Baking & beautiful music

Baker Lio Botello and country singer/songwriter Kam Ross are a gay power couple on the rise

By Jenny Block, Page 8
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Cover design by Kevin Thomas
Photo by Marcos Covos Photography
Dale Hansen is retiring

WFAA announced this week that sportscaster Dale Hansen is retiring in September. He's been at the station since 1983.

Hansen became a hero to the LGBTQ community when he aired a Dale Hansen “Unplugged” segment about Michael Sam, after Sam was snubbed by every NFL team because he is gay.

At the time, Hansen thought sportscasters in every market would comment similarly. Instead, no one else said a word, and Hansen went on to appear on Ellen and became a hero to the LGBTQ community around the country, but especially here in Dallas.

Since then, he has raised tens of thousands of dollars for Black Tie Dinner and has won Dallas Peace and Justice Center’s 2019 Inspiration Award, the Hero of Hope Award from the Cathedral of Hope Church and the Peacemaker Award from the Turtle Creek Chorale. He’s won more than 20 Lone Star Emmy Awards and has been named Sportscaster of the Year twice by Associated Press.

— David Taffet

Trans candidate wins Democratic Primary for Erie, Penn., county executive

Transgender candidate Tyler Titus moved one step closer this week to becoming the first openly trans county executive in the U.S. with a victory in the four-way Democratic Primary race for Erie County, Penn., county executive. Titus, president of the Erie School Board, now faces Republican Brenton Davis in the November general election.

Titus, 36, became the first openly transgender person to win any elected office in Pennsylvania when they won their school board race in 2017.

The LGBTQ Victory Fund, which backed Titus in the race, credited the candidate’s “groundbreaking ad detailing their coming out story, struggles with their identity and their path to public service,” “carefully laid out policy plans addressing everything from increasing broadband access to healthcare reform” and “honesty and transparency [that] resonated with voters” for Titus’ win.

— Tammye Nash

Victory Fund will not be endorsing Caitlyn Jenner

Victory Fund issued a statement Thursday, May 20, that it will not be endorsing Caitlyn Jenner for Governor of California.

Jenner simply doesn’t meet the criteria that all candidates must meet for an endorsement.

Victory Fund requires that its endorsed candidates support full equality for all members of the LGBTQ community.

“While Jenner is running as an out trans person, she’s doing it while throwing trans kids under the bus, telling TMZ that she supports laws banning trans kids from sports,” Sean Meloy, Victory Fund’s vice president of political programs, wrote in a statement. “Caitlyn Jenner isn’t with us – and we’re not with her.”

Victory Fund has endorsed a number of transgender candidates, including Tyler Titus who just won their primary for county executive in Erie County, Penn. Other endorsed trans candidates include Danica Roem, who is running for re-election to the Virginia House of Delegates, Mariah Moore, who is running for New Orleans City Council, and Andrea Jenkins, who is running for Minneapolis City Council.

— David Taffet

Trick the Mini Fest announced for Pride

The party starts quickly for Pride month this June. Black Sheep Hospitality Group announced its inaugural Trick the Mini Fest on June 4-7, and organizer Rickey Head is looking to bring Pride back into the gayborhood.

“Pride just hasn’t been the same since it moved,” he said by phone. “So I wanted to give people an opportunity to celebrate on The Strip who don’t want to celebrate it elsewhere.”

The event will feature a DJ lineup, drag performances, the Lil Miss Trick pageant and the Mr. Trick dance contest.

Tickets are available at Eventbrite.com.

— Rich Lopez

Preston Hollow Dems warn of email scam

Preston Hollow Democrats are warning members and supporters this week about a scam email asking recipients to donate gift cards to the group.

“Be aware there is a fraudulent email circulating,” the group notes in an alert on the PHD website and in an email sent to members and supporters. “Do not respond to this email or open any attachments.”

Edwards warns, “It did not come from my email address or any other PHD email addresses. It is not associated with George or the Preston Hollow Democrats.”

The scam email subject line reads “The Preston Hollow Democrats,” and the body of the email says, “Are you available to assist? I am out of the state, and I’ve got credence in you to take care of this. I would have called your phone, but presently I don’t have access to my mobile phone.

“The Preston Hollow Democrats need some gift cards for donation to Veterans at Hospice and Palliative Care Units for Personal Protective Equipment from Corona Virus (COVID-19). I have decided to make it a personal duty. I will be responsible for the reimbursement.”

— Tammye Nash

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Finding hope after the pandemic

Religious institutions found themselves at the center of the COVID crisis, finding ways to continue to worship while responding to grief.

More than 570,000 Americans have died from COVID-19. That’s more deaths than American soldiers lost in World War II, the Korean and the Vietnam wars combined.

But pandemics and wars are difficult to weigh against one another. Wars typically happen far away, and those who go to fight them understand that they may not return. In a pandemic, death comes to our shores, and everyone is enlisted. It’s a moment in time that has the power to shift our sense of being.

As a minister and leader of a congregation fighting on the home front in this battle, I have seen more heartache and loss than any society should have to endure. Religious institutions found themselves at the center of this crisis as we attempted to respond to the toll of human grief while finding novel ways to gather together and live out our faith.

I am proud of our efforts at the Cathedral of Hope. We started Zoom groups, recorded messages of encouragement and broadcast sermons from empty sanctuaries into living rooms. On many Sundays, the liturgy of the pandemic was about making do with what you have and hoping some of it sticks.

I’m not sure if we always succeeded, but we persevered through stress, uncertainty and sometimes tragedy to find ourselves on the cusp of victory. As vaccines are distributed, herd immunity is eventually achieved, restrictions are lifted or modified, many churches are preparing to return to in-person worship.

This is an exciting moment. COVID has been a worthy opponent, and it feels like we are nearly on the other side of it. But our David and Goliath moment may just be getting started, and we can’t let our excitement obscure the challenges ahead.

Like King David in the Bible, it would have been easy to let fear consume us as we faced the giant standing before us. In the story, David was outsized and outmatched, but he did not let fear get in the way. It took courage and encouragement — the things we’ll need most going forward — to face new challenges ahead.

We may have slain one giant, but new ones will emerge, and having courage to face them doesn’t mean fear disappears. It means we stand strong no matter what tries to knock us off our feet.

With in-person worship services, we may never recover to pre-COVID level. We may have to deal with the personal trauma of returning. We may be frightened of trying to establish a kind of normalcy that doesn’t exist yet, to accept that some of us can’t go back to “before” — and this is where our worship spaces and family in faith can help. We can encourage one another as we walk through the doors once more, in faith that we are right where we need to be, while fully recognizing and respecting another’s choice to continue to worship from home where they need to be.

We must also learn to trust again. After spending so much time away from friends and colleagues, we will have to re-learn what it means to live in a community again. We may wonder, “How can I trust my neighbor to mask up, or stay home if she’s sick?”

Doubts have taken hold of us because we have been deprived of opportunities to be vulnerable, to serve and be served by one another, to simply interact with others on a regular basis for more than a year.

For most of us, we have been forced to become more self-sufficient. But healthy societies and congregations rely not on individualism alone in hard times but on relationships we build with one another. It will take some time, but I am confident trust will return to our worship spaces.

Finally, we’ll need hope. A pandemic is nothing if not a hope-killer. It stretches us, tests us, brings us to the very edge of despair. But I have hope that you will find hope in the coming days and weeks.

I have hope not only because the end of this pandemic is near but, most importantly, because I choose to exercise encouragement and to trust in others. Our job isn’t to find superhuman strength during a pandemic; our job is simply to love and lean on one another.

We must love others as we have been loved. This is the fertile soil where hope, when cultivated in a community, will blossom.

The road to full recovery may take longer than we might like, and many churches will choose to continue with online or hybrid options that proved so valuable during COVID. Our church will do so.

Regardless of how our communities move forward, one thing is certain: We must move forward together. By encouraging ourselves and others, building trust, and cultivating hope in our lives, we can defeat any giant that stands in our way.

The Rev. Neil Thomas is senior pastor of Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ.
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Baker Lio Botello gets ‘Krafty’ with the support of his country-music-singing partner Kam Ross

JENNY BLOCK | Contributing Writer

Lio Botello, 32, is one crafty queen. Actually, he is Krafty Kween, maker of baking goodies that look as good as they taste. His day job is managing a Farmers Insurance Agency, he explained, but “My second full-time job is baking and crafting for my business.” Formerly with Sugar Daddy’s, he grew up in Fort Worth.

“I lived in Hurst for nine years before finally making the move all the way across DFW to Dallas,” he said.

Botello’s former partner in business and in his personal life was a pastry chef. That’s how his career in baking began. “Living together, I was around it all the time,” he said. “I have always been creative, and I love making beautiful things. I was assisting most of the time [at Sugar Daddy’s], taking care of all of the marketing and social media for our business, and I slowly just taught myself to do more and more.”

He’s been baking as a lead and solo baker for almost a year now after assisting for almost three years.

Botello says he is inspired by “the impact a cake or dessert has on someone’s special day, whether that be their birthday, anniversary, Mother’s Day or a promotion. If one of my beautiful desserts can be in the center of a table surrounded by people celebrating something, then my heart is full.”

“I love watching someone’s face light up when they receive the cake or treat that was ordered for them, but even more so the joy it brings the person gifting the item,” he added.

Almost a year ago now, Botello left Sugar Daddy’s. “I decided to focus on my business and take on my biggest fear — baking on my own,” he said. “My ex-business partner and I had just run our course in business, and it was what was best for us.” Shortly after, his ex-partner decided to close Sugar Daddy’s completely.

But Botello didn’t miss a beat. Still, because he had always been assisting rather than working as a lead baker, he knew he still had plenty to learn.

“But I am always excited to learn,” he continued. “Surprisingly, my biggest mentor was one of my competitors from my time on Netflix’s Sugar Rush — Amy from Amy’s Cupcake Shoppe. She has been a tremendous help any time I have questions or feel unsure about something.”

While at Sugar Daddy’s, Botello worked with a number of charity organizations. “I always enjoyed heading up these projects and being a dessert sponsor for various events,” he said. And he is proud to say that he is continuing that charity work at Krafty Kween, adding, “I actually just locked in working with DIFFA Dallas for their event this fall. I am extremely excited about that.”

Grateful for his success with his recent pivot, Botello said it’s not something he could ever have done alone. “One of my good friends and regular customers, Alyssa Edwards [Justin Johnson], has been a great return customer and also a great mentor as I have tried to navigate becoming a solo entrepreneur,” he said.

“The sweets are always sweet,” Johnson said. “I think Lio just is such a wonderful guy. They’ve been making things for all of my events, my studio and for me, personally, for... I mean, it’s been a good minute. They would make my birthday cakes. They baked all of the things for all of my studio. They would bring cupcakes to my students.”

“He’s just a creative person, and I think we’re fans of each other’s worlds.” Botello’s current partner — in life alone this time and not business — is Houston native Kameron Ross, 31.

“He and I have been together since October of 2019,” Botello said. “We actually saw each other for the first time at Alyssa Edwards’ Labor Day party.”

Johnson added, “I introduced them. And little did I know, they would end up being together. So, I guess that’s a crazy little thing called love. But I wasn’t caught off guard, because they’re both really sweet souls.”

Botello and Ross crossed paths again a few week after the party, and the two have been inseparable since, Botello said. And that, Johnson said, makes sense, really. “They connect with people really naturally and easily. They remind me of a lot of one another in that sense, because they’re so inviting when they walk in a room.”

A graduate of Binn College, Ross is a senior key account manager for a hospitality tech company when it comes to making a living. But he’s a country mu-
sic singer/songwriter when it comes to making his dreams come true.

Ever since he was a kid, Ross has wanted to be a musician. “When I was 8, my parents took me to a Shania Twain concert, and I knew then that that was what I wanted to do,” he said. His first album was released in 2006.

“I am passionate about performing and being on stage. I love connecting with people through the lyrics in whatever song it is that am singing,” Ross said.

Ross was a contestant on Season 15 of America’s Got Talent, which aired last summer in the midst of the pandemic. He made it all the way to the quarterfinals.

“He had an amazing time on the show and loved that they gave him a platform to share his voice with people all over the country,” Botello said of his partner.

Johnson is certainly sold on Ross’ talents, too. “I remember seeing Kam sing live for the very first time at Alexander’s years ago,” he said. “I think it was a karaoke night. And I’ll never forget. I turned to our mutual friend, and I said, ‘That is a star. He is a star. And he is the future of country music.’”

Johnson continued, “There are just some people that have a natural quality on stage. [Ross] has that ‘it factor.’ And then you start peeling back layers, and you meet this human that is truly a bright light in this world.

Fair Park in June for Dallas Pride, and, he said, “Performing at Pride is exciting for me, having been an artist that struggled with being a gay country music singer when I was younger to now be performing at Pride.”

Burgeoning careers and romance: It doesn’t get much better than that. As Johnson said of his friends, “When two like-minded souls connect, it’s just magnetic. And I’ve watched their relationship blossom into the beautiful couple that they are inside and out. It’s important that we recognize that, because sometimes we can get caught up on someone’s outer features, but they’re both very creatively inspired.

“I love that they support one another in their creative ventures. Both of them have this drive that is just a force. I mean, they really are a beautiful power couple,” Johnson said.
With time running out in the 87th Texas Legislature, activists watch two bills targeting trans youth

JAMES RUSSELL | Contributing Writer
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Republicans in the Texas Legislature are so intent on making life hell for transgender kids that even some Democrats are joining them. As the biennial 140-day open season on civil rights and liberties comes to a close, lawmakers have prioritized and passed legislation banning abortion after six weeks, further restricting access to the ballot box, limiting lawsuits against 18-wheeler drivers who hurt or kill someone and allowing guns to be carried without a permit.

The abortion restrictions, which also allow for any private citizen to sue someone who receives, performs or is an accessory to an abortion, was signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott on Wednesday, May 21, as was the trucking bill. The others remain in conference committee, where members from both chambers work out the differences between their respective chamber's version of the bills.

Other bills making their way through the legislature include a measure requiring that any professional sports team with government contracts play "The Star-Spangled Banner" before starting a game and a measure banning "critical race theory" pedagogy in public schools.

Yet two top Republican priorities — barring healthcare access to transgender youth and requiring they play sports based on the sex on their birth certificate and not their actual gender identity — have consistently stalled despite the momentum similar legislation is gaining nationwide.

While various House versions of these bills died before getting a full vote on the floor, Senate versions have found new life thanks to the efforts, in one case, of a Democrat.

Two Senate bills remain on the radar of LGBTQ groups: Senate Bill 1311 by Sen. Bob Hall, R-Edgewood, and Senate Bill 29 by Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee Chair Charles Perry, R-Lubbock. The former bans gender-affirming care for transgender children. And SB 29 would codify existing University Interscholastic League policy requiring students play on the teams based on their biological sex and not their gender identity.

While UIL already prohibits most transgender students from participating in athletics that align with their gender identity, it does allow students to use amended birth certificates; SB 29 would take away that option. The bill is waiting to be taken up by the Calendars committee, which decides when bills are heard on the House floor.

SB 1311 would ban gender-affirming health care for transgender youth, punish doctors for providing transition-related care by revoking their licenses and ban insurance coverage of the practice. It awaits committee referral. Equality Texas has named SB 29 as a top threat to trans youth.

SB 29 has had a rocky road on the way to hitting the House floor. It passed easily in the conservative Republican-held Senate on a party line vote of 18-13 while its House companions died. But the Senate versions have been revived.

When the committee held its initial vote on SB 29, Democrat Rep. James Talarico of Round Rock called it "lipstick on a pig," adding he knew his Republican colleagues on the committee don’t like the bill. Voting it out would be “enough to tarnish the name of this committee,” he said.

House LGBTQ Caucus Chair Mary Gonzalez, D-Clint, urged her colleagues to vote no after hearing testimony from educators who opposed the bill. And
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What happened to Tiffany?

Dallas police continue to investigate the murder of Jermaine Thomas, 38, also known as Tiffany, who was found shot to death on Saturday morning, April 24, at a car wash at 7171 American Way near Red Bird Mall. Although they were “presenting as female” at the time of the murder, and photos provided to police show the victim presenting as female, Dallas Police LGBT Liaison Officer Chelsea Geist said family members told police the victim didn’t identify as transgender.

According to police reports, when a police patrol sergeant was flagged down by a passerby of an unresponsive person lying on the ground at the car wash. The officer found the victim on the ground, unresponsive, with a gunshot wound. Dallas Fire and Rescue responded and pronounced the victim deceased at the scene at 1:45 a.m. Witnesses reported hearing gunshots in the area at around midnight.

Pocahontas Duvall Crowe said that it is common for family members to deny someone is transgender, especially after a murder. But, she added, other members of the trans community will usually know the victim and will come forward to point out that the person was just coming out as trans or that they hid their trans identity from their family.

But, she said, this case is different. Crowe said she has asked around her extensive network in the trans community and found no one who knew Tiffany.

“Lots of trans people don’t have access to other trans folks,” Crowe said, adding that coming out as transgender is not uncommon. “Tiffany may not have identified as transgender, they were somewhere on the trans spectrum. Referring to the picture the family released, Crowe said, “She didn’t look like somebody who just jumped into it.”

In their photo, Tiffany’s hair and makeup are done well, something that baffles Crowe, because Tiffany obviously learned hair and makeup skills somewhere. And even if they didn’t identify as transgender, they were quickly identified as Tiffany.

And it isn’t just Crowe’s network of friends that didn’t know Tiffany. Both Naomi Greene at Abounding Prosperity and Carter Brown with Black Trans Men/Black Trans Women said no one in their organizations knew Tiffany either.

Carmarion Anderson-Harvey is the Alabama state director for Human Rights Campaign. She’s originally from Dallas and has been following this case.

“Whether or not the individual identified as transgender, the focus should remain that this was a beautiful black human, someone’s child, someone’s loved one and, more importantly, a life that did not deserve to be taken through any form of hate, prejudice, or discrimination,” Anderson-Harvey said.

Often it’s difficult to come out as trans and truly live as one’s authentic whole self, she said, stressing that that can be especially true in the Black community. “This may contradict cultural norms, which often are binary and give no room for living free from fear or rejection,” Anderson-Harvey said. “The truth will live only with the individual and is not predicated on other thoughts, perceptions or opinions.”

She said she hopes there will be a break in the case and that Tiffany and her family will find justice.

Dallas police ask that anyone with information regarding the murder of Jermaine “Tiffany” Thomas contact the Dallas Police Homicide Unit at 469-475-6004 or email andrea.isom@dallascityhall.com. Reference case number 070623-2021.

Crimes Stoppers will pay up to $5,000 for information leading to an arrest and indictment in this case.

Alan White’s body found

Police still have no clues in the murder of Tiffany Thomas

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Police hope to know cause of death soon but aren’t yet calling it murder

The Dallas County Medical Examiner has yet to determine the cause of death for Alan White, the Dallas gay man who disappeared last October and whose body was found last week. But police hope to have more information soon, according to LGBT Police Liaison Chelsea Geist.

White’s body was found near Paul Quinn College in south Dallas on May 13. A survey crew working for the college found the remains in a wooded area and called 9-1-1. White disappeared on Oct. 22. White and his husband, Rusty Jenkins, both left their home at around 4:45 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, driving separate cars on their way to separate gyms. White was last seen leaving the L.A. Fitness gym at CityPlace around 6 a.m. He was driving a black Porsche Macan, a loaner car from Park Place Motors.

From there, surveillance video from the RaceTrac gas station on Inwood Road at Maple Avenue in Oak Lawn showed him at a pump filling the car with gas. Another video showed him exiting the station onto Inwood, going north toward his home.

But he never reached home.

White was an executive with KPMG who worked from home and was scheduled to participate in a Zoom call from home at 7:30 a.m. Jenkins filed a missing person report at 11 a.m.

Park Place Motors was unable to locate the car, even though loaner cars are normally fitted with GPS trackers. The car was found a week later about a mile from where White’s body was eventually found. At the time, police said they were waiting for results to come back from SWIFS, Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences.

“It is a very difficult and time-consuming process unfortunately,” Geist said at the time.

In addition, White’s phone was found in the car and police were waiting on warrants from Apple to unlock the phone. Then separate warrants were required for each application on the phone. There has been no word yet from police where they were in that process or if it revealed any clues.

Until his body was found, police were not calling the case a death, but a disappearance. Throughout the investigation, however, they have been considering all possibilities.

Now, because cause of death has not yet been determined, White’s death has still not been ruled a homicide. Because of the state of decomposition, determining cause of death may be difficult, but Geist said she hopes results would be available soon that can give detectives new clues.

While the case hasn’t been officially ruled a homicide, Crime Stoppers is offering a $5,000 reward for any information that leads to the arrest and indictment of a suspect in the case. In addition, a private fund has offered $20,000 for information on White’s disappearance and death.

While police are waiting for autopsy results, they are actively seeking information in the case and ask that anyone with information related to White’s death contact Detective Eric Barnes at 214-283-4818 or by email at eric.barnes@dallascityhall.com, referencing case 188623-2020.
LOCAL CRIME UPDATES

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PRIDE for all ages

Author writes Pride books for tots to teens and those in between

DANA RUDOLPH | Contributing Columnist

There are happily now many children’s books about Pride, but Robin Stevenson may be the author who has taken up the subject for the most age groups.

Over the past few years, Stevenson, an award-winning author of more than 25 books in total, has published a board book, a picture book, a middle grade nonfiction book and a young adult novel — all revolving around Pride.

She told me via e-mail, “Pride has always been important to me, but it has had different meanings for me at different times in my life — coming out as a young adult, taking my own child, talking to queer activists around the world in researching my book — and I think all of those meanings have filtered into my writing.”

Her most recent book, Pride Puppy! (Orca Books, 2021) is an alphabet book and more, bursting with diversity across LGBTQ and other identities. “A for awake, animals and all,” it begins, as a young child, a baby, and their two parents (one Black and female; the other white and nonbinary) wake up in the morning and get ready for the Pride march.

Each rhyming page takes us onward through the alphabet and the day, where Julie McLaughlin’s colorful drawings show people of various ages, body types, skin tones, cultures, physical abilities, religions and LGBTQ identities. At one point, the puppy gets loose and romps across subsequent pages with the family in pursuit, offering an engaging narrative arc lacking in many ABC books. The book also incorporates a fun “seek-and-find” activity, with additional items to discover on every page.

Stevenson reflected, “When I wrote Pride Puppy!, I was thinking about families like mine, who look forward to the Pride parade every year — all the kids who love getting dressed up in fancy outfits, meeting up with friends, eating ice cream in the park, watching the floats go by, listening to music on the stages and feeling like a part of it all.

“But I was also thinking about kids who haven’t had that chance, and I wanted to give them a glimpse of our beautiful, diverse, creative community. I tried to write this as a child’s eye view of Pride, focusing on the things that might be relevant to a small kid.”

Pride Puppy! is an energetic delight, but those who want something more soothing for the very youngest children should try Stevenson’s board book Pride Colors (Orca Books, 2019). It takes the original meanings of the colors in the Pride flag, as envisioned by creator Gilbert Baker, and turns them into a poem from parent to child: “Yellow sunshine, smiles so bright, I’ll hug you, kiss you, hold you tight.”

“Board books are all about the relationship between the little one and the adult reader, and with Pride Colors I wanted to write a book that conveyed a message of absolute love and acceptance from caregiver to child,” Stevenson explained. “It includes the line ‘Be yourself, love who you choose’ — I think that is one of the meanings of Pride, and I love to think of children hearing that message from the very beginning of their lives.”

For middle grade children ready to learn more specifics about Pride, however, Stevenson’s nonfiction Pride: The Celebration and the Struggle (Orca Books, 2020) does the trick. It blends a history of the event with a broader look at the struggle for LGBTQ equality plus information about what it means to come out, what to expect at Pride events around the world, fun facts, profiles, a glossary and more.

“Pride offers a factual overview of LGBTQ+ history and community, and lots of stories to encourage and inspire young activists,” Robinson said. “It’s an outward-looking book, because middle grade readers are at an age when they are often wanting to know more about the world and how they can make a difference in it.”

In contrast, her recent young adult book When You Get the Chance (Running Press Kids, 2021), written with fellow Canadian author Tom Ryan, “is more about the emotional experience of Pride and what it can mean to a young person — who may be grappling with questions about family, relationships, identity — to feel that they are a part of something bigger.”

In that novel, a grandfather’s death brings cousins Talia, 18, and Mark, 17, together at the Ontario cottage where they used to spend their summers. They haven’t seen each other in years because their parents are estranged. Both teens are queer and struggling with the status of their romantic relationships.

Even though they don’t really get along, Mark convinces Talia to take a break from family obligations and sneak off with him and his 10-year-old sister on a road trip to Toronto Pride. They get help from several older queer folks, meet new friends and learn more not only about LGBTQ culture but also about themselves.

Told in alternating chapters by Talia and Mark, this is a fun yet thoughtful book about family, community, and growing up. Mark and Talia are presumed white; supporting characters are of various skin tones and queer identities.

While When You Get the Chance and Pride are very different, Stevenson said, “They actually touch on some similar themes. … In my non-fiction book, I explained the history of Pride very directly, while in this teen novel, facts about the Stonewall Uprising and changing ideas about identity are woven into intergenerational conversations between queer adults, teens, and kids.”

No matter what age your kids are, Stevenson’s books may even spark real-life intergenerational conversations about Pride and identity as well.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com). Join her June 1 for the 16th annual #LGBTQFamiliesDay: post and share on all social media in support and celebration of LGBTQ families!
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The Clover Girls by Viola Shipman; c.2021, Graydon House; $16.99; 416 pages

Learning to love laundry day


The grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Someone else’s life is always better than yours, warts and all, and you wanted what she got, partly because she got it first. Greener grass often goes with sour grapes, but, as in the new novel, The Clover Girls by Viola Shipman, it ultimately depends on how well you tend your garden.

V, formerly known as Veronica, felt fat. She was sure that her husband, David, was embarrassed by the weight she’d put on since the kids were born and she’d had to give up her modeling career. Yes, she was once a cover model, lithe and beautiful. Now, she had an extra 15 pounds, but no career, no friends, no family — the talent her friends appreciated — had never quite taken hold. And where were those friends these days, she wondered.

And then she got the letter.

Em said she’d be dead by the time they read their letters, that the cancer had metastasized too far for a cure. Sweet, dear Emily was the only one who’d kept track of everyone; she’d hoped the friendship-shattering event that happened years ago was forgivable, and she took a drastic move to try and make it so.

But is a four-leaf clover that’s missing a leaf still lucky?

There’s a meme-thread going around social media chiding men who write awkwardly about female characters. You might ask yourself, then, how author Wade Rouse, a gay man writing under a female pseudonym, would do it. The answer is: With a semi-contrived plot and a whole lotta heart.

On one end, readers who are used to more action-packed novels may roll their eyes; the main characters in The Clover Girls are all celebrity look-alikes, their spat was schoolgirl-silly, the plot lines are oh-so-convenient: How many times will they spread Emily’s ashes, and where did Liz get all that fabric?

It’s enough to make you squint. And yet, the basic story here is sweet and not outrageously dramatic. Shipman/Rouse instead makes it gentle, loving, squeaky-clean and perfect for sharing with anyone who devours women’s fiction like this.

So put aside the go-go-go novels. Look beyond the contrivances, and The Clover Girls may be your next obsession. Find it, and you might not be able to leaf it alone.

Tomorrow’s outfit is on a chair over there. That’s where it’s been since you last washed it.

What you wore today came from a basket and off a hanger, the shirt needed ironing, there was a tiny stain on the pants but who noticed? And you just bought new socks, so there’s that.

Time to do the wash? Yeah, but get a load of this: Laundry Love by Patric Richardson (with Karin B. Miller).

In one of his earliest memories, Patric Richardson’s uncle holds him aloft so that Richardson could watch laundry swimming in the washer. He was almost a baby then, but the fascination was set: At age three, Richardson was “over the moon” when he received a toy washing machine as a birthday gift. He remembers that it was Harvest Gold.

Growing up, Richardson absorbed washday secrets from an extended family of women, and he learned the appeal of laundry hung on a line outside. While at the University of Kentucky, he met three professors who taught him about textiles, and employers educated him further. Love of fabric eventually became Richardson’s career, and laundry is his love-language: “Caring for your loved ones’ clothes shows them love.”

The first thing to know, Richardson states, is that “Our clothes are bossy.” If something you enjoy wearing says “Dry Clean Only” on the label, lay it on the kitchen counter, grab a pair of scissors, and cut that label off because, “Anything can be washed at home.”

Here, you’ll learn how to save time on wash day. Find out why big-brand-name detergents are unsafe, and see what you need to care for your clothes properly. Learn to iron, eliminate horrible stains, wash woolens and other awkward-to-clean items and see how to rescue yellowed linens and special-event clothing like a pro.

Remember, says Richardson, “You don’t have to do laundry — you get to do laundry.”

These days, though, author Patric Richardson doesn’t “get to” very often. His husband, he says, does their wash while Richardson runs a clothing store and offers “Laundry Camp” at the Mall of America. But since not everyone can be a happy camper, there’s Laundry Love.

If you’re thinking that a book about joyfully washing clothes would be a mighty skinny book, you’re right, but laundry is only a part of this story here. The rest is biography, and a love-letter to Appalachian and Southern women. In giving props to the women who raised him, Richardson shows how his interest in fabric grew, too; the subject of textiles, he, Richardson shows how his interest in fabric grew, too; the subject of textiles, which may be perceived as mundane by many, is treated in this light as something precious and accessible.

If you come for the biography, you’ll be glad you stayed for the hints as Richardson shows how even the most delicate items can be safely home-cleaned. That fur you love? Done. That stinky-perfumed vintage item you found? Clean. Ahhhhhhh, so pick up the undies in the corner, use Grandma’s linens, shop thrift-stores with impunity. Go ahead, fear-free. Having Laundry Love should take a load off your mind.
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rep. diego bernal, d-san antonio, said it was all about politics for republicans worried about primaries. he asked, “is the cost worth it?”

it died with one republican absent and dutton voting present. then in a dramatic reversal, dutton brought the bill back up for a vote after his bill allowing texas education commissioner mike morath to remove school board members was killed on a technicality by rep. alma allen, a houston democrat.

democrats generally oppose that bill but dutton has advocated for more state control over the houston independent school district for poor performance.

“i don’t know how big this problem [trans youth in sports] is, and i wish i did, because i’d be in a better position. i can tell you this,” he said before the roll call, “the bill that was killed last night [allowing morath to remove isd board members] affected far more children than this ever will.”

as a consequence of killing his bill, he brought sb 28 back in retaliation. dutton even went so far as to sign on as a house sponsor of the bill, joining rep. ken king, a west texas republican.

committee member state rep. diego bernal, a san antonio democrat told the texas tribune it was “soul-crushing” and that “bringing it back up, was used as a form of retaliation by the chairman,” bernal said.

dutton was slammed by lgbtq advocates. human rights campaign state director rebecca marques said his move showed “the petty and cruel ways that texas elected officials use the lives of trans kids to score political points without regard to the actual human impact.”

he should be on watch.

“we have a track record of supporting pro-lgbtq candidates and working with lawmakers to expand their understanding of lgbtq texans,” marques added. “lgbtq voters have a consistently high turnout – and they know who stands with them, and who works to harm them.”

sb 29 has been sent to the calendar committee. the legislative session ends on may 31.
### JUNE 5, 2021

#### CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS**

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<th>Council District 2</th>
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<td>1 Jesse Moreno</td>
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<td>2 Jaynie Schultz</td>
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<td>2 Kevin Felder</td>
<td>2 David Blewett</td>
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#### DALLAS COUNTY EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS

- **AUDELIA ROAD BRANCH LIBRARY – AUDITORIUM**
  - 10045 AUDELIA RD
  - DALLAS 75238
- **BALCH SPRINGS CIVIC CENTER – MEETING ROOM**
  - 12400 ELAM RD
  - BALCH SPRINGS 75180
- **BETTY WARMACK LIBRARY – EMPOWER ROOM**
  - 760 BARDIN RD
  - GRAND PRAIRIE 75052
- **CARROLLTON SENIOR CENTER**
  - 1720 KELLER SPRINGS RD
  - CARROLLTON 75006
- **COPPELL TOWN CENTER - MAIN LOBBY**
  - 255 E PARKWAY BLVD
  - COPPELL 75019
- **CROSSWINDS HIGH SCHOOL**
  - 1100 N CARRIER PKWY
  - GRAND PRAIRIE 75050
- **EL CENTRO COLLEGE-MAIN CAMPUS – C BLDG LOBBY**
  - 801 MAIN ST
  - DALLAS 75202
- **FRETZ PARK LIBRARY – BLACK BOX THEATER**
  - 6990 BELT LINE RD
  - DALLAS 75254
- **GEORGE L ALLEN SR. COURTS BLDG – MAIN LOBBY**
  - 600 COMMERCE ST
  - DALLAS 75202
- **GRAUWYLER PARK RECREATION CENTER – GYM**
  - 7780 HARRY HINES BLVD
  - DALLAS 75235
- **J ERIK JONSSON CENTRAL LIBRARY – EAST ROOM**
  - 1515 YOUNG ST
  - DALLAS 75201
- **LAKEWOOD BRANCH LIBRARY – AUDITORIUM**
  - 6121 WORTH ST
  - DALLAS 75214
- **MARSH LANE BAPTIST CHURCH – FELLOWSHIP HALL**
  - 10716 MARSH LN
  - DALLAS 75229
- **MARTIN LUTHER KING CORE BLDG – GYMNASIUM**
  - 2901 PENNSLYVANIA
  - DALLAS 75215
- **OAK CLIFF SUB-COURTHOUSE - MAIN LOBBY**
  - 410 S. BECKLEY AVE
  - DALLAS 75203
- **OAK LAWN BRANCH LIBRARY - AUDITORIUM**
  - 4100 CEDAR SPRINGS RD
  - DALLAS 75219
- **OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH - PARLOR**
  - 7611 PARK LN
  - DALLAS 75225
- **PAUL L DUNBAR LANCASTER-KIEST LIBRARY - CLASSROOMS A & B**
  - 2008 EAST KIEST BLVD
  - DALLAS 75216
- **PRESTON ROYAL LIBRARY**
  - 5626 ROYAL LN
  - DALLAS 75229
- **RANDOLPH REED CENTER – ROOM 106**
  - 1933 SPIKES ST
  - GRAND PRAIRIE 75051
- **REVERECHON RECREATION CENTER – GAME ROOM**
  - 3505 MAPLE AVE
  - DALLAS 75219
- **RICHARDSON CIVIC CENTER – PARKS ROOM**
  - 411 W. ARAPAHO RD
  - RICHARDSON 75080
- **RICHLAND COLLEGE – MAIN CAMPUS - FOYER AREA**
  - 12800 ABRAMS
  - DALLAS 75243
- **SAMUEL GRAND RECREATION CENTER -GENERAL PURPOSE ROOM**
  - 6200 EAST GRAND
  - DALLAS 75223
- **SEAGOVILLE CITY HALL – FOYER**
  - 702 N HWY 175
  - DALLAS 75159
- **SKYLINE BRANCH LIBRARY - AUDITORIUM**
  - SOUTH GARLAND BRANCH LIBRARY - THE PROGRAM ROOM
  - 6006 EVERGLADE RD
  - DALLAS 75227
- **SOUTH GARLAND BRANCH LIBRARY - PROGRAM ROOM**
  - 4845 BROADWAY BLVD
  - GARLAND 75043

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**EARLY VOTING DATES/TIMES**

- **May (mayo) 24 – 27**
  - Monday-Thursday (lunes a jueves)
  - 8a.m. to 5p.m.
- **May (mayo) 28**
  - Friday (viernes)
  - 7a.m. to 7p.m.
- **May (mayo) 29**
  - Saturday (sábado)
  - 8a.m. to 5p.m.
- **May (mayo) 30**
  - Sunday (domingo)
  - 1p.m. to 6p.m.
- **May (mayo) 31**
  - Memorial Day
  - 7a.m to 7p.m
- **June (junio) 1**
  - Polls are Closed
  - las encuestas están cerradas
  - Tuesday (martes)
  - 7a.m to 7p.m

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Alicia Graf Mack, dean and director of the Juilliard School, will be the featured guest artist at Dallas Black Dance Theater’s Spring celebration, streaming for 7 p.m. Saturday through 11:59 p.m. Sunday. See listings for details.
OK, serenely now, let’s everybody just swill a long, tall draught of our Sex-on-the-Beach and get right to it, shall we? Dear Howard: I want to go traveling overseas this summer — a faraway beach, somewhere exotic with plumaged birds and sucking pigs roasted in graves with banana leaves. I’m done pacing around, stuck Covid-bound here in Texas. I wanna hit somewhere friendly and aspersions-free where I can openly dig a bulging bikini on a wild isle of dudes by a palm tree in the sand! So, what’s the deal this summer with traveling internationally? Are proof of vaccinations now a requirement? I don’t trust them vaccines. But, still, I wanna get around. I’m thinkin’ big, like Tahiti, Bora Bora . . . Riaatea, even! There’s gotta be some backwater jewel that has sparkling, untainted beaches, not pawn shops and stripper poles and sandy beaches glittering with spent shell casings. I can’t do another Redneck Riviera same-old/same-old. I even saved up my stimulus check money! Just toss a dart for me over toward the Indian Ocean somewhere and tell me where she sticks. Just once in my life, I wanna be Thong-Tan Thor! Dear Thor, The Island Sex God: I can’t speak for the Society Islands or the Seychelles, but as it just so happens, I did actually spend a month last week in The Maldives, which I believe may be in your hand grenades-&-horseshoes’ range of Indian Ocean options. Advertised as the ideal “Vaccine Tourist Destination,” this bare-inches-above-sea-level nation is comprised of a coral-reef archipelago chain of over 1,200 islands located three degrees above the equator and surrounded by nothing but endless sea. The Maldives are ideally located to contract nothing. And everybody this summer is looking to travel anywhere other than where they’ve spent their last year cooped-up, rushing toward nowhere. The Maldives is ideally situated to contract absolutely nothing infectious by anyone. Let’s go there! But, wait. There’s a catch to traveling to a place where three days, two jumbo jets, one seaplane and a bouncing speedboat are needed just to get there. In this new world order, no matter whether you’re traveling steerage and staying in a one-star sex hotel, or whether you’re roughing it via a Qatar Airlines’ First-Class Cabin, followed by a 24/7 personal Butler on your five-star island resort, the answer to any question asked of said staff will always be a smirking emphatic, “No!” Nodding affirmatively, with a gra-ciously lifting bow, endearingly pressing his palm against his heart, “No, I’m afraid is not possible at the moment.” Immediately, there follows the requisite faux frown, replete with now sagging palm upon his heart. Aridy, he whispers the slammed gate that assures any possible scintilla of personal integrity, responsibility, fault or blame: “COVID.”

But why can’t we join another couple for dinner at their table tonight whom we met today at the Whale Bar, where nobody is even allowed except guests here of your hotel, all of whom have been thoroughly vaccinated already, only then to be force-tested, yet again, 72 hours prior to our arrival here on this bleached coral clod? Because only family members may sit together at the same table.

But we have zero family members with us; that was the whole point of coming here! We’re sick of our family members. We came here to mingle again, finally, with total strangers — totally vaccinated strangers! At the risk of being labeled a politically-incorrect racist xenophile, or worse, I’m nevertheless gonna send up this trial balloon of advice for any of you out there still planning a same-sex couple’s vacation this summer to an institutionally acolyte part of our world: Don’t even think about it. They have ways of retaliation toward forwardism, far saltier than just, oh, Doha Stadium’s regular, run-of-the-mill public stonings for those layover passengers caught to be engaging in Mile-High-Club antics, or whose luggage contain even a molecule of fabric in a shade other than mortuary. If nothing else, COVID has taught extremists how better to prioritize their hatreds. They’ve learned the long game. After all, why murder a poor fellow just for gussling a long rope of jazz from a big happy penis when extortion/blackmail can provide both a steadily reliable stream of money on the side and suck the very life out of the deviant’s soul, simultaneously!

On the surface, sure, everything looked so Fantasy Island meets Finding Nemo, yet one never shook the feeling that something just wasn’t quite, well, sane. Case in point: My dear friend Tasha, and I met an erudite gay couple who’d jetted over for a quick holiday from Abu Dhabi, where they resided as “roommates” in one of the city’s premier hotel residences. The elder of the two — when faced with the sudden decree that every guest would now have to take yet another COVID test within 72 hours prior to their scheduled departures, suggested that every test would return with a false positive forcing us all to stay another 14 days. Happily his accusations didn’t play out. In fact, within a sea of otherwise unanimously negative test results, only one guest on the island’s entire roster received a positive. (I’ll give you three guesses who, and the first two don’t count.) So take your unrevealed thrills where you can find them, bois, and enjoy your summer, wherever your paradisical, teetering-tottering stumbles may take you. Yes, here’s to you, Rona: Bottom’s up . . . BITCH!

— Howard Lewis Russell

Got a question about forbidden love, jungle lust, tropical taboos or anything else Howard can offer his torpid take on? Email him at AskHoward@dallasvoice.com

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Black Lives Matter at JR’s

Bowser, Aaron & Adam at The Balcony Club

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PUZZLE

Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom

Solution on Page 24

Across
1 Nutty as a fruitcake
2 Straight AIDS victim Arthur
3 Bitch botherer
4 Agee of the Amazin’ Mets
5 Remarkable hole
6 Playgr
7 Precious stones
8 Where space ships start
9 Sink-trap shape
10 Slang for a small member
11 Poet Angelou
12 Farmer’s tool
13 Drag queen Gene
14 Northern capital
15 Geometry calculations
16 Simba’s love, on Broadway
17 Start of a quote by Ma in Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom
18 Davis of King
19 Voyeur’s confession
20 Petticoat junctions?
21 Taxpayer’s ID
22 Cover for head or shoulders
23 W words in an analogy
24 Carpenter’s connector
25 One place to stick it
26 Witherspoon of Big Little Lies
27 Ethiopia’s Selassie
28 California middle name
29 Claim 9 inches online, say
30 Asp secretion for Cleopatra
31 Gone with the Wind guy
32 Rock-bottom
33 Pol in the Bears’ hometown
34 Home st. of Jim Nabors
35 The Continent, to Britten
36 Mardi Gras crowd, e.g.
37 Perlman of Cheers
38 Debtor’s slips
39 End of the quote
40 Dallas setting
41 Eat it
42 Titanic, e.g.
43 Old Russian despots
44 Straight to ___
45 The ____ Love of R.E.M.
46 Half a fly?
47 Female hormone
48 Robert of Camelot
49 Like a metrosexual
50 Top floors
51 Drag queen Gene
52 Leave as is
53 Part of a drag queen’s wig
54 End of the quote
55 lawrence of Arabia director
56 They’re performing, in Fame
57 Old Russian despots
58 Balkan native
59 DeLaria of comedy
60 Hit the road
61 TV singing competition
62 Hit the road
63 ___ of Eden
64 Beach birds
65 Muse to John Boswell
66 They’re performing, in Fame
67 Old Russian despots
68 Balkan native

Down
1 Umlaut pair
2 Straight AIDS victim Arthur
3 Bitch botherer
4 Agee of the Amazin’ Mets
5 It’s stimulated by Bernstein
6 Playground retort
7 Precious stones
8 Where space ships start
9 Sink-trap shape
10 Slang for a small member
11 Poet Angelou
12 Farmer’s tool
13 Bellow in the library?
14 Lawrence of Arabia director
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Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom

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