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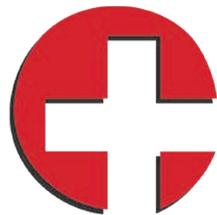
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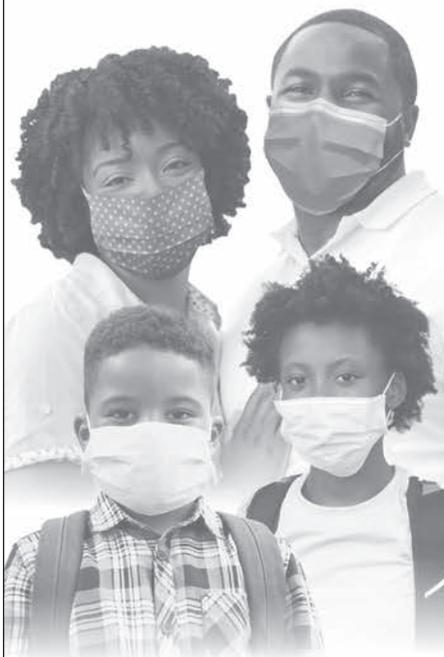
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Bites from our blog

WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com



Megan Thomas

DPD introducing new liaison officer

The Dallas Police Department Office of Community Affairs announced Thursday that Officer Megan Thomas will be the department's new LGBTQ+ Liaison. She replaces Officer Chelsea Geist, who is returning to patrol.

DPD is holding a Meet & Greet event on Wednesday, June 9, from 6-7 p.m. at the Oak Lawn Branch of the Dallas Public Library, 4100 Cedar Springs Road. No registration is necessary to attend, and light refreshments will be provided. For more information call 214-671-4045.

Watch for an interview profiling Officer Thomas in Dallas Voice soon.

— Tammye Nash

COVID vaccine pop-up will be held in Oak Lawn

Dallas County's health department will hold a pop-up vaccine clinic on Saturday, June 5, from noon-3 p.m. outside the Nelson Tebedo Clinic, 4012 Cedar Springs Road. No appointments are necessary.

You'll have a choice between the Johnson & Johnson and the Pfizer vaccines. Pfizer takes two doses, so county health officials administering the vaccine will schedule a second dose. J&J takes only one dose but doesn't provide quite as much immunity.

Anyone who has not received a vaccine or who needs a second dose of Pfizer is welcome to stop by. If you have questions about the vaccine, feel free to stop by.

Vaccines are free.

— David Taffet

Turtle Creek Chorale sings out- side QAnon convention hotel



A group of the Turtle Creek Chorale members and other community singers gathered across the street from the Omni Hotel in downtown Dallas last weekend where members of QAnon were holding for their first national convention.

Although the hotel is connected to the Dallas Convention Center, that facility was not available for the group to use. Initially the group was set to hold its meetings a few blocks away at Gilley's, but when Gilley's canceled, the group moved its meetings to Eddie Deen's Ranch in Deep Ellum.

QAnon is the conspiracy group that claims sex trafficking pedophiles conspired against Trump and stole the election. Members of the group participated in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

"We're here as a peaceful musical protest," said TCC Artistic Director Sean Baugh. "There's enough screaming going on down the road for all of us." The performance lasted an hour

and included songs like "Let There Be Peace on Earth," "Lift Every Voice and Sing," "Take A Stand," "We Are Rising Up" and more.

— David Taffet

Second Thought Theatre announces '21 season

Second Thought Theatre this week announced plans for its 2021 season, the first under new artistic director Carson McCain.

Second Thought's 2021 season begins with *Goat Song*, specifically written for the pandemic by playwright Matt Harmon. Next up is *Libra Season* by playwright and actor, E.E. Adams, which was commissioned and developed under Second Thought's S.T.E.P. program earlier this year. And closing out the season is the world premiere of *Sweetpea* by Janielle Kastner.

For more information or to purchase season subscriptions or single tickets for *Goat Song*, visit SecondThoughtTheatre.com. All unused STT 2020 subscription tickets will be eligible for use during STT's 2021 season.

— Tammye Nash

Demi Lovato, Trixie Mattel among emcees for YouTube Pride 2021 livestream

YouTube Originals on Wednesday, June 2, added Tyler Oakley to the lineup for its YouTube Pride 2021, a multi-hour livestream event celebrating the LGBTQ community that will be broadcast on Friday, June 25.

The virtual celebration will feature celebrity emcees Demi Lovato, Olly Alexander with Mawaan Rizwan, Trixie Mattel and Daniel Howell — each hosting their Pride party from their respective YouTube channels. The livestream will include musical performances, giving challenges, special guests, live moments and more, and viewers will be encouraged to help raise funds for the The Trevor Project in the U.S. and act in the U.K.

— Tammye Nash

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Addressing vomiting, diarrhea in your pet

WOOF! DR. JOSH TALKS TO THE ANIMALS

Bienvenidos, Dallas Voice readers! I certainly hope all is well, as it seems we are finally moving towards some sort of normalcy. Today I am discussing the topic of vomiting and diarrhea. How fun, right? We all feel horrible when we see our babies not feeling well, especially if they have the pukes and the runs at the same time.

First, I want to make a point that “vomiting” may not always be actual vomiting. A dog or cat can be regurgitating or having a productive cough, which many times is confused with vomiting. Another common confusion that I see is that parents may say their baby has diarrhea, but it may be soft stools and not actual liquid diarrhea.

When talking to your veterinary team, it is important to describe what you are seeing as best as possible. You can also consider taking a picture or a video of what you are seeing, which can be helpful in determining what may be going on with your baby.

While it can be normal for a dog or cat to vomit or have soft stools once in a blue moon, it is important to be vigilant. And if you are concerned, or if your fur baby seems to be not OK, then to take action right away.

Based on age, vomiting and/or diarrhea can be caused by quite a few different things. These causes include the following parvovirus, intestinal parasites, ingestion of foreign material/object, toxicity, congenital disease, organ failure/damage (including liver and kidney disease), pancreatitis, metabolic/systemic diseases like Addison’s disease, inflammatory diseases like IBS, certain bacterial/viral infections, changes in diet/treats or poor quality of food, stress, food allergies, reactions to medications/supplements/vaccines, motion sickness and, sadly, different types of cancer as well.

In order to identify the likely cause of vomiting and/or diarrhea, your veterinarian may recommend tests ranging from very basic to potentially more advanced, based on multi-



Dr. Josh Sanabrias
Contributing Columnist

ple factors. These tests may include fecal analysis, blood work, radiographs and parvo testing. If warranted, the doctor may also recommend tests like abdominal ultrasound, endoscopy, MRI or CT scan, food allergy testing (or prescription food trial), biopsy or even surgical intervention for exploratory and potential sample collection.

Needless to say, not all tests are applicable to every case, and often only the most basic tests are needed to identify the cause of the problem.

As expected, treatment options vary widely. Sometimes all your fur baby needs is just some injections and medications to go home with. However, there are times that hospitalization and even surgeries may be needed as part of the treatment. Some treatments may be needed long term or even for life. It truly depends on what caused the gastrointestinal disease and the severity of the issue, among other factors.

It is important to remember that while sometimes it may not seem that a couple episodes of vomiting or diarrhea are all that bad, it can certainly be correlated to significant disease — and vice versa, too.

When taking your loved fur baby to your primary doctor or the emergency hospital, make sure you have all the information available for the visit, as this will assist your medical team in finding out the cause of the issue. If your fur baby ingested anything that could have caused the vomiting and/or diarrhea, try to figure out what it was

and how much they ingested, and if there is a label, take a picture of the label or bring the container with you to the visit. You may also consider contacting the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435; they are available 24/7.

Prevention is vital in avoiding vomiting and diarrhea with our babies. Always make sure your home is safe for them and make sure they have no access to things they can chew on or swallow that would make them ill. That includes picking up clothes from the floor if your fur baby is known to chew on or swallow fabric. Also beware of exposed electric cords, as some babies (especially kitties) can be tempted to chewing on them.

It is VERY important to avoid taking your puppy to public areas where there are other dogs that may not be fully vaccinated, since puppy vaccines are typically administered every three weeks until they reach four months of age, so they would be susceptible to catching something from an unvaccinated animal.

Unless it is necessary or recommended by your veterinarian, I suggest you avoid changing brands of food or treats cold turkey. And lastly, please understand that people, social media and some breeders or pet store team

members may not have the best advice for your babies. Follow your doctor’s recommendations instead.

Let me finish this month by wishing all of you a very HAPPY Pride Month. I can only imagine how many people out there are not out and proud for different reasons. If you are reading this, and you are one of them, let me say I personally know how difficult it is to come out and be rejected. I even “lost” my family, just because I am gay.

I cannot hide the reality that there are challenges for us, but do not let these challenges stop you from being who you truly are and loving yourself. We only live once, and we deserve to be happy, even with the struggles. If you need help, seek professional advice. If you are not out and need support, you can always reach out to me, and I can at least share with you my struggles and how I overcame them.

Do not give up, and be PROUD of who you are!

Thank you all for taking your time to read my monthly column! Abrazos!

Dr. Josh owns Isla Veterinary Boutique Hospital, 14380 Marsh Lane, Ste. 110 in Addison (next to Tom Thumb). Call him at 972-738-1111 or visit IslaVet.com.

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No kink at Pride? I don't think so!

As a leatherman, I am not surprised at the recent kerfuffle over kink at Pride. The "A Gays" and others have long tried to make Pride a heteronormative-friendly event at the expense of the many subcultures that make our queer community what it is — queer!

I remember these same arguments from the early days of the parades, before the Tavern Guild took it over. I remember how the question of how we wanted to represent ourselves to the community as a whole always caused rancor. Leather, guys and gals in revealing outfits, drag queens — we were all once considered a "problem" for Pride, at least here in Dallas.

Luckily, those heated discussions never kept the parade from being a celebration of our sexuality and our cultures. At least, they didn't until recently.

I remember going to a planning meeting for the parade several years ago on behalf of a company I worked for that wanted to participate. We were told the parade was going to be "family friendly" that year, and most people there were caught by surprise by the announcement.

Family friendly? Exactly whose family were they talking about?

My family includes leathermen and leather dykes, transwomen and transmen, human puppies, daddies, drag queens — and more. We celebrate and



Hardy Haberman
Flagging Left

openly proclaim our sexuality as an expression of our queerness. We have one day a year when we don't have to wait until after dark to don leather and strut our

stuff.

The idea that we would have to "tone it down" for the benefit of tourists who brought their kids to the parade to catch beads was — and is — abhorrent to me.

Why can't those folks use the parade as a teaching moment for their youngsters? Why can't they let the kids know that not everyone looks like Mommy and Daddy? They should take the parade as a chance to tell their kids that the world is far more interesting and colorful than the homogenized myth that many straight folk live in.

If you are afraid of the questions your kids will ask after seeing a few guys in speedos or leather or drag, then maybe you need to brush up on your parenting skills. Maybe you need to keep your sheltered children at home. Frankly, if I had seen a Pride parade as a child, I

would have had a much easier time coming out as queer, minus a lot of the guilt and shame I felt at being different.

As has been said many times, Stonewall was a riot. For three days, queers fought the police with rocks and bottles. And while they did it, they danced in the streets: "We are the Stonewall girls!"

"We wear our hair in curls!"

"We wear no underwear!"

"We show our pubic hair!"

"We wear our dungarees

"Above our nelly knees!"

The queers at Stonewall sang that as they danced a kick-line in front of the police.

In that same spirit, I firmly believe Pride should continue that rebellious and in-your-face celebration of what makes us different. It is not our jobs or our ethnicity or our family background. It is our queerness and our sexuality that distinguish us from everyone else.



This Pride, embrace that spirit and include everyone who makes the LGBTQ+ community the rainbow that we are. ■

Hardy Haberman is a longtime local LGBT activist and a board member of the Woodhull Freedom Alliance. His blog is at Dungeon-Diary.blogspot.com.



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VOICES

OPINIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

The Gen Z identity crisis

Members of a new generation are learning to create themselves

The quarter life crisis is coming earlier and earlier these days for the 25 and under crowd. However, unlike their older counterparts, the question up for debate isn't about career choices or family planning but something far closer to home: gender identity.

Over the past year, Gen Z-ers have taken to TikTok to discuss any, and every, major or minor life crisis, and the topic of gender and sexuality has not been forgotten in the minds of our youth. Born into the era of AI and "augmented reality," Gen Z has used the principles of their time to inspire the realities of their own more personal dimensions.

Inspired by modern feminism and gender theory, gender has become more and more of an elusive construct in the minds of our youth. This surgency of public accessibility to modern theory has further opened the doors of gender fluidity and gender non-conformation, which trailblazers such as Marsha P. Johnson sacrificed their lives to crack open. And it is allowing younger and more tech-involved individuals a chance to step into the footsteps others have left for them, and in doing so further push the boundaries of what it means to be a young, queer individual in America.

The lines between what can and what cannot exist have become unimaginatively blurred in the modern age, and the same is true for the modern individual. In a day and age where reality can be altered and augmented in whatever way you please, so can the other aspects of our lived experience — especially when it comes to topics as fluid and individualist as gender expression and sexuality.

My own decision to further push the boundaries of my gender identity came at a time in my life when I was beginning



Maxwell Poyser
Special Contributor

to start over. All of the doors which I had opened in the past seemed to be simultaneously closing around me, and it was in that moment

that I was able to accept and embrace the person who I wanted to become going forward. And my gender identity and expression very much played a part of that.

Image is not everything. But I will not and do not deny that, at a first glance, it is one of the only things — one of the only impressions — that people have of you. Clothes speak for you; your skin tone speaks for you; your hair texture speaks for you. And in the age of the internet, where your personality is displayed for others in 150 characters or less, labels speak for you. A label as simple as a set of pronouns or a more detailed account of your gender expression or sexuality can be a way for you to speak yourself into being within the world around you.

My pronouns, my labels will never be able to encompass the entirety of my being. But they are a starting point, one that is important to me and to a number of other young people in this world.

In 2021 there are few to no limitations to what the world can become for the individual; we are living in an age where reality is highly flexible — and the same has become true for gender identity. ■

Maxwell Poyser is the head of marketing and media at Fern Connections, an LGBTQIA- and ally-focused matchmaking company, and the voice behind the company's blog, *The Dating Dispatch*.

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TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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Even as the numbers of people vaccinated against SARS CoV-2 are going up, and the number of COVID-19 cases are coming down, organizers for Dallas Pride felt it was too soon to return to a full-blown in-person Pride celebration this month. Encouraging thousands of North Texans to pack themselves into Fair Park for a music festival or a parade, no matter how much fun that sounded like, would not be the responsible thing to do, organizers believed.

At the same time, they knew that the community wanted — needed — more than just another virtual event. As the world was slowly returning to some semblance of pre-COVID normality, so should Pride.

And so was born The Dallas Pride Miller Lite Showcase, presented by Smirnoff. It is two full nights of entertainment, including musical acts, drag and comedy, happening tonight and tomorrow night — Friday and Saturday, June 4-5 — in the Coliseum at Fair Park.

“Dallas Pride is planned months in advance. When those decisions [on what kind of celebration to have in 2021] were made, a smaller, scaled-down celebration made much more sense. Then we went to two nights instead of one to allow for even more people to join us,” explained Jaron Turnbow, Dallas Pride’s executive director.

“While there is no parade or festival this year, we are glad to be able to do something in person to feature excellent North Texas talent,” he added. “You won’t want to miss these shows!”

The shows were originally slated to be held in The Bandshell at Fair Park but were moved earlier this week due to



Jaron Turnbow

weather forecasts predicting inclement weather. “We’ve been closely monitoring the forecast, and there is a chance of rain,” Turnbow said. “We didn’t want to take the chance of our attendees and performers getting wet, so we’ve moved the event to the Coliseum.”

Drag queen/activist/fundraiser Marsha Dimes is mistress of ceremonies. Friday night’s lineup includes The Uptown Players, Spectrum Ensemble, Jada Pinkett Fox, IDT Band, Raquel Blake, The Roommates, Bleach, Daphne Rio and Mulan.

Performing Saturday night will be Kennedy Davenport, the cast of The Rose Room, The Fly Queens, Sisters-In-Action, Sister Helen Holy, The Flannel Tones, Anton Shaw and her Band, Niecee X and country singer Kameron Ross.

“We’re looking forward to these events and the great entertainment we have planned,” Turnbow said. “We are extremely grateful to our sponsors, supporters and volunteers who have helped make this happen.”

“As you know, Dallas Pride is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and celebrating our LGBTQ community, and after everything our community has gone through with the pandemic and weather, winter storms, etc., it’s time to share an evening together and celebrate who we are,” he added.

Doors open each night at 7 p.m., and the shows begin at 8 p.m. Remember that all health and safety rules mandated

by Fair Park remain in effect, including wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

And if you still aren’t ready to attend an in-person performance, sign on at 7:30 p.m. to watch the shows stream live at DallasPride.org.

More ways to celebrate

Pride, of course, doesn’t end on Saturday night. There are many, MANY more ways to show your true colors and celebrate our community, throughout the month of June and beyond. Go to Page 88 in this issue of Dallas Voice to check out the Pride Agenda, a special calendar in this week to find details Pride events throughout June and the rest of 2021. But keep reading right here for more notable events and efforts honoring and celebrating LGBTQ Pride.

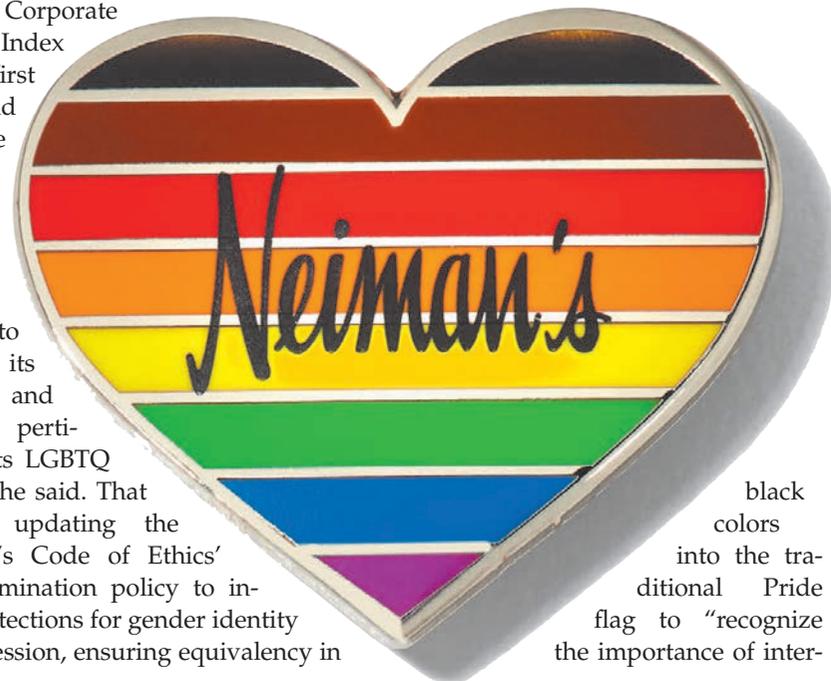
Neiman Marcus shows its Pride

Neiman Marcus Group, headquartered right here in Dallas is stepping up its efforts to honor its LGBTQ employees and the community this Pride month, according to John Walls, director of corporate communications. NMG is participating in the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index for the first time and using the national benchmarking tool on LGBTQ equality to improve its policies and benefits pertinent to its LGBTQ workers, he said. That includes updating the company’s Code of Ethics’ nondiscrimination policy to include protections for gender identity and expression, ensuring equivalency in

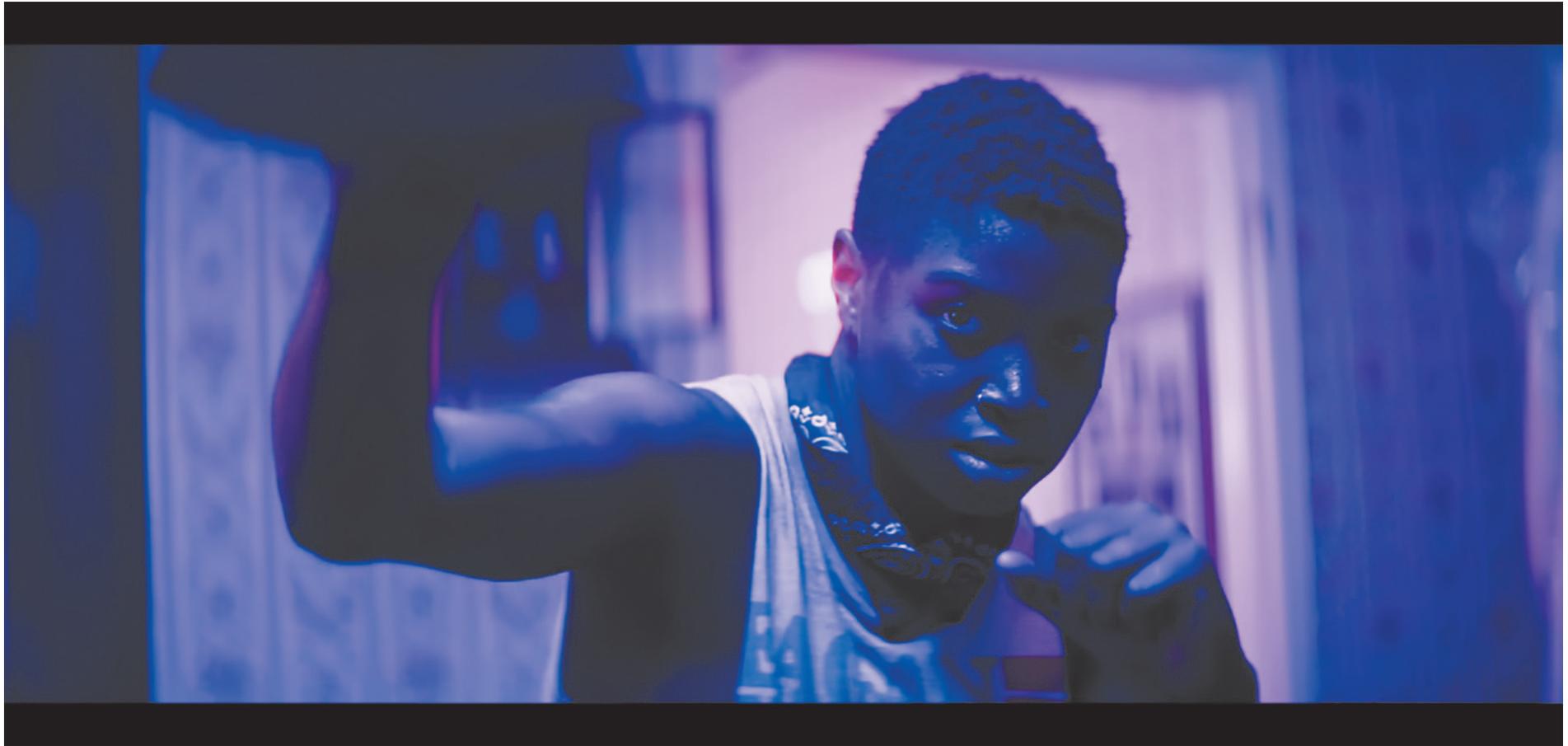
medical and soft benefits for same and opposite-sex spouses and domestic partners, including an insurance plan that explicitly affirms equal health coverage for transgender individuals, adopting gender transition guidelines with supportive restroom, dress code and documentation guidance for the workplace, creating a new LinkedIn Learning pathway to help associates increase their understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace and access resources, and partnering with Reaching Out MBA to strengthen the company’s efforts for LGBTQ workers, especially in the executive development program.

NMG is also shoring up its philanthropic support and outreach by making donations to HRC, The Trevor Project and True Colors United.

Walls said that nearly all 37 Neiman Marcus stores and both Bergdorf Goodman stores will display Pride support windows, in-store visuals and curated product displays. The stores are fundraising for the Human Rights Campaign through point-of-sale asks and the sale of 1,000 limited-edition “More Colors, More Pride” lapel pins online and in 10 select stores, including the one in NorthPark Mall in Dallas. The “More Colors, More Pride” pins incorporate brown and



black colors into the traditional Pride flag to “recognize the importance of inter-



DMA - A still from *Innocent Boy*. (Courtesy Brock Cravy. AIDS Quilt, right)

sectional identities [and] including LGBTQ people of color.

Geoffroy van Raemdonck, NMG's first openly LGBTQ CEO and director, will also be taking as many opportunities as he can, Walls said, to "speak about his journey towards unlocking his full and authentic self as an LGBTQ+ leader," including hosting a virtual event with Andrew Gelwicks, author of *The Queer Advantage* on Wednesday, June 9 at 3 p.m.

Pride Party+

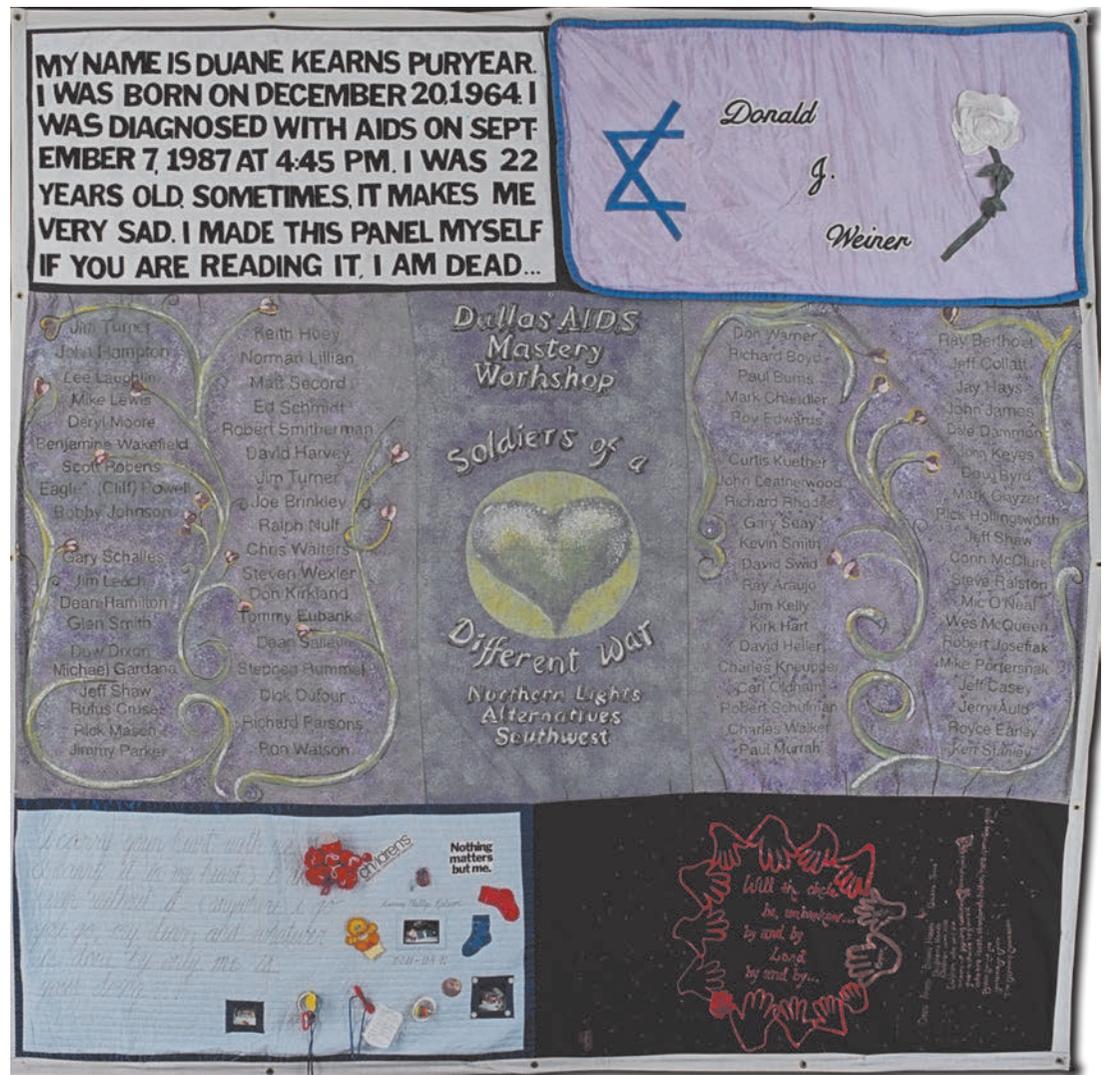
Pride Returns to the Dallas Arts District this year, as the Arts District partners with The Crow Museum of Asian Art of The University of Texas at Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art, The Nasher Sculpture Center and the AT&T Performing Arts for a super weekend celebration.

The party kicks off virtually on Friday, June 18, when Terry Loftis serves as MC for a night of music and performances featuring Miss Dallas Southern Pride Porsche Paris, Dezi 5 and the Dancing Doll of Dallas herself, Miss Southern Pride Kennedy Davenport.

On Saturday, June 19, Pop Up Performances will take over the Sammons Park Community Stage/ AT&T Performing Arts Center with entertainment by The Uptown Players, Bandan Koro, Dezi 5, Artitude resident installations artists Jose Villalobos from San Antonio and Josue Ramirez from the Rio Grande Valley and, once again, Kennedy Davenport.

The Crow Museum of Asian Art and the UT at Dallas School of Arts, Technology and Emerging Communications present an installation featuring three sections from the AIDS Memorial Quilt in the museum's Gallery III, 2010 Flora St. Two of the sections will include panels memorializing those in the Asian communities who have died of HIV/AIDS, and a third including a panel memorializing Dallas activist Duane Kearns Puryear. Admission is free, and the quilt sections will be on display through June 30.

Dallas Museum of Art hosts a screening of the short horror film In-



Party on video

PRIDE

DVtv will recap Pride and more with video set for Monday

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

DVtv hosts Brad Pritchett and Regina Lyn are set to visit the official Pride celebration at Fair Park on June 5 along with filmmaker Israel Luna for a Pride Party video featuring highlights of the event at Fair Park and more.

Pritchett described the video they'll be making as a recap of the festivities at the highest level; if you were there, you'll see what you enjoyed most, and if you weren't there, you'll see what you

missed. He also called it Dallas Voice's own digital Pride celebration, with special features available nowhere else.

The video will highlight the hard work Pride organizers did to put on the event, and the crew expects to interview Dallas Pride Executive Director Jaron Turnbow, Pritchett said. Pritchett said he wants to know how the Dallas Pride committee developed and staged an event as the pandemic unfolded around them.

It will feature an exclusive celebrity interview and breaking news from community organizations, including Black Tie Dinner.

Then, Pritchett said, he and Lyn will take viewers behind the scenes as performers rehearse, stage and prepare for their Fair Park Coliseum debuts. "And we'll have a moment with our sponsor, CAN Community Health," he added.

And, of course, Pritchett said, he plans



Brad Pritchett, left, and Regina Lyn

to spend time with the community enjoying the evening.

"I am vaccinated and beyond thrilled to be hosting one of the first major events with this DVtv Pride special," Pritchett declared.

Dallas Voice Publisher and DVtv Executive Producer Leo Cusimano said, "This epic show will encapsulate not only Dallas Pride, but Pride that we celebrate all month long and around the year."

He said he hopes this virtual show will help connect the community.

"We are very fortunate to have award-winning filmmaker Israel Luna producing the show," he said. "It's always fun to see the talented Brad and Regina hosting anything for us."

Cusimano encourages people to go and enjoy Pride on Saturday and then on Monday, kick back and enjoy the highlights on Dallas Voice's YouTube channel.

DVtv can be found at tinyurl.com/f5drr-b2z.



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Dallas Pride flags fly over city facilities

PRIDE



Mica England fought discrimination at DPD with a lawsuit that resulted in the hiring of other LGBTQ cops

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Dallas city Pride flags on Tuesday, June 1, were raised over Love Field, Dallas Police Headquarters and City Hall where they will fly throughout the month of June. Last June, the Dallas City Council voted to approve a design of the city seal over a Pride flag as the official Dallas Pride flag. Their vote included the provision that it would fly over Dallas City Hall every June.

Last month, the council extended the provision to allow the Dallas city Pride flag to fly over any city-owned or -operated facility.

Dallas is the only city with its own official Pride flag.

Most poignant of the flag-raising ceremonies was when the flag was hoisted over Dallas Police Headquarters. About 100 uniformed officers participated in the event.

The event was noteworthy because of the past relationship the LGBTQ community had with DPD. In 1990, Mica



Mica England

England sued the state of Texas, the city of Dallas and then-Dallas Police Chief Mack Vines after the Dallas Police Department refused to consider her application to become a sworn officer because she is a lesbian.

The police department's anti-gay-and-lesbian policy was based on Section 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code, which prohibited private, consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same gender. Violation of 21.06 was a Class C misdemeanor equivalent to a minor traffic violation. But the police department decided it was enough reason to prevent someone from being hired.

England was qualified for the job, having completed 72 hours of college credits toward a major in criminal justice.



Dallas Police Chief Eddie Garcia, center at podium, was surrounded by DPD officers as the Dallas Pride flag was raised over police headquarters. (David Taffet/Dallas Voice)

England applied multiple times. In 1987, she failed a polygraph test. She was disqualified because she lied when she said no when asked if she was a lesbian. The next year she applied again and was disqualified when she was honest during her polygraph when asked if she was a lesbian.

In 1992, the trial court ruled in England's favor, and the judge declared 21.06 unconstitutional. But the judge also dismissed the state as a defendant. So everyone appealed. The city and police chief appealed the ruling on 21.06, and England appealed the dismissal of the state.

The Appeals Court upheld the lower court ruling on the sodomy law being unconstitutional, but said that it could not rule on a criminal statute in a civil case. The city and DPD appealed to the Texas Supreme Court, but that appeal came two days after the window for appeal had closed. So the appellate court ruling stood, and the Dallas Police Department began hiring gay and lesbian cops. (Well, to be clear, there were already plenty of lesbian and gay cops on the force, but they were in stealth mode.)

But DPD still rejected England's application on a technicality.

Even though it had already been declared unconstitutional three times — the first time coming in 1982 in Dallas case *Baker v. Wade* and third time by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003 — the law remains on the books. So far four out lesbians have served as LGBTQ police liaisons. At least one lesbian has risen to the level of major. Another was named officer of the year in 2015.

Now, throughout the month of June, the Dallas city Pride flag will fly over

the building that once refused to employ LGBTQ police officers.

In addition to flying over DPD headquarters, a city Pride flag has been raised over Dallas Love Field and at Dallas City Hall. Love Field's Director of Aviation Mark Deubner noted that 5 million people are expected to travel through the city-owned airport during June and will see the flag. Because the ceremony was held on a traffic island surrounded by cars entering parking garage C and those proceeding to the terminal, only a limited number of people attended in person.

The ceremony to raise the flag at Dallas City Hall attracted most of the Dallas City Council. This is the second year the city Pride flag will be raised over the plaza but the first year it will fly for the entire month.

Before raising the flag, Mayor Pro Tem Adam Medrano distributed three awards on behalf of the Mayor's LGBT Task Force, which he chairs.

The Spirit of Equality Ally Award was given to Councilman Adam Bazaldua, who has been a reliable and active ally on the council working closely with the three out council members.

The annual Leadership Award went to Ahmad Goree and Kirk Myers. Goree was honored for his work and advocacy for the LGBT community with resources during COVID-19 and his continued behind the scenes support with other social issues this community faces. Myers was recognized for his work as founder and CEO of Abounding Prosperity Inc. and lead organizer of Dallas Southern Pride.

During the pandemic, API provided COVID-19 care kits, gift cards, rental assistance and other aide to the LGBT community, API's South Dallas neighborhood and beyond. ■



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TEXAS LEGISLATURE



Texas state Rep. Jessica Gonzales speaks during a news conference in Austin early Monday, May 31, after House Democrats pulled off a dramatic, last-ditch walkout and blocked one of the most restrictive voting bills in the U.S. from passing before a midnight deadline. (Acacia Coronado/Associated Press)

Democrats turn to delay tactics, breaking quorum to stop anti-trans, voter suppression bills as the 87th Texas Legislature comes to an end

JAMES RUSSELL | Contributing Writer
James.Journo@gmail.com

What's the difference between the dystopian *Purge* movie and television franchise — where a totalitarian government legalizes crime, including murder, one day a year with the goal

of decimating the poor — and the Texas Legislature?

Texas Legislators get 140 days every other year where the people in *Purge* only get one day a year to do those things. Also unlike in *Purge*, where civilians hide their faces with masks as they commit their crimes, legislators don't mind showing their faces while they wreak carnage.

Thankfully, on May 31, Texas' constitutionally-mandated purge for 2021 has finally come to an end.

To be clear, the 87th Texas Legislature was chaotic — in some ways, unintentionally so. Two events worsened the situation:

Only a few days before the Republican-dominated chambers gavelled in,

DONE, Page 37

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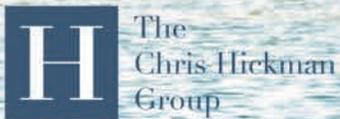
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Need a parade?

PRIDE



Former Northhaven pastor the Rev. Marti Soper and her husband led the 2020 parade at the church. (David Taffet/Dallas Voice)

Northaven Church is holding a safe parade, picnic and Dallas Pride viewing party

For most of the LGBTQ community, Pride means a parade. Dallas Pride is putting on a wonderful event this weekend at Fair Park, but the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade won't return until next year.

So, do you need a parade? If so, then Northaven Church has you covered.

For the second year, Northaven is staging a parade — small, socially distanced and safe. And everyone's invited.

The parade takes place on and around Northaven's property at 11211 Preston Road on Saturday, June 5. Gather at 4 p.m. in the south parking lot off Preston Road, where participants will decorate their cars for Pride.

Then the parade steps off promptly whenever all the cars participating are decorated and ready to go.

According to Bob Roton, one of the organizers, the Rev. Ann Willet will lead

the parade in a red convertible.

"We love celebrating Pride," he added.

The route is short — from the south lot, around the building to the north lot, exiting onto Northaven Road and down Preston Road back into the South lot. And last year, because everyone was having so much fun, they drove the route a second time.

While last year's parade was small — fewer than 50 cars — they stopped traffic for a few minutes on Preston Road. And isn't that a goal of Pride — making others take notice?

"Last year, we wanted to do what we could in a safe environment," Roton said. "We came together — masked and distanced — and did what we could safely do during a tough time."

He said he is excited that Congregation Beth El Binah, which also meets at Northaven, would be joining this year.

Bring a picnic supper and stick around after the parade to enjoy dinner on Northaven's shaded grounds. And, finally, at 8 p.m., they'll watch a stream of the performance of Dallas Pride at Fair Park, which will be projected on the building's south wall.

— David Taffet

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More than rainbows in June

NEWS ANALYSIS

Marketing to the LGBTQ community should extend beyond slapping on a rainbow label one month a year

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

In time for Pride Month, Kellogg's has released a new cereal of rainbow-colored hearts and edible glitter. Also this month, Lego is offering, for the first time, Pride blocks that include the trans colors and extended Pride colors with human figures that snap into the rainbow assortment of blocks.

But how much did Lego spend advertising its new blocks? Not a penny on local or national media. Not one cent spent shipping samples. They just emailed a press release with one picture that both gay and straight media jumped on.

Even if the LGBTQ community can't figure out what to do with those Legos, at least the company has riled up people like Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Shame on the LGBTQ community, he wrote in a very long editorial, for demanding this. I don't remember demanding rainbow-colored Legos or rainbow-colored breakfast cereal. But, apparently, Mohler thinks I did.

Kellogg's new cereal and Lego's new Pride blocks are the latest examples of corporate rainbow-washing — the term for when, come June, corporations suddenly discover the LGBTQ market and sponsor a big community event once a year, never to be heard from the rest of the year. Or they release a rainbow product — or the same-old product with a rainbow label — in June, and then we never hear from them again.

Several years ago, both American Airlines and Southwest Airlines showed a real commitment to their transgender employees and customers when their CEOs traveled to Austin to testify against the bathroom bill. They didn't do it to attract customers. In fact, they

actually may have turned off more of their customers than not. But they were committed to doing what was right no matter the consequences.

Absolut has shown a commitment to the LGBTQ community by promoting their rainbow bottles starting decades ago when advertising in LGBTQ media wasn't popular. And it's not something they do only in June.

Target has a large selection of Pride merchandise in select stores. But then, Target has been sponsoring both national and local LGBTQ events for years, as well as placing ads in national and local media.

The Texas LGBT Chambers of Commerce recently held a discussion on rainbow washing, and among the speakers was UT Austin lecturer Valerie Salinas. She described rainbow-washing as — 50 years after Stonewall — companies joining the disingenuous advertising bandwagon. And even if they make a large, one-time donation to a national organization, their donations are for publicity, not because they have any commitment to the LGBTQ community.

Salinas said she's more interested in whether a company she's doing business with is a safe place for its LGBTQ employees. And she recommends that a company that's truly interested in whether their company is a good place for LGBTQ employees to work should simply go to their LGBTQ employees and ask them.

Katie Martell, a Boston-based author and producer of *Woke Washed*, said it is safer than ever now for a company to take a stance for LGBTQ equality. Producing a Pride product or label was braver, she said, when Absolut was the only one doing it. When a company comes out with a Pride product in time to market throughout June, the LGBTQ community has simply become the "minority of the month,"

she said.

"Rainbow-washing creates the illusion of progress," Martell said.

But, she continued, she's actually not sure exactly where she stands on rainbow-washing. Sure, she's glad to see money going to organizations like GLAAD, Trevor Project and HRC, the biggest national recipients of rainbow-washed money. Martell said she enjoys seeing the rainbow-washing products — even if they are inedible products like rainbow-colored Doritos that Plano-based Frito Lay introduced at the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade several years ago but now are only available in Mexico.

But Martell understands disingenuous marketing. And checking a company's HRC Corporate Equality Index rating may not tell the whole story. She referred to a story about a gay Goldman Sachs employee who was not included in a conference call with a client because he was "too gay." Meanwhile, Goldman Sachs retains its 100 percent HRC CEI rating.

And how much of the rainbow-washed merchandise is manufactured in a place where it's illegal to be gay or where LGBTQ persecution is commonplace?

Last year, Donald Trump took advantage of Pride month to introduce a rainbow-colored MAGA hat in its online store. You can give him credit for acknowledging

his LGBTQ supporters, or you can laugh at the idea of a Pride MAGA hat considering all the assaults on LGBTQ progress that happened throughout his administration.

And it's not just in the U.S. In 2019, the British store Marks & Spencer added to their menu a lettuce, guacamole, bacon and tomato sandwich — an LGBT sandwich — and wrapped it in rainbow packaging for Pride Month. They donated a portion of the proceeds to an organization helping homeless LGBTQ youth. But did the 10,000 British pounds the company donated really make a difference to a company that made an 84-million-pound profit? Or was that less than the company would have spent on a few TV commercials or an ad in a few LGBTQ magazines?

Martell said not only is she unsure exactly where she stands on rainbow-washing, she also isn't sure exactly where to draw the line. But she doesn't want to discourage companies from jumping in and starting to support the LGBTQ community in some way. And Pride month is a good place to start. Still, we'll see if rainbow Legos actually become available in stores and remain on the market in July. No other product would be given just four weeks to succeed in the market.

"We're nowhere near done," Martell said about the progress the LGBTQ community has made. "We still need a Pride parade." ■



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SCAN ME



Trick the Mini-Fest and an art installation sponsored by The House of Rebirth honoring North Texas transgender activists, originally scheduled for this weekend on Cedar Springs Road, have been rescheduled due to weather.

Updated information on both will be announced soon.

nocent Boy, about a trans boy in Texas “caught between a cowboy’s lustful rage, greed and corruption.” The screening features an extended cut and behind-the-scenes interviews, plus a Q&A after the screening with director and writer Brock Cravy and cinematographer Karissa Leicht. The screening takes place Sunday, June 20, from 3-4 p.m. at DMA’s Horchow Auditorium. Admission is free but reservations are required.

Nasher Sculpture Center’s App Tour for the most of June will feature artists

on view whose LGBTQ identity has influenced their work, and friends of the Nasher in the LGBTQ community will share insights on works on view.

For more information, visit Dallas ArtsDistrict.org.



Harley’s Big Gay Pride Balcony

Irving resident Harley Gonzalez is known for going all out in decorating the balcony of penthouse, at Alesio Urban Center, 387 W. Fork, for each every holiday. And this year, Pride Month is no exception.

Harley invites visitors to drive by any time between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. between now and June 29 to take a look at “Stand Together With Confidence,” his display inspired by the Black Lives Matter/LGBTQ Pride protests that took place in Dallas in 2020. The display is presented by Unfilteredyou Foundation.

“It was important for me that my design team create a display that would represent the fight for equal rights, and everything the LGBTQ community and the Black community have faced over the years,” Harley said. “What better way to bring awareness to equality than to feature a display that showcases a march towards freedom and raising our voices.”

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Fla. ban in place

NEWS

DeSantis OKs limits on trans athletes

BOBBY CAINA CALVAN | Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida's Republican governor signed a bill June 1 barring transgender girls and women from playing on public school teams intended for student athletes identified as girls at birth, plunging the state into the national culture debate over transgender rights.

"In Florida, girls are going to play girls sports and boys are going to play boys sports," Gov. Ron DeSantis said as he signed the bill into law at a private Christian academy in Jacksonville that would not be subject to the law. "We're going to make sure that that's the reality."

The new law, sure to be challenged as unconstitutional, inflames an already contentious discussion unfolding nationally as Republican-controlled states move to limit the rights of LGBTQ people, whose advocates were especially frustrated that the legislation was signed on the first day of Pride Month.

The NCAA, which oversees college athletics, has said it has "a long-standing policy that provides a more inclusive path for transgender participation in college sports." The NCAA currently requires transgender women to get treatment to lower their testosterone levels before they can compete in women's sports.

When the Florida Legislature was considering the measure in April, the NCAA said it would commit championship games to "locations where hosts can commit to providing an environment that is safe, healthy and free of discrimination."

High-profile athletic events, such as football bowl games and basketball tournaments, generate millions of dollars for local communities.

The measure approved by the GOP-led Legislature takes effect July 1. It says a transgender student athlete can't participate without first showing a birth certificate saying she was identified as a girl when she was born. It's not clear whether athletes must show their birth certificates, or only those whose gender



Activists attend a #ProtectTransKids rally outside Orlando City Hall after Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a ban on transgender girls from competing in girls' and women's sports during a new coronavirus pandemic, June 1, in Orlando, Fla. (Phelan M. Ebenhack/Associated Press)

is questioned.

The proposal allows another student to sue if a school allows a transgender girl or woman to play on a team intended for students identified as female at birth.

The final wording of the "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" stripped away some of its most contentious elements, including a requirement that transgender athletes in high schools and colleges undergo testosterone or genetic testing and submit to having their genitalia examined.

But the legislation signed by the governor advances an underlying principle asserted by supporters: Biological differences make it unfair for athletes identified as boys at birth to compete on teams for girls and women. The law would not bar female athletes from playing on boys or men's teams.

Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David said the new law would not only harm transgender girls. "All Floridians will have to face the consequences of this anti-transgender legislation — including economic harm, expensive taxpayer-funded legal battles, and a tarnished reputation."

Democrats and LGBTQ advocates said the law is discriminatory and will be challenged in court as unconstitutional.

"This is yet another hate-driven attack from the governor and Republican legislators, and it's insulting that they've staged this morning's photo-op on the first day of Pride Month," said state Sen. Shevrin Jones. "At the end of the day, transgender kids are just kids." ■

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Fighting for the foster children

NEWS

Congress members, Family Equality representatives announce upcoming John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Stacey Stevenson, CEO of Family Equality, has announced that U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., will be introducing the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act.

The act, if passed, would prohibit any agency that receives federal money from discriminating against potential foster or adoptive families on the basis of religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. The act would also ban discrimination against foster youth based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

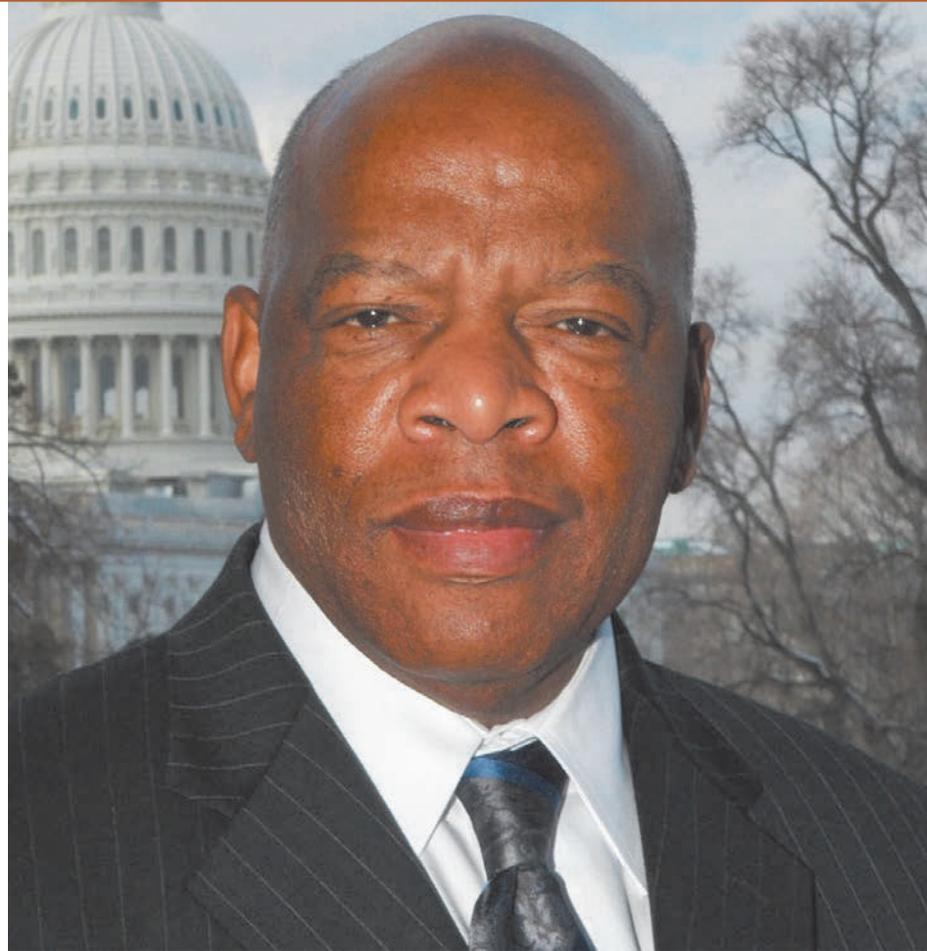
Some states go as far as to ban LGBTQ people from serving as foster parents and from adopting. While that is not true in Texas, legislation is regularly introduced by lawmakers here that would do just that. And a number of agencies in Texas that receive federal funding do refuse to work with potential parents who are LGBTQ or who are not of a particular Christian faith. Others refuse to work with potential parents who are unmarried.

And lots of foster children who are LGBTQ are placed in homes with parents who are hostile to them.

The bill is named after the late Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, who was a sponsor of the original bill. Lewis, a civil rights icon, died of pancreatic cancer last summer, July 17, at the age of 80.

LGBTQ Rep. Angie Craig, D-Minn., said of Lewis, "He and I have something in common — we're both adoptive parents."

Craig said she experienced anti-LGBT discrimination when she and her wife



the late Rep. John Lewis of Georgia,

were trying to adopt. "We had a long, drawn-out legal battle simply because we're lesbian," she said. "For three years we didn't know if Josh would be in our home that night."

Craig said she always wondered why, with 400,000 children in the foster system, so much time and expense was expended traumatizing a child who was already placed in a loving home.

Davis said most children in the foster system are Black, Latinx and LGBTQ. "Government has a unique responsibility to make sure every child finds a for-



Stacey Stevenson

ever home," he said. "We have an obligation to religious minorities and LGBTQ children."

Gillibrand was the original Senate sponsor of the bill and will sponsor it there again. "Anyone who receives taxpayer money shouldn't be allowed to discriminate," she said.

Three out of 10 children in the foster system identify as LGBTQ, Gillibrand said. One problem she identified is conversion therapy in foster care. Some states ban the practice on youth under the age of 18, but Gillibrand said it should be banned in foster care.

"They [foster children] deserve loving families," Gillibrand said, adding that 175 organizations from across the country support the legislation named in honor of Lewis. The argument against the bill comes from agencies that would lose money when they refuse to work with single parents, LGBTQ families and religious minorities.

Family Equality has a simple answer to that argument: "There's no shortage of agencies. There's a shortage of families."

Anna Libertin, Family Equality's chief communications officer, explained allocation of funds. "The bill requires all agencies that receive federal funding to comply with the nondiscrimination requirements for the child welfare services they provide," she explained.

"Our experience at the state level is that, where nondiscrimination laws have passed, most faith-based providers recognize that nondiscrimination is in the best interests of the children, and they decide to welcome all prospective parents and kin and affirm the children in their care," Libertin added.

But what about those served by agencies that refuse to work with certain prospective adoptive parents? Libertin noted, "When agencies have made the choice to no longer provide child welfare services, affirming agencies have stepped up to absorb the cases."

Stevenson, who lives and works in Dallas, recounted a devastating experience she and her wife had while trying to adopt. "Our dream of having children was almost shattered," she said. "We were devastated when we were told no birth mother would choose lesbians to raise their children."

Instead of giving up, Stevenson said, she and her wife changed agencies and are now the proud parents of two six-year-old sons. ■

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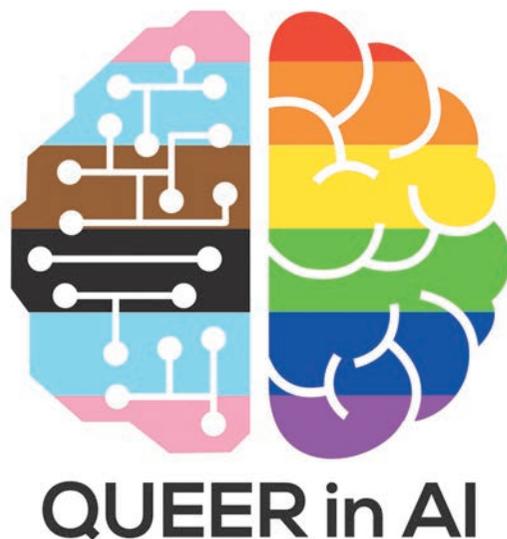
Rise of the machines?

SCIENCE

AI researcher MaryLena Bleile says it's not the robot apocalypse we should fear but the biases the machines are learning

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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Next month — July 18-24 — the International Conference on Machine Learning will hold its 38th annual conference. That conference will include a Queer in AI workshop designed



to highlight issues faced by marginalized communities in the AI field through talks and panel discussions on the inclusion of

AI member MaryLena Bleile talked with Dallas Voice about the field of machine learning, artificial intelligence and what

non-Western non-binary identities and Black, Indigenous and Pacific Islander non-cis folks.

Organizers are accepting submissions through Monday, June 14, for presentations during this workshop. Submissions must be generally related to the intersection of LGBTQIA+ representation and AI or be research produced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, according to the Queer in AI website.

This week, Queer in AI member MaryLena Bleile talked with Dallas Voice about the field of machine learning, artificial intelligence and what

it means to be a queer person in the AI world.

Dallas Voice: When I think of AI, I always think of Terminator. So, first of all, explain what AI is, just in general layman's terms, and what it isn't. MaryLena Bleile: So "Artificial Intelligence" is a broad term that encompasses many different areas of research, all with the general goal of making machines "smart" in some regard. Under that umbrella, the specific computational technique that has seen a major rise in popularity over the past 20 years is called "Deep Learning."

Think of a machine with a lot of knobs and buttons, each of which controls a machine that does something very simple, like turning on a light switch. Deep Learning is about tweaking those knobs and buttons in a way that makes them all work together to achieve a specific outcome, like turning on light switches in such a way

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Machines really can't do anything they aren't trained to do, so anyone who's concerned about a robot apocalypse can sleep easily. The most magical thing about Deep Learning is math!

Is there a large queer presence working in this field? It's difficult to say, really, since many queer people — particularly senior people — in the field choose not to come out for fear of career repercussions. However, from what I've read, it's unfortunately one of the least diverse fields of academia — along with physics, I believe — along axes including gender, race and sexual orientation. Like I mentioned, this is particularly true for the older generation; in the entirety of the time I've been working here, I've known exactly two out queer professors, both of whom I met through Queer in AI.

Why is it important to elevate the queer presence in this field? Elevation of all minoritized groups is of utmost importance to AI because of how much Deep Learning amplifies bias. Like I mentioned earlier, a machine can't do anything you don't tell it to by feeding it data or code. And when you feed it with data generated by a process that is sexist, racist, homophobic, etc., you get a machine that has those qualities as well.

For example, some AI systems can learn sentiment, analogies and the structure of language: how "similar" words are to one another. Google has an AI that does this, and a paper (Saucedo, 2018) revealed that according to that AI — as of 2018 — the words most similar to "gay" are "dumb," "lame," the R word, "creepy" and "rude." The most similar word to "lesbian" was "slut."

Not only does this show the homophobic bias in peoples' language, when these systems are deployed in [common] practices such as targeted marketing and advertising, they reinforce the existing structure of bias. There are countless examples of this phenomenon when it comes to racism, sexism and transphobia as well.

Unsurprisingly, research has shown that queer people working in STEM fields are disadvantaged compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Cech, 2017), and the Queer in AI demographic survey has shown that queer people do not feel completely welcome in the community. This is particularly true for queer researchers who are also minoritized along other axes, such as socio-economic status, race and ability type. In the words of one of our organizers, Arjun Subramonian, "Vectors of oppression intersect," with compound-

ing effects.

There's been a substantial amount of research on what's called "minority stress," that means negotiating prejudice and discrimination — and preserving outness/concealment as necessary while potentially also navigating internalized homophobia, for queer individuals — creates a cognitive load-on that causes depleted mental health and can actually cause increased rates of physical illness (Frost, et al 2015, Meyer, 2003a, 2003b, Meyer & Dean, 1998). This cognitive load makes thoughtful wonder — which is necessary for good research — a lot more difficult.

Personally, I grew up in a community that believed homosexuality was a perversion of nature, and that "the gays [were] ruining [the country]." People won't generally tell you that at work, of course, because the standards of professionalism in the field prohibit it. But, because it's never spoken of, it can be very difficult to figure out which, if any, of one's colleagues privately hold similar opinions. And needless to say, working with or for someone who thinks you are ruining the country by loving women, is not ideal.

From what I've heard, my experience is not uncommon among LGBTQ+ folks in the field; Queer in AI provides advocacy and community for those of us in such a

situation.

Tell me about the upcoming conference overall, and about the Queer in AI workshop specifically. What is your goal for this workshop and for the conference? Research has shown time and time again that the voices of queer individuals — particularly trans, non-binary, non-western and BIPOC queer individuals — are under-represented and feel unsupported in the field. In our demographic survey, many queer individuals cited a lack of role models and community as issues that propagate the underrepresentation.

The ICML workshop is a step towards the ultimate goal of equality, where people are not minoritized in any regard. Specifically, the Queer in AI workshop highlights and works to resolve the issues queer individuals face by featuring Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander non-cis folks as well as talks and panel discussions on the inclusion of non-Western non-binary identities.

We also have an optional buddy system for community-building, free undergraduate mentoring and a poster session to highlight the work of queer individuals, with free conference registration for presenters. We don't desk-reject any submissions, and submissions can be in any format.

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AROUND OAK LAWN

The gayborhood begins to wake up after a year of slumbering under COVID-19

As we head into Pride Month, the gayborhood is finally starting to re-open fully, after a year of COVID-19-forced closures and restrictions. We ventured out and about to get the scoop — and plenty of photos — on what's happening and where in Oak Lawn. Check it out!

— David Taffet



Alexandre's

The big news at Alexandre's is that Lee Daugherty has signed a lease for the space next door to his bar that used to be a donut shop. That gives the bar room to expand to accommodate larger groups. And the donut shop kitchen is being refurbished so Alexandre's can serve food, although Daugherty wasn't sure what kind of food quite yet.

While the bar was closed due to the pandemic, Daugherty installed a big window that opens up. And the outdoor patio is being expanded. Live music returns June 5 with Chris Chism, followed the next week by Jason Huff.

Resource Center

When the Texaco station on the corner of Cedar Springs and Inwood roads came available, Resource Center snapped up the property. Our first thought was, "Yippee, gay gas!" But Resource Center isn't about to get into the retail gasoline business. While they're deciding exactly what to do with the property, they're having the underground tanks removed and tearing down the building. In their place? For now, a few trees. We'll let you know what's coming when the information is available.





S4

The Rose Room's been open for a few weeks now, bringing you the top-notch drag shows you expect. And now, the rest of the bar is open, ready and waiting for you to come dance! Employees were hard at work this week, fine-tuning the light show to make sure you have a good time.

Sue Ellen's

After the bar has been boarded up for more than a year, the plywood has come down, and the doors at Sue Ellen's open up again today (Friday, June 4).



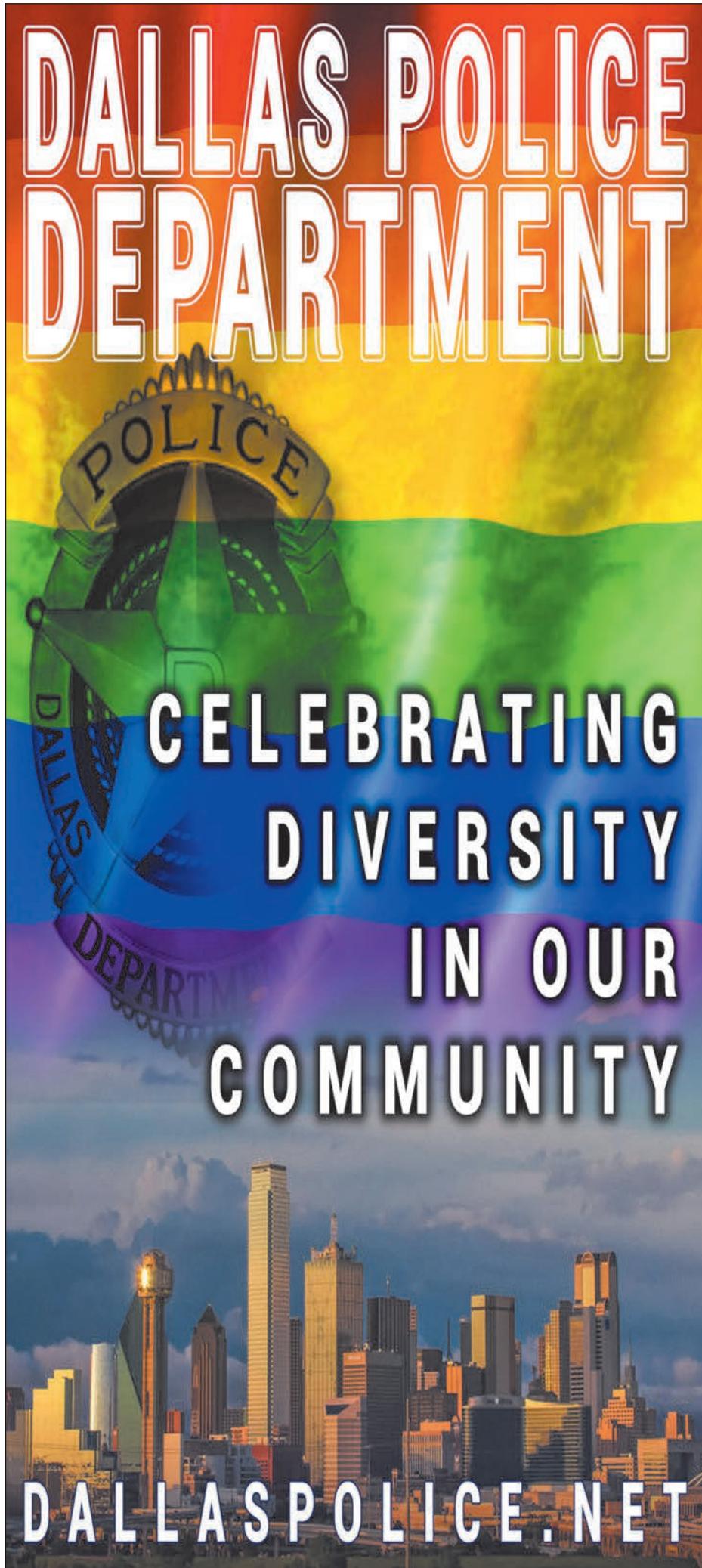
AIDS Services Dallas

Debris from a fire that destroyed one unoccupied building and gutted a second building has been cleared at the AIDS Services of Dallas campus. But work has not yet begun on 18 new independent living residences ASD is building just blocks from its Revlon and Ewing properties.

Just weeks after breaking ground on the renovation, the project was put on hold by the pandemic. Then as work was about to begin in August, someone fire set to one of the buildings.

In the meantime, plans for the property have been revised. Although insurance covered a lot of the cost of rebuilding, construction materials have skyrocketed in price since last year, and the city is way behind in issuing permits.

In April, Development Director Chris Turman said he was renewing his fundraising efforts for the project and construction would begin as soon as permits are issued.



Why is this field/topic important to the world in general, and to the LGBTQ community in specifically?

AI is powerful. From self-driving cars, to personalized/adaptive treatment planning and devices like Amazon Alexa — which one of our organizers actually helps develop! — it has achieved an overwhelming presence in our lives and in the anticipated future of technology. But this power can be used to reinforce and amplify the bias present in datasets constructed by biased individuals, which presses the need for cultural reform and equality.

Tell me about yourself and your work. How did you get into this field, and what do you do?

I'm a Ph.D candidate at Southern Methodist University and UT Southwestern. My dissertation research takes place out of the Medical Artificial Intelligence and Automation lab in UT Southwestern's Medical Physics department, where I'm part of a team that's working on an AI system to control and optimize radiation treatment for tumor elimination. The agent observes the tumor as it grows and makes adaptive decisions about the radiation treatment protocol.

I love it because of how practically useful it is and because it combines a bunch of fields that fascinate me. Getting to work at the intersection of statistics, math, computer science and physics — and in an environment that pushes me to improve in a way that's kind and supportive, no less — is living the dream, in my opinion.

How I got into the work is kind of a wild ride! I come from a devout Christian family where music is sort of the family trade, so I've been playing cello since I was 3 and planned to join a convent after I finished my music degree. After getting rejected by the convent, I started to realize how much I enjoy math and science, got a stats degree and started coming out. I knew I wanted a Ph.D almost as soon as I stopped planning on becoming a nun, before I started science, because I felt like an undergraduate degree just didn't give me the depth of knowledge I wanted. And that's just my personality; whatever I'm in, whatever I have expertise in, I want to do it or know it 110 percent. I still love music and art, particularly heavy metal.

What have I not asked about that you



MaryLena Bleile defends her Ph.D thesis

think is important for people to know?

Introducing mathematics and machines into decision processes doesn't remove the issue of bias; in many cases such an introduction amplifies it. There's a really great documentary on this topic called *Coded Bias* that highlights some of these issues. So don't worry about the robot apocalypse; worry more about the implicit biases transferred from the AI researcher and the data.

For more information about the Queer in AI Workshop, visit the website at <https://Sites.Google.com/view/Queer-in-AI>

References for Question 3: Frost, D.M., Lehavot, K. & Meyer, I.H. Minority stress and physical health among sexual minority individuals. *J Behav Med* 38, 1-8 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-013-9523-8>; Meyer, I. H. (2003a). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674-697; Meyer, I. H. (2003b). Prejudice as stress: Conceptual and measurement problems. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 262-265; Meyer, I. H., & Dean, L. (1998). Internalized homophobia, intimacy, and sexual behavior among gay and bisexual men. In G. M. Herek (Ed.), *Stigma and sexual orientation: Understanding prejudice against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals* (pp. 160-186). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications; Cech, E.A. and Pham, M.V., 2017. Queer in STEM organizations: Workplace disadvantages for LGBT employees in STEM related federal agencies. *Social Sciences*, 6(1), p.12; Saucedo, R., 2018. GAYTWITTER: AN INVESTIGATION OF BIASES TOWARD QUEER USERS IN AI AND NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING. THE SLU MCNAIR RESEARCH, p.60.



DONE, From Page 22

President Donald Trump and his supporters led an insurrection on the U.S. Capitol with goal of stopping the verification of the Electoral College vote making Joe Biden the president. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton was among those who spoke to the crowd that day in Washington, D.C., and state Rep. Kyle Biedermann, a Hill Country Republican who has advocated for Texas secession, was also there.

Then, only a month into the session, a winter freeze shut Dan Patrick



down the state's power grid, leaving the grid within mere minutes of collapsing. That caused Gov. Greg Abbott to add reform of the state's ironically named independent grid operator named the Electric Reliability Council of Texas and the Public Utility Commission, which oversees the council. Those reforms were added to the governor's emergency items, which also included bail response reform and expanding broadband access to underserved areas.

Two items appealed to the Republican base: vaguely described "election integrity reforms," based on Trump's Big Lie that the election was stolen, and bills focused on punishing entities that reduce public safety budgets — a nod to "defunding the police." Emergency items can only be set by the governor and are considered must-pass. If they don't, the governor can call a special session.

While Abbott only named four priorities, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick rolled out 30. Most of those passed. They included bills delicious to the Republicans' right flank, including banning "critical race theory" in schools, scrapping licensing requirements for carrying guns, limiting lawsuits against 18-wheeler drivers who hurt or kill someone as well as banning abortion after six weeks and allowing anyone to sue the woman, doctor or any accessory to the abortion — all of which passed. An-

other bill would require any professional sports team with government contracts to play "The Star-Spangled Banner."

LGBTQ bills

As usual, among other priorities for Patrick and the GOP's rightest wing were anti-LGBTQ measures largely targeting transgender youth. A record number of bills targeting LGBTQ people were filed this session in Texas and around the country. But Texas was lucky: Bills barring healthcare access for transgender youth and requiring they play sports based on the sex on their birth certificate and not their actual gender identity did not pass — although there were some close calls.

While various House versions of these bills died before getting a full vote on the floor, one Senate version made it to the House floor, thanks to a Democrat. That bill, Senate Bill 29, would have codified existing University Interscholastic League policy requiring that students play on the teams based on their biological sex and not their gender identity. While UIL rules already prohibit 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

DONE, Next Page

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DONE, From Previous Page

have taken away that option.

The measure had died in the House Public Education Committee, but committee Chair Harold Dutton, a Houston Democrat, brought the bill back up for a vote in retaliation after his bill allowing Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath to remove school board members was killed on a technicality by Rep. Alma Allen, also a Houston Democrat. Democrats generally opposed the bill on school board members, but Dutton has advocated for more state control over the Houston Independent School District, citing the district's poor performance.

SB 29 passed that second committee vote 8-5, with all Republicans and Dutton voting for it and the remaining Democrats against it.

"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," Dutton said before the roll call vote, adding, "I can tell you this, the bill that was killed last night affected far more children than this ever will."

SB 29 then sailed through the Calendars Committee, which decides when legislation will be voted on the floor, and went up for debate. But thanks to a handful of Democrats, including the LGBTQ Caucus, it died when Democrats used a legislative tactic called "chubbing," which essentially allows the minority party to slow down legislation. Tactics include extensive questioning of the authors of the bill and any amendment, filing superfluous and often non-germane amendments and calling points of order.

That process lasted throughout the day. That night as the clock counted down, Democrats saw a path to victory when the bill was delayed from consideration until 11:30 p.m., all but ensuring it was truly dead.

In the final minutes before the midnight deadline, Democrats gathered at the front and back microphones, waving transgender flags. Rep. Gina Hinojosa of Austin was discussing an amendment to a bill with colleague Erin Zwiener of Driftwood about data collection for public contractors.

"Is this the time to risk their wages on an experimental piece of policy?" Zwiener pointedly asked.

"This is not a time to undercut their wages, to undercut their wages. They do

this work for us!" an elated Hinojosa replied. "We need to do what," she began, then cut herself off just at 12 a.m. "And I move adoption!"

The clock struck midnight, and SB 29 was dead.

Equality Texas Chief Executive Officer Ricardo Martinez called it a relief.

"Many of the parents who showed up to the Capitol time and time again this session to defend their children were watching legislators from the gallery. They didn't want to be alone as they waited the agonizing hours it took to get to midnight," he said. "The relief in their eyes as the clock ran out was a reminder of how damaging this bill would have been on their little ones."

"The defeat of SB 29 would not have been possible without committed parents and community members, ally legislators and partner organizations who helped protect the dignity and inherent worthiness of trans kids. It was a true team effort," Martinez added.

While numerous bills benefitting LGBTQ people were filed this session, none of them passed.

Democrats break quorum

As is often the case, drama ensued at the end of the session, leading two of Patrick's priority bills to fall short.

The election and bail reform bills died after Democrats broke a quorum in opposition to Senate Bill 7, the elections bill. They opposed in particular an additional 20 pages of language added during negotiations that Democrats said they were left out of. By breaking the quorum on the final deadline for passage of finalized bills, they killed it — for now.

Abbott is expected to call a special session in the fall to address redistricting and may add the elections bill to the call.

Dallas Democrat Jessica González, who is vice chair of the Elections Committee which heard the bill, was among the proponents and leaders of the strategic walk out. Throughout the debate, Democrats slowly trickled off the floor throughout the proceedings. By 10:30 p.m., only five remained; a few members stay behind to serve as reinforcements and pepper with questions as needed.

It was only the fourth time in Texas history a quorum was broken. And it may not be the last this year. ■





 “Councilman Blewett
 “shows up” for his friends
 in the LGBTQ + community.

 It’s great that he has
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 open heart advocating
 for what is right.”

 - Pam Gerber,
 LGBT Activist

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Still going strong

Gay country artist Ty Herndon talks about the Concert for Love & Acceptance, the changing attitudes in county music and a new album

GREGG SHAPIRO | Contributing Writer
GreggShapiro@aol.com

Ty Herndon knows a thing or two about love and acceptance. Although he was initially embraced by country music fans in the mid-to-late 1990s, a series of unfortunate events — including some related to his sexuality — sidelined his career. But since coming out as a proud gay man in 2014 and finding personal and public acceptance, Herndon has performed at Pride festivals and released albums in which he sings songs with same-gender pronouns.

One of his greatest accomplishments, he says, is the formation of The Foundation for Love & Acceptance and its annual music event, the Concert of Love & Acceptance. This year's all-star 2021 Concert for Love & Acceptance takes place on June 30 at 7 p.m. Central; it will be live-streamed exclusively on CMT's Facebook and YouTube channels, and at F4LA.org/concert.

Performers for this year's concert, in addition to Herndon, include Kristin Chenoweth, Kathy Mattea, Brothers Osborne, Terri Clark, Brooke Eden, Chris Housman, Gretchen Peters and Tenille Townes, to name a few.

This year's beneficiaries include GLAAD, MusiCares, and Nashville's Oasis Center. Herndon was generous enough to answer a few questions for Dallas Voice in advance of the concert.

Dallas Voice: Ty, would you please say a few words about the genesis of the Concert for Love & Acceptance? Ty Herndon: At the beginning of creating Love & Acceptance, I'm so happy I trusted my heart. I've said this many times, but I stand by this: I wanted to do something for that 14-year-old kid that's at home watching the CMA Awards. For me, it was *Hee Haw!* [I was thinking to myself], "Oh my God, I want to sing with Tammy Wyn-

ette one day." But now it's that kid, who wants to sing with Maren Morris and feels like they're broken, and they don't fit in.

I don't know one actor, singer [laughs], anybody in entertainment that has ever felt like they fit in. It's a nomadic job. I said from the beginning that I wanted to make that kid, who was also me, sitting out there, wherever they're from, or their gender, think that they can do anything they want to in this world. It's just getting the right messaging.

On June 30, the latest Concert for Love & Acceptance, is being presented with an all-star cast. Did you ever imagine when you first came up with the concept that you would still be involved with each one that followed, and the success of it? I hear, "You've got to stay relevant in the business" so much! Reba [McEntire] told me one time, "You're constantly reinventing yourself, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's always moving, always evolving."

I always credit my Concert For Love & Acceptance for keeping me kind of relevant [laughs], in a great way, because I get to meet and talk and work with all these affirming hearts. Whether they're on our red carpet or whether they're on the show or whether it's a friend like Terri Clark who's been around with me forever. Or Kathy Mattea!

A lot of these generations of kids will be watching the show because of Brothers Osborne and some of these amazing new acts that are on the radio today. [But] they don't know who Kathy Mattea is! So we're going to tell them!

I'm so glad that you mentioned Kathy, and I was happy to see her in the lineup. I remember how supportive she was during the early years of the AIDS crisis, performing at benefits, as well as contributing songs to the Red Hot + Country album. What does it mean to you to have her be part of the concert?

I was watching the CMA awards that evening when she was the only artist who had on a red ribbon. A lot of the artists were wearing the green ribbon for supporting the earth and environmental awareness. That red ribbon stood out like crazy! I remember thinking, "Wow, she's really brave!" There are soldiers out there who tell the truth, no matter what the cost. I love that! I try to stand for that today.

Having the opportunity to be the word "authentic." I hear a lot of kids say,



Ty Herndon at the 2019 CMT Music Awards (Sanford Myers/ Associated Press)

"What does that mean today?" I'm like [laughs], I can see the window for me to learn something, so I go, "I don't know. Why don't you tell me?" Back to Reba, "Constantly growing. Moving forward."

Also among this year's performers is longtime ally and icon Kristin Chenoweth. What does it mean to you to have her on the roster? Well, she really

didn't have a choice, because she's one of my best friends [big laugh]. I was talking to her yesterday. I said, "Oh, you saw your picture on the announcement? Oh yeah, you're doing the show!" With a star of her magnitude, friend or not, I have to go through the proper channels. She has a great team of people, and they were so delighted. We're closing out the show

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TY, From Page 40



Ty Herdon, right, was honorary grand marshal of the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade in 2015.

with Kristin and my performance this year. It's gonna be — I can't tell you, but make sure you stay tuned [laughs].

Has it gotten easier over the years to get performers to say yes, to agree to take part in the Concert for Love & Acceptance? I'm gonna tell you something right now, and I'm probably gonna get emotional. On press day, two days ago, the amount of stuff we used to have to fight for just to get noticed, it just was there. I work hard, yes, but I have a team of people that work so hard. We had a meeting yesterday, and we were talking about this. It's nice to have the phone ringing, for people to actually want to do the show. It's mind-blowing, and I get emotional about it.

That's understandable. You mentioned the Brothers Osborne, and the 2021 Concert for Love & Acceptance features some incredible out country acts, including TJ Osborne of the Brothers Osborne, Brooke Eden and Chris Housman. Since coming out, would you say you are encountering more LGBTQ+ folks in country music? You know what it's like to turn on [the SiriusXM country music station] The Highway and hear [lesbian country artist] Lily Rose? I'd mean like, wow! Hold on a second, you got me all emotional again.

Sorry. I have that effect. [Laughs] the fact that I am a big old strong cowboy, and I cry about this — that's the answer to your question. Things are changing, and we've been able to see that. It's awesome.

Do you think that Cody Alan, being an out person on CMT, has helped the Nashville and country music-loving

community become more accepting and open-minded? I think everybody knows how luxurious and awesome and wonderful Cody Alan is. The way he speaks into his confidence and his authenticity, and how he can stand next to people who agree and people who don't agree and still matter and know that he matters. I've told him this to his face, "What you're doing is probably the greatest work."

Yes, it's good to have him in the community. Because of the Concert for Love & Acceptance, and your involvement in various charitable events, you can proudly call yourself a philanthropist. What does it mean to you to be able to have such a distinction? I'm going to say something, and I think all my LGBTQ brothers and sisters will laugh about this. I've often thought that that word sounds like the name of a drag queen: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the stage, Miss Phyl-Ann Thropist." But seriously, I just try, on a daily basis, to wake up and, you know I'm a sober guy, so as long as I follow my program, and I do something for someone else, it saves my own ass. I feel like being who I am today keeps me alive.

Finally, Ty, is there any chance that there is new music from you in the works? I'm going to give you the scoop, my friend. The album is called *Jacob*. It's a body of work that I have written with some of the most wide-awake, sober, intelligent, life-changing people in the world. These lyrics mean a lot, and we tracked nine songs yesterday. It was one of the most emotional days I've ever had because the album is so personal.

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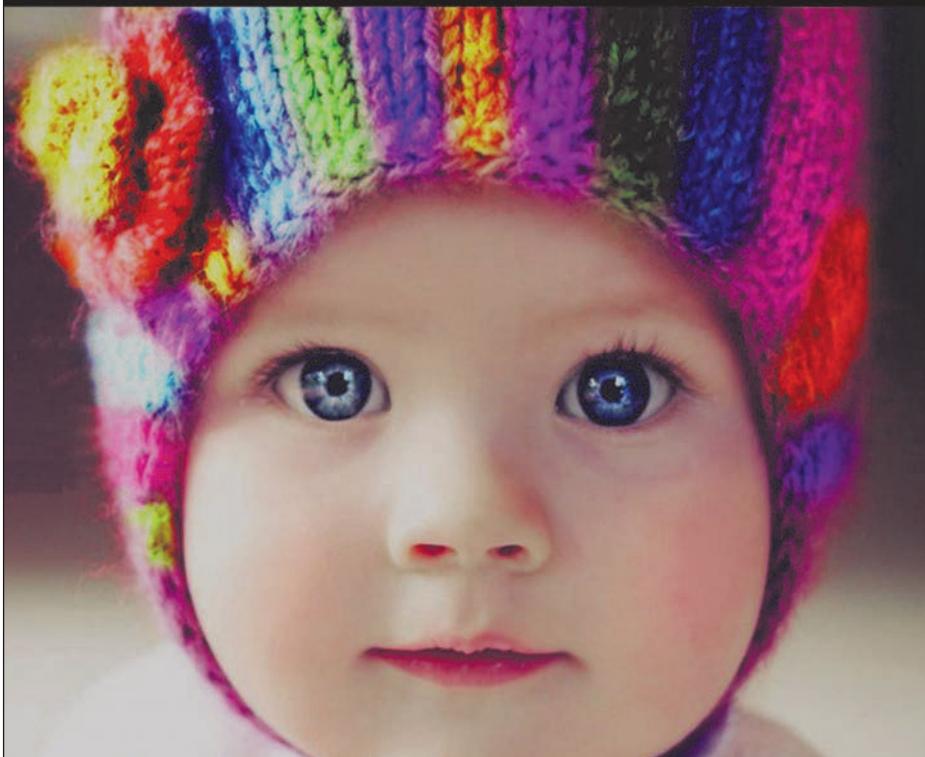
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Promoter Zayne Aguilar set out to throw a 'proper' gay dance party and create community at the same time

As more and more North Texans are getting vaccinated and health officials are starting to rein in the COVID-19 pandemic, people are getting more and more anxious to get back to some semblance of normal life. And in the LGBTQ community, as we kick off Pride Month 2021, what is more "normal" than a dance party?

And that's where the Crystal Queer Riot dance parties come in. The first in the Crystal Queer Riot series of dance parties took place earlier this year. But things are really gearing up with the two-day Crystal Queer Riot: Reclaiming My Time on the Dance Floor party, happening June 5-6 at Elm & Pearl. This week, founder Zayne Aguilar of PROPA



Productions talked with Dallas Voice about how the parties began and what they are all about.

— Tammye Nash

Dallas Voice: Who came up with the idea and the name for this series of events?

What prompted it? Zayne Aguilar: The idea for Crystal Queer Riot came from being asked by a few gay friends to throw a proper gay dance party.

Tell me about the creator or creators.

What is your background? I currently own and work as the creative director for PROPA Productions. PROPA produces techno and house music parties and raves. We have been throwing parties in Dallas for five years now and have showcased artist from all across the globe, debuting some of the biggest names in electronic music today in the Dallas market.

How did you choose the name? Is there a special significance to it?

Yes! Every show we produce has an intention, and we always like to bring a positive message to why we gather and dance. The first Pride was a riot, a riot of trans women of color, twinkles and queer people who began the queer liberation movement we now know as The Stonewall Riots. Yet to this day these same trailblazers are still very marginalized within our own more mainstream gay community.

Crystal Queer Riot is a call to action, an intentional effort to give the dance floor back to those fighting the hardest struggles. Queer Riot is a community that opens its doors to everyone, especially those who may find it hard to fit in.

Dance music saved my life, and I want to share that experience with other people. I want them to know that there is a community out here that will accept anyone who is authentic and exactly who they want to be. For these reasons, Queer Riot is your favorite aggressively queer and radically tender party.

You have already held one Crystal Queer Riot dance. What kind of response did you get? How many people attended?

It was a great response; the event sold out! We took over Rainbow Vomit at Fair Park, and people showed up early ready to dance. And they did! So many people came up to me excited to know we were creating a space specific to queer people, not just gay men.

The place was full of party monsters, club kidz — and they absolutely loved it. Everyone danced and made new friends. People were dressed up from beautiful costumes to fetish wear. We danced 'til 5 a.m.!

You say these events were created with the intention of “creating more dance events for Queer expression” and “more inclusive dance floors” in our community. What does that mean?

How do you define “queer expression” in dance? And what does a “more inclusive dance floor” look like? What do you hope people take away from these events? This is the most important part to us. I personally have always struggled with fitting in within the nightlife and club scene of the gay community. I never felt accepted; I felt more tolerated. While there are bars with dance floors in our

PARTY, Page 72



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Graphic Pride

TidalWave Comics offers five new Pride Month titles

FROM STAFF REPORTS

TidalWave Comics has announced the addition of three new graphic novels, inspired by Pride month, as part of their "FAME" and "Female Force" series. These unique graphic novels are intended as a "tribute to the lives and accompaniments of those who are proud to stand up for those who aren't afraid to live authentically," TidalWave officials said.

All three graphic novels will be linked together under one giant cover by artist George Amaru.

Book One, written by Michael Frizzell, Michael Troy, Mike Lynch and CW Cooke with art by Alex Schumacher, Jason Moser, Manuel Díaz and Beniamino Bradi is part of the "FAME" series. It tells the stories of Pete Buttigieg, Anderson



Cooper, Tom Daley, Freddie Mercury and Ryan Murphy, all of whom were

willing to stand strong, be loud and be proud. Book One will be released June

9; order it on Amazon at <https://amzn>.

GRAPHIC, Page 50



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Game on

In an add-on to *Borderlands 3* main characters Hammerlock and Wainwright get married.



Gearbox CCO Dan Hewitt relishes life in a gamers' paradise

RICH LOPEZ | Contributing Writer
richlopezwrites@gmail.com

We're told to do what we love and get paid for it, and we'll never work a day in our lives. Dan Hewitt, 44, takes that to another level. Not only is he an avid player of video games, but as Gearbox Entertainment's chief communication officer, he gets to talk about it all he wants.

And there is a lot to talk about.

"I basically talk about Gearbox and share our values and mission, which is to entertain the world," he said by phone from Washington, D.C. "And our great entertainment brings joy and happiness to peoples' lives."

With popular titles such as *Duke Nukem*, *Brothers in Arms*, *Homeworld* and its flagship title, the *Borderlands* series, that entertainment takes shape in a number of ways among gaming fans.

But as an out executive at the Frisco-based Gearbox Entertainment, Hewitt has found a company that embraces diversity in all forms.

"This is an industry that is primari-

ly known as a white, cisgendered male environment. Gearbox is flipping that script and showing that you can have an environment inclusive of men, women, gender nonbinary, trans — across the spectrum," he said. "[Founder] Randy Pitchford created — and continues to create — an environment where people can be authentic. If we are going to entertain the world, we need to be of the world and have opportunities for all types of team members."

Hewitt joined the team in 2019, but it was in 2017 that he really took notice of Gearbox. At that time, Pitchford and the company were speaking out against the Texas bathroom bill, which would have regulated use of public bathrooms and barred Texans who identified as transgender from using facilities appropriate to their gender identities.

At the time, Hewitt was in the game industry already, working for a trade association. When he was approached about joining the Gearbox team, he said the decision was easy.

"I've known Randy for years, but I was so incredibly impressed by their stance back then, and they're a leader in the industry. That they were inclusive and taking that position, working

to make that broader community a more inclusive place — I knew that was a supportive and welcoming place to work," Hewitt said.

A company that encourages representation and visibility also empowers its team, and Hewitt says that results in providing an outcome of world-class entertainment.

"To be part of a company using its medium as games and film to do that makes me feel incredibly lucky and I will always be thankful," he said.

Gearbox has made headlines again recently by confronting anti-LGBTQ efforts in the Texas Legislature. Dallas Morning News' May 20 headline almost says it all: "Frisco game development studio Gearbox says it'll invest elsewhere if Texas passes anti-LGBTQ laws."

Senate Bill 29 was anti-trans legislation introduced this year that would have prohibited trans youth from joining gender-specific school sports teams aligning with gender identity. Also introduced in this more recent legislative session was SB 1131, which would have banned gender-reaffirming medical treatment for transgender youth.



A scene in *Borderlands 2*, top, and Gearbox Chief Communication Officer Dan Hewitt, above.

The Gamer magazine reported in May that an employee group at Gearbox had begun a fundraiser to take on the issue.

From The Gamer:

“The Spark Team at Gearbox has added their voice to the fight, highlighting the growing list of anti-trans legislation in the state. The team’s goal sits at \$10,000 USD for the National Center for Transgender Equality, and CEO Randy Pitchford has agreed to match up to \$10,000 in donations. The GoFundMe currently sits at a bit more than half of its goal.”

In April, Gearbox executive David Najjab testified against Texas House Bill 4042, another piece of anti LGBTQ legislation, and the company signed a letter advocating for Texas to protect its LGBTQ population.

“This commitment to the LGBTQ-plus community is not a performance exercise. It’s not a corporate statement. We live and breathe that idea,” Hewitt stressed. “We have a number of diversity groups that are incredibly active, and I think that encourages people to think more broadly about the world.”

He assures, though, that Gearbox doesn’t want to leave Texas. Instead, the company wants to bring strong talent to the state. But if these anti-LGBTQ bills were to pass, that talent would likely go elsewhere.

“We were formed and founded in Texas,” Hewitt said. “We’re staffed by Texans and proud to be headquartered there. When we see negative legislation, that hurts us in different ways. We worry about our team members and how it affects them on a daily basis.

“We want to have a state that attracts talent, and there are a lot of states out there looking to attract the tech and entertainment communities,” he added.

This year is looking to be a monumental one for Gearbox. In February, it was announced that the Embracer Group, parent company of businesses developing and publishing PC, console and mobile games for the global games market, completed its acquisition of Gearbox Software, which was seen as a good match.

“They have a history of giving their partners autonomy to allow them to do what they do best,” Hewitt said. “We create cutting-edge entertainment that no one else does, and their experience with other companies would enable Gearbox to grow and remain authentic.”

Gearbox is also collaborating with Lion’s Gate studios for a new film based on its signature *Borderlands* games, a first for the video game publisher.

“That’s being filmed right now in Budapest, and we have an incredible cast: Cate Blanchett, Jamie Lee Curtis. I’m personally excited about Gina Gershon. Like, we have actors who are definitely not B-listers,” he said.

The game itself is currently on its third installment, and players will continue to find a showcase of diversity among the game’s characters.

“We have characters there who identify as gender nonbinary and gay, and we use ‘they’ and ‘them’ pronouns. That’s important. To the people playing our games, having themselves reflected in entertainment is powerful, and we take that incredibly seriously.”

In *Borderlands 3*, the studio released the add-on *Guns, Love and Tentacles*, which is totally gay.

“The entire premise behind it is the marriage of our two lead male characters, Hammerlock and Wainwright,” Hewitt said. “I think this is the first marriage in video games between two male characters, and from a major studio. That’s great. And that’s what you see when the team feels comfortable about pitching different ideas.”

Perhaps for most LGBTQ people, there is a crossroads of their career and their identity that eventually intersects. But in Hewitt’s case, there’s no need for one. He’s out, loves video games and he works for a premiere video game studio that fights for equality and diversity.

“When I first came out, my mom, who could not have been more supportive, told me not to be out at work. That it would limit my job opportunities, and now here I am — the chief communications officer of a global entertainment company,” he said. “That I can personally work at a place and be myself completely is a privilege for which I’m incredibly thankful.”

The video games don’t stop at the office. He’s lucky to have a husband who is also a gamer.

“Nothing is more fun than just playing games with him,” Hewitt said. “We’re both of a generation that played video games as kids. And you know, it’s not just a passive medium. Whether we engage with people in real life next to you or online, it fosters a social connection.”

For more about the Gearbox’s selection of games, visit gearboxsoftware.com.

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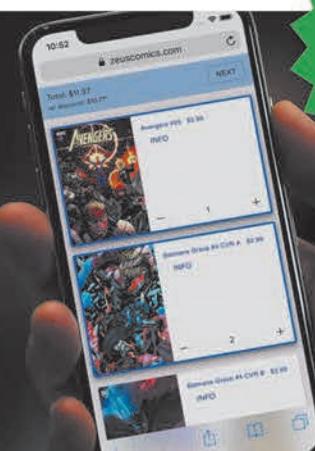
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Also in the "FAME" series, Book Two tells the stories of three iconic women who are staunch allies of the LGBTQ community — Dolly Parton, Cher and Lady Gaga — and one man who became famous by dressing — and singing — as a woman — RuPaul. Book Two is written by Dan Rafter, Marc Shapiro, Michael Frizell and CW Cooke, with art by Dan Glasl, Zach Bassett, Ramos Salas and Joe Phillips. It will be released June 16; order it on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3yD-5qq4>.

Book Three falls into the "Female Force" series. It will feature Ellen DeGeneres, Joan Jett, Kristen Stewart, Jane Lynch and Rosie O'Donnell. Writers are Sandra C. Ruckdeschel, Dan Rafter, Spike Steffenhagen, CW Cooke and Kimberly Sherman. Art is by Pedro Ponzio, Kristopher Smith, Aaron Sowd, Beniamino Bradi and Warren Martineck. Book Three will be released June 23; order it on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3bSKh1D>.

Also in the "Female Force" series is Book Four, a "bonus Pride edition" all

about the legendary Dolly Party herself, with never-before-seen images and a special cover for Pride month by Dave Ryan. Order it on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3fJzaJu>.

The "Female Force" imprint features prominent and influential authors, business executives, entertainers, journalists, politicians and activists. Previous titles have profiled Mother Teresa, Kamala Harris, Tina Fey, Betty White, Michelle Obama, Barbra Streisand, Cher and Gloria Steinem.

Book Five is a hard cover tome on the Stonewall Riots, the June 1969 riots that followed yet another police raid on The Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village, New York gay bar. The Stonewall Riots are considered the birth of the modern LGBTQ rights movement. "TidalWave Productions is proud to present Stonewall, a detailed account of the movement that started with Stonewall and continues to this day with the gay community celebrating gay pride each year to commemorate the brave efforts of the community," according to a press release.

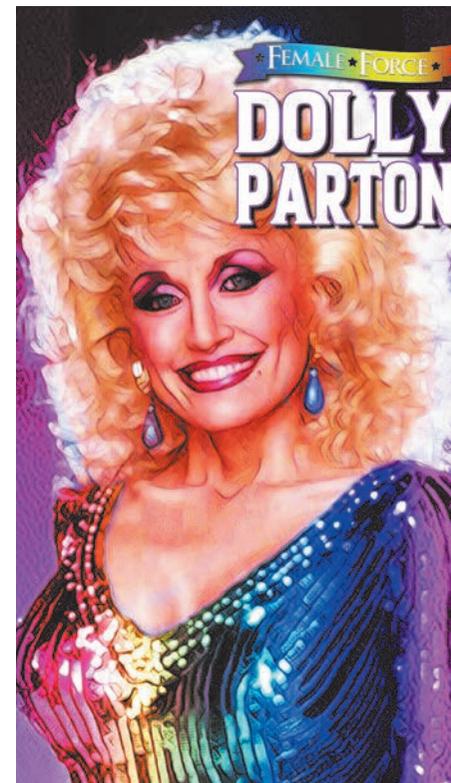
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Publisher Darren G. Davis said, "As out and proud gay man who is HIV positive, I am glad to be able to use my platform to share and celebrate stories of the LGBTQ+ community.

"However," he continued, "over the past 10 years the stories we've told have been predominantly those of white and cis people, which I realize has contributed to the continued erasure of Black, Indigenous and people of color queer and trans voices and experiences within our community. Going forward, TidalWave Productions is making it a priority to focus on BIPOC LGBTQ voices and stories."

He noted that books currently in the works include stories of Angela Davis, Billy Porter, Laverne Cox and Lil Nas X, adding, "We are excited to share more with you soon. We are always looking for suggestions on subjects."

A special poster of all the five Pride Month covers is available exclusively at Comic Flea Market. TidalWave Comics'



titles can also be downloaded digitally from Kindle, iTunes, EPIC!, Madefire, Izneo, ComiXology, Global Comics, Drive-Thru Comics, Google Play, Overdrive, Library Pass, Biblioboard, Nook, Kobo and wherever eBooks are sold. ■

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Two suits, same hybrid closet



2021 Toyota RAV 4 Prime, Venza each excellent fuel economy, so choose based on where you want to go

CASEY WILLIAMS | Auto Reviewer
AutoCasey@aol.com

It's good to have a closet well-stocked with clothes both for a night on the town and for hiking with your date. Its even better if your closet is a garage and there are two efficient Toyotas residing inside. You can get your mid-size hy-

2021 Toyota RAV4 Prime

5 passengers, AWD Crossover
Powertrain: 2.5-L I4, CVT, Li-Ion Batteries
Output: 302 hp combined
Suspension f/r: Ind/Ind
Wheels f/r: 19-inch/19-inch alloy
Brakes f/r: regen disc/disc
Must-have features: Style, MPGs
Fuel economy: 94 MPGe, 38 MPG
Assembly: Aichi, Japan
Base/as-tested price: \$26,250/49,578

2021 Toyota Venza Limited

5 passengers, AWD Crossover
Powertrain: 2.5-L I4, CVT, Li-Ion Batteries
Output: 219 hp combined
Suspension f/r: Ind/Ind
Wheels f/r: 19-inch/19-inch alloy
Brakes f/r: regen disc/disc
Must-have features: Style, MPGs
Fuel economy: 40/37 MPG city/hwy
Assembly: Aichi, Japan
Base/as-tested price: \$32,570/43,100

brid crossover looking like it just rolled off the trail with the RAV4 or all slicked out for a fast date like the Venza. Both wear pretty well.

2021 Toyota RAV4 XSE Prime Plug-in

Consider the RAV4 the ruffian of the pair, looking ready for adventure with its square-jawed grille, angry LED projector headlamps, hunky fenders and deeply sculpted D-pillar. Chiseled bodysides are accentuated by our sporty XSE edition's black top over red lower body and 19-inch wheels. Get intimate to notice the power moonroof and tailgate.

It's a contemporary look that belies its efficient powertrain.

It's what's between the fenders that matters here. Lithium ion batteries deliver 42 miles of all-electric range before the 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine begins consuming fossils. Fuel economy is rated 94-MPGe full cycle after plugging in or 40/36-MPG in normal hybrid mode.

A combined 302 horsepower helps it clip 0-60 mph in 5.7 seconds — quite quick for a hybrid utility. Use "EV Hold" to preserve the battery for city driving. An electric motor at the rear enables all-wheel-drive, while Trail Mode configures the vehicle for getting to a favorite camping spot.

Moving inside, a large touchscreen with rubberized knobs for tuning and volume sets the tone — as do head-up

display, wireless phone charging, navigation, Wi-Fi hotspot and JBL audio with subwoofer. Comfy faux leather SofTex seats with red stitching add style but can be washed down with a rag should things get messy. They're also heated and ventilated up front, heated in the rear. You'll love fondling the heated steering wheel too.

Of course, we want to practice safe driving with all those we consider dear riding along. Adaptive cruise control with lane tracing steering, lane keep assist and forward collision alert with auto brake keep "eyes" ahead. Blind spot warning, rear cross path detection, digital rearview mirror and 360-degree birds-eye camera help, too.

The RAV4 starts at \$26,250, but the plug-in Prime is rarer at just over \$38,000. Our fully-dressed XSE Prime came to — please sit down — \$49,578.

If you want an outfit that's slightly less expensive and decidedly more urban, read on.

2021 Toyota Venza Limited

Button up for the 2021 Toyota Venza Hybrid. Forms flow from a sleek plastic beak over large grille, narrow LED headlamps, fast rear roofline and thin wrap-around LED taillamps — all placed over 19-inch alloy wheels. You would be hard pressed to tell it shares anything with the RAV4 — until you move inside.

The cabin shares basic lay-out with

the RAV4 but looks like Louis Vuitton specified the blend of gray and brown upholstery, brown stitching on the faux leather seats and woodgrain dressing the console and doors. Little chrome tabs enhance the fine luggage detailing.

Very cool feature: The panoramic sunroof turns from clear to opaque with the touch of a button.

There's a lot more tech, too, with wireless phone charging, JBL audio and head-up display. Seats are plush and stylish but are also heated and ventilated up front. Safety is enhanced by adaptive cruise with lane tracing steering, blind spot warning, lane keep assist and rear cross path detection with auto brake. A rearview camera mirror looks rearward.

Unlike the RAV4 that's available with powertrains ranging from gas to plug-in, the Venza is only available as a regular hybrid. Beneath the sophisticated bodywork is a 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine bolstered by lithium ion batteries to generate a combined 219 horsepower. As expected, fuel economy is excellent at 40/37 MPG city/highway.

The Venza is a velvety near-luxury crossover with excellent fuel economy and lush style — a Lexus in Toyota clothing. That's reflected in the price: Base models start at a value-packed \$32,570 but came to \$43,100 for our swanky Limited edition.

Storm forward!

Send comments to Casey at AutoCasey@aol.com; follow him on YouTube @AutoCasey.



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Finding power in difference

Ashley T. Brundage used the power of her own differences to create a successful career. Now she wants to help others do the same

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
nash@dallasvoice.com

Ashley T. Brundage knows the importance of finding power in your differences. As a teen she worked her way up from server to HR manager in the food industry. After transitioning in 2008, she started a new career as a bank teller and worked her way up to vice president of diversity and inclusion. Now she owns her own company, *Empowering Differences*, which lets her share her life lessons with others.

Brundage — who recently celebrated her 18th anniversary to her spouse Whitney, with whom she has two biological sons — recently published her book, also named *Empowering Differences*, and she will be in Dallas on June 12 for an *Empowering Differences* workshop and to sign copies of her book. She recently talked with Dallas Voice about her life, her work and her drive to help others.

Dallas Book Launch

Saturday, June 12, 2-4 p.m.
Sue Ellen's, 3014 Throckmorton St.
Register at [LinkedIn.com/Events/EmpoweringDifferencesDallas-Book6794757070630522880](https://www.linkedin.com/events/empoweringdifferencesdallas-book6794757070630522880)

Books, workbooks, and online course enrollments will be available. Ashley will also be able to sign and/or personalize copies of the book purchased during the event. Register only if you are planning to attend this event in person. For bulk book and online course orders email Ashley@empoweringdifferences.com.

Dallas Voice: Tell me how your company, *Empowering Differences*, got started and about your background in this kind of leadership and diversity training.

Ashley T. Brundage: I started my company when I saw how important leading with empowerment was in navigating my personal and professional journey. Personally, I started developing leadership skills really early on in life, working as a manager while I was just a teenager. I developed my first career from server to HR manager

in the restaurant industry, and then, in my second career, I had to develop as an out trans person from part-time bank teller to vice president of diversity and inclusion in less than five years. Both these careers, along with my lived experiences, have given me a fresh look on both leadership and diversity for sure.

Tell me about the programs/courses your company offers and the team you work with. Your website mentions professional development, keynote speaking and training courses. Yes, my team works to provide educational sessions for corporations connected to empowering others. This includes teaching the valuable concepts of accessibility, inclusion and broader leadership skills.

One of my newest offerings is an online leadership course called “The 10 Empowering Actions to Leverage Change,” which is the next step for organizations attempting to help connect diversity programs to actions that drive real change. This course is the follow up to my new book and has the book and workbook included with enrollment, as well as being a professional development plan with more than 40 hours of potential earned credits.

When did you decide to write this book, *Empowering Differences*? And how does the book expand on and enhance the training and other programs you offer? I had been writing a book about my journey of overcoming homelessness and surviving gender transition, but I didn't want to write a trans memoir. I also didn't want to take away opportunities for other trans people to tell their stories.

I felt that answering the question of how I was able to grow my career so quickly with no college degree, while being authentic each and every day, was going to be helpful to a very broad audience. That is what led me to capture the 10 key “Empowering Actions” that I used to grow my career, and relate it to all people as our differences.

We all have differences, all 7 billion people on this planet, and it's the differences that truly make a difference. They should be empowered and never hidden.

What, from your perspective, is the biggest benefit of expanding and enhancing diversity in the workplace? How does it benefit a company overall, and how does it benefit the individuals who work for that company? The differences we all have bring strength to an organization. Sometimes the word diversity can scare people, or even alienate them, as



they might feel that it doesn't apply to them. If you have all college educated people on a team or in a room making a decision, then they might not be able to speak to or capture exactly what you are asking about: perspective. Perspective is always in the eye of the beholder, and it will lead to uncovering additional opportunities, thus growing your organization.

When it comes to diversity training, it seems we hear more about how enhancing diversity improves a company overall. But how can an individual improve their own career and job performance by focusing on what sets them apart, on the differences within themselves? Self-actualization will lead to more empowerment. This is key in the journey, and this is why my online course participants take the self-assessment ([EmpoweringDifferences.com/SelfAssessment](https://www.empoweringdifferences.com/SelfAssessment); I made this free for anyone to take to help create more empowerment for all). Unlike computerized self-assessments, this one is based on self-actualization, as the participant has to examine themselves and answer open-ended questions surrounding privilege, empowerment and other lived experiences. Then when

they finish the online course, they are instructed to go back and read what they wrote, and then retake the self-assessment a second time. This will help them in their journey of better categorizing their differences and then lead to more empowerment.

What else do people need to know about you and your company and your book? What are the important points — about you, your company and your book — that I haven't asked about? That 10 percent of all sales from my book and course are being donated to GLAAD to help amplify and protect LGBTQ+ voices. I am proud to volunteer my time, and I now serve as a vice chair of the national board of GLAAD.

Also, if anyone reading this article has a hardship and needs more empowerment they should contact me directly at Ashley@empoweringdifferences.com, as for each corporation that enrolls someone in my course, I match that in a donation for a nonprofit organization or individuals who are needing access to this content.

Empowerment isn't meant to be easy, but we can always work to empower others through selfless actions.



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Best Side Story

Legendary actress Rita Moreno talks about a new doc about her life, her role in the 'West Side Story' remake and turning 90

GREGG SHAPIRO | Contributing Writer

GreggShapiro@aol.com

How fortunate are we to be alive at the same time as Rita Moreno? Groundbreaking actress, writer, activist, dancer, mother, singer, feminist, Latina and EGOT. The recipient of two Emmy Awards (for *The Rockford Files* and *The Muppet Show*), a Grammy Award (for *The Electric Company* cast album), an Oscar (*West Side Story*) and a Tony (*The Ritz*), Rita Moreno shows no signs of slowing down at 89.

In December 2021, Moreno will be playing Valentina, a role written especially for her, in Steven Spielberg's big-screen remake of *West Side Story*. But if you can't wait until then to see her, you are in luck. The documentary *Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It*, from Roadside Attractions, is being released this month.

Revelatory and celebratory, *Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It* features Rita Moreno front and center, telling her story as only she can. She was gracious enough to answer a few questions in advance of the release of the documentary.

Dallas Voice: Rita, in 2011, your book, *Rita Moreno: A Memoir*, was published and now, in 2021, the documentary *Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It* is being released. During the 10 years in between, you have continued to be a hard-working actor — appearing in movies as well as sitcoms such as *Jane The Virgin*, *Happily Divorced* and, of course, *Norman Lear's One Day At A Time*. Would it be fair to say that the documentary is a kind of visual extension and update of the book?

Rita Moreno: Actually, it is a kind of visual extension, and definitely [an] update of the book — except that there's a lot more detail in this. It's important to know, for the viewers, that I made a promise to myself, once I decided I was going to take part in the documentary, that I would be as truthful as I could possibly be. I did not want to pull any punches whatsoever, and



Rita Moreno arrives at the Oscars at Union Station in Los Angeles on April 25 this year. (Chris Pizzello/Associated Press Pool)

I paid the price because [laughs] I was asked very serious and difficult questions. But you can be sure that everything I said in this wonderful documentary — by the way, I think it's marvelous — is absolutely the truth.

In addition to being the director of the documentary, Mariem Riera is also the mother of Marcel Ruiz, one of your *One*

observation. Of course, being the mother of the young man who plays my grandson helped a great deal, because I had a great relationship with him.

She decided one day when she heard that a documentary was going to be done about my life, she went to Brent Miller, one of our producers, and Norman Lear's [producing] partner and said, "I would like to be considered." They said, "Great. You know what to do." So she made a whole — I don't know what they call this in that business — but she made a whole kind of storyline of what she wanted to do.

I think one of the things that really charmed them, as it did me, was the little paper doll Rosita — me as a young girl. I just love that. I love that little Rosita, and I love the conceit. I think they did, too.

She also had some super ideas of how to make this very personal. That's where, in a way, it differs from the book, because it becomes a living thing, a document. I think she did a marvelous job! I really do. It's gotten huge reviews, and even Rotten Tomatoes gave it 100, and we know what that means to most people.

Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It is the very definition of a journey; from Puerto Rico to New York to Hollywood. From actress to activist, from lover to wife and mother. What do you think it was in your constitution that helped you navigate the journey, through both good and bad times? I had a remarkable mother. I'm sure everyone says that, and, you know what, they're probably right. What was special about my mother is that despite the difficulties of being in a brand-new country where nobody seemed to speak Spanish, that she somehow navigated that journey and helped me through that journey, is simply amazing.

My mom was a very brave woman. My mom was the kind of person who had several jobs at one time, because she had left Puerto Rico, having divorced her husband, my father, and it was just her and me. She had a very strong constitution. I think I initially got that from her. I don't know that it was something she so much taught me as something that I intuited and that I saw examples of.

I've always been kind of strong in that sense. Very sensitive kid. Cried easily. I still get very hurt. I still cry. But I'm able to somehow make my way around that and understand that, more often than not, good will come from bad. It's something I know I got from my mom; whether it's genes or observation almost doesn't matter.

Day At A Time co-stars. How did everyone involved know that she was the right person to helm the documentary project? The reason Mariem was chosen as the director is really very simple. For one thing, on her behalf I'll say this, she had been studying me for months doing the series *One Day at a Time*, so she got to know me very well simply from

Your identity as an activist is also featured prominently in the documentary. Do you have words of advice or wisdom for future generations of activists? I think that the most important advice I can give to people who are activists — but activists seem to know this without being told — is to never ever give up. If they believe in something, they will hang on to those beliefs forever, because they're made of that kind of stuff. So, I would simply say, just hang on to that, because it's wise, and it's necessary for you to teach future generations.

That wasn't thrilling, but that's all I can think of [laughs].

The documentary features an extraordinary cross-section of people singing your praises — from politician Jackie Speier to scholars and historians such as Frances Negrón-Muntaner, Julia Foulkes and Annette Insdorf, fellow performers Mitzi Gaynor, Justina Machado, Eva Longoria, Gloria Estefan, Morgan Freeman, George Chakiris, Whoopi Goldberg and Lin-Manuel Miranda, as well as your daughter Fernanda. What was the experience of hearing these people sing your praises like for you? I think the person that impressed me the most, with respect to saying complimentary things about me, was my daughter. It's not something you do with a mother. I mean you rarely go around saying, "Oh Mom, I love you, and I admire you, and aren't you the strong one" [laughs]. That doesn't happen. So that when I hear my daughter say those things, I am touched to the very quick.

The other people are very important to me, because some of these people are people who deal with society, such as the professors. I think that the choice of using these two women to explain what was happening at the time, in social terms, was so important to understanding what this documentary was about. Because it's really not just about a woman who somehow made her way into movies and sang and danced and was strong and suffered terribly.

It's very important for the viewer to understand that these were really hard times. It's a question of setting an example when I never expected to be doing such a thing. That makes me very proud — proud for the documentary and proud for myself.

I also want to say how much I appreciate the people who spoke about me — Mitzi Gaynor, Justina Machado, Eva Longoria, Gloria Estefan. [Laughs] I never knew I would even know such people in my

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Work of art

Chris Hightower loves his hometown and his new job as CEO of the Arlington Museum of Art

MATHEW SHAW | Contributing Writer
Mathews.yb@gmail.com

Chris Hightower is the new CEO of the Arlington Museum of Art. But he's certainly not new to Arlington or to the North Texas LGBTQ community. An Arlington native, Hightower has lived there almost all his life, even running for a seat on the city council at one point. He has worked in real estate for years, and his husband, DeeJay Johannessen, is CEO of the HELP Center for LGBT Health and Wellness, based in Arlington. Having been born in Arlington and having lived there most of his life, coupled with his work as a real estate agent, means Hightower knows his city. And now, as CEO of the museum, he gets to help others learn more about his hometown.

Dallas Voice: How long have you been CEO of Arlington Museum of Art? Chris Hightower: I'm originally from Arlington, and I was on the board for several years in the early 2000s, late 2000s, and I was approved by the board to become the CEO and president about a month ago. So, it's fairly new.

What does your job entail? So, I'm president of the board, and I run the organization. So, I kind of have my foot in both sides of the organization, the board side as well as running the organization.

Is being president and CEO of the AMA your only job? It sort of is. I also am a real estate agent, so I kind of do that on the side.

Are there any exhibits coming up that might be of interest to the LGBTQ community? Absolutely, the one that opened May 29 [is] called 30 Americans. It's 31 artists, actually, but it's 31 of the most influential African-American artists of the past three or four decades. So it not only deals with race, which many LGBTQ folks are dealing with race as well, but it also deals with gender, sexuality and the intersectionality of all of those things. It's definitely an exhibit that I think a lot of folks in the LGBTQ community would find

interesting and something that they can connect with.

I heard that your husband founded an HIV/AIDS organization. Yes, the HELP Center for LGBT Health and Wellness.

Do you help out with that as well? I do. When needed or called on, I'm a volunteer for them. They have a clinic in Fort Worth and a clinic here in Arlington just about two or three blocks away, so we often share resources. If we have something that they need or they have something we need, we do share resources occasionally.

How does being openly gay influence your job? I don't think it influences my job. I've been openly gay for such a long time that I don't really think anything about it. Everybody in the office knows. The board knows. Most of the people in the community know.

I grew up in Arlington; I've been around a long time. I left to go to college and then graduate school. I moved back in about 2000, March 2000, so I've been around for the past 21 years.

Where'd you go to college? I went to TCU for four years, graduated there, went to University of Georgia and lived in the Atlanta area for about six years.

What was that like? Amazing. Atlanta in the '90s — what's not to love about it?

Tell me about your day-to-day life on the job. Well, lately we've been doing installation for this exhibit that's coming up. People don't know when they go to see an art exhibit all the work that goes on behind the scenes to make it happen. It looks so simple and so elegant and so easy when you walk in, and people just will walk past a piece of art and not think about the installation. In some cases, it takes, you know, two or three days to install a piece of artwork. It's a lot of work. I was here from, like, 8 o'clock to 8 o'clock — sometimes 12 hour days, doing all kinds of things, like painting walls, replacing base boards, all kinds of stuff that's not necessarily glamorous.

You have to be willing to get your hands dirty a little bit, which you wouldn't necessarily think about when you think about a museum. But I also do a lot of curatorial work and selecting exhibits and thinking about the future and doing lots of fundraising and working with the board. So, it's a lot of work.

What are some of your favorite exhibits? Keith Herring last year was a really kind of exciting move for us. We borrowed the exhibit from the Rubell Museum in Miami



Chris Hightower

and really launched a good collaborative relationship with those folks in Miami. So that is top of my list. Ansel Adams we did a few years back. I can't remember the year — 2013, '14. It was an amazing exhibit. We had people from all over the world come.

That's one of the things that people don't know about this museum. Only 30 percent of our visitors come from Arlington; 20 more percent come from the Dallas-Fort Worth area. But 50 percent of our visitors come from more than 50 miles away from here. We had visitors from Australia that came to see the Ansel Adams exhibit. They posted it on their Facebook page, and their friends from New Zealand flew in to see that exhibit. So, a lot of times you don't necessarily know that this little museum in Arlington, Texas, is actually getting lots of visitors from around the world.

Why do you think art, in particular art museums, are important for the community? Oh, my gosh, they're of huge importance! I really think of them as the soul of the community, because it's that thing that, in some cases, an artist will put something out there that's sometimes difficult to talk about. Those times when you get together and say, 'Well, we're not supposed to talk about religion or politics or this or that or whatever' — a lot of the topics that are in art are those topics. It's those things that really stir our emotions and, in some, cases it's visceral. We have a piece in this particular exhibit that's go-



ing to be very visceral. We've had to kind of sequester it to the rooftop gallery, but it's going to elicit some strong emotions.

And I think that's what art does. It's a reminder of who we are in terms of humanity, and it's a little mirror into our own soul. So, I think it's really important for people to come and, not just look at it, but think about it, process it and have a conversation with people. I think that's what sets our museum apart from others; we really encourage accessibility, having conversations versus just coming and looking at a piece of art.

30 Americans, showcasing works by 30 emerging and established African-American artists of the last three decades, is on exhibit at the Arlington Museum of Art through Sept. 5. The museum, located at 201 W. Main St. in downtown Arlington, is open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays. Admission is \$15 for adults, \$10 for students and seniors. Children 12 and under are free with a family.

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Remembering Larry Kramer

A year after his death, the activist and writer remains a reminder of our responsibility to keep fighting

ANTHONY T. EATON | Contributing Writer
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May 27 marked a year since the death of Larry Kramer and the LGBTQ community's loss of one of its most influential leaders. And as we celebrate Pride Month, it is a perfect time to remember the impact Kramer had in the fight against AIDS and the struggle for LGBTQ equality.

Kramer was an accomplished man, having earned a degree from Yale, an Academy Award nomination as a screenwriter, an Obie Award twice and a Pulitzer Prize nomination — all in addition to his activism.

Born at a time when being out was unheard of and when the role models we have today did not exist, Kramer had his

own struggles in coming to terms with own sexuality and accepting himself as a gay man — as many did and still do. After going so far as to attempt suicide while in college, Larry eventually came to terms with who he was and went on to lead a movement that would change our world.

While not initially interested in activism, Kramer became a leader in the gay rights movement and the fight against AIDS when gay men began to get sick in 1980 with a then-unknown disease. Larry was instrumental in the fight against AIDS in so many ways, from forming the first AIDS organization, which would become the Gay Men's Health Crisis, to creating ACT UP in 1987 after years of the U.S. government and the world turning a blind eye to what was happening.

Kramer forced gay men, the government and mainstream news to pay attention and to respond to the AIDS crisis, starting with his lengthy essay entitled "1,112 and counting." Pulitzer Prize win-

ner Tony Kushner said of that essay, "With that one piece, Larry changed my world. He changed the world for all of us." And indeed, he did.

Kramer exemplified what it means to stand up and take action even when that makes you unpopular and a target. When many were willing to stand back and stay quiet because they were afraid of being outed in a time when we had few, if any, rights, Kramer refused to stay quiet and hidden. He stepped forward, mobilizing a movement that would bring forth money for research to fight AIDS. He refused to let those that had died, were dying and suffering do so in vain.

Kramer was widely criticized for his methods, even within the gay community. GMHC, the organization he founded, ousted him in 1983 due to his "in your face" approach. But Kramer knew he had to do something, so he did it. And his approach resulted in the outcomes he wanted: People, including people in



government, took notice and took action. Larry knew someone had to do something, and he did.

"You'd think one day we'd learn. You don't get anything unless you fight for it, united and with visible numbers."

— Larry Kramer

While we now know that HIV had probably been around for decades, it was not until 1981 that the virus seemed to take hold and spread. If you were born after 1981, you might not know what effect the disease had back then, the toll it was

A yellow poster with a rainbow wave at the bottom. At the top right is a grid of dots. The text reads: "HAPPY PRIDE MONTH BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE" and "LOVE IS LOVE". In the bottom left corner is the ASD logo: "ASD AIDS Services of Dallas A HOME FOR LIFE".

An advertisement for Salon Aura. It features a woman with long, multi-colored hair (rainbow) against a background of a brick wall. The text says: "SALON Aura | fabulous SINCE 2013". At the bottom, it provides the address "3910 Cedar Springs Rd. • Dallas, TX" and phone number "214.443.0454 • SalonAuraDallas.com".



Larry Kramer, right, and his husband, William David Webster, at the Broadway opening of *An Act Of God* in May 2015. (Andy Kropa/Invision/Associated Press)

taking. I was 14 in 1981, and I remember clearly the fear that permeated the gay community and the lack of response or even acknowledgment from the government. No one would do anything, because AIDS was “that gay disease.”

I remember my own fear, as a young gay man, seeing all those who were sick and dying, or who had already died. Had the first population to be affected by HIV been white straight men, things would have been much different. Now more than ever, that fact is not lost on me when I see the world’s response to the COVID pandemic and compared that to what happened with AIDS in the 1980s.

“AIDS was allowed to happen. It is a plague that

needs not to have happened. It is a plague that could have been contained from the very beginning.”

— Larry Kramer

Had it not been for Larry Kramer and others like him, we would be in a very different place today. Because of his courage and the courage of others like him, we should all recognize that one person — each of us can — make a difference. Even when the stakes are high, when we are afraid and there is much to lose, we can make a difference. Because there is also always much to be gained.

Today, more than ever, we all need to be like Larry Kramer and stand up against all that is wrong in the world and our own country. As renowned immunologist Dr. Anthony Fauci said of Kramer, “In American medicine, there are two eras — before Larry and after Larry.”

Larry Kramer’s life and courage should be a catalyst for our own response to the lack of leadership in our country and to the continued and pervasive racism and bigotry. He should be the impetus to each of us to fight inequality and injustice against anyone. We must raise our voices however we can. We must de-

mand change and not stand by meekly and wait for someone to do it for us.

We must unite — not as groups based on color, gender or sexuality, but as human beings. Larry Kramer’s passing should be a call to action, a reminder that we must not let all those who have gone before us, those who have sacrificed, risked and even lost their lives, to have done so in vain.

Each of us must have a cause, and we must do something to advance that cause. We must get involved by voting, by writing our representatives, raising our voices. Like Larry Kramer, we must act up.

“Some reporter called me ‘the angriest gay man in the world’ or some such.

Well, it stuck, but I realized it was very useful.”

— Larry Kramer

Larry Kramer’s legacy should remind us that the rights we have gained are fragile and can easily be stripped away. We have seen and continue to see that happening. Leadership comes in many forms and people, but most often, it comes from those we least expect. Now let it come from us. ■



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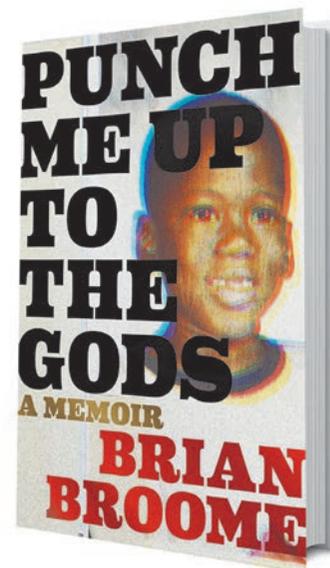
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ON THE PAGE

A 'don't miss' memoir

Brian Broome's new book about his upbringing isn't easy, but it is compelling

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER | Bookworm Sez
bookwormsez@yahoo.com



Punch Me Up to the Gods: A Memoir, by Brian Broome. © 2021, HMH Books \$26; 272 pages.

Little kids have it so easy. Somebody feeds them when they're hungry, does their laundry, buys them toys and plays with them. Somebody escorts them everywhere, and, sometimes, they even get carried.

Yep, life is good when you're a little kid — except, as in the new memoir, *Punch Me Up to the Gods* by Brian Broome, when it's not.

He called Corey his "best friend." but Corey was no friend to 10-year-old Brian Broome. Sure, things were sympatico at first, but it didn't take long for Corey to sense Broome's insecurities. Or to start pummeling Broome. Or to humiliate him.

Broome's father hoped that Corey might act as "a form of therapy" for a boy who played with girls too much. Broome endured the abuse and didn't complain to the adults, because he was a little in love with Corey.

As if Corey's thrashings weren't harsh enough, Broome's dad beat him for a multitude of reasons, from a pink shirt to frustration over unemployment to racism. He said he'd rather kill his children himself than to let a white person do it. Broome, in fact, often wished that he was white like the people on TV, so he'd have the benefits of it. White parents really seemed to love their kids.

Broome dreamed of moving far away from the tiny working-class Ohio town of his birth to a larger city where he believed he could avoid the bullying and teasing, leave his life behind and escape the embarrassment of his parents' ramshackle existence. He did leave once, for college, but he was deeply humiliated by the racism and homophobia of his roommates. He called his mother then, and

she came to get him.

She was one of a handful of Black women who saved him.

Being a man isn't easy. Being a Black man in America is harder. Being a gay Black man led Broome to drugs and alcohol and away from his family — although, he says, "... yes, I was loved. Just not in ways that I could understand."

Be prepared to be messed with here. Your emotions may never be the same.

There's a tightly-coiled, ready-to-strike fist wrapped in melancholy and a miles-long people-watching incident in this book, both giving aptness to its title. The title — *Punch Me Up to the Gods* — refers to the author's father's second-favorite words before the beatings began, and they'll hit you hard, too. You're not embarrassed, in fact, to be seen carrying a book around, are you? Because you will, this one.

Happily, there are moments of humor, too, as Broome recalls things that occurred in his youth or maybe just a few years ago. He surprises readers with similes that are sobering, in the middle of laughter. He steps back, sometimes, to pick at something else, turns it over twice to examine it and pulls it into his tale.

For this, you won't regret picking this wonderfully companionable, startingly gracious and compelling memoir. *Punch Me Up to the Gods* is a don't-miss; devouring it is so easy. ■



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ON THE SCREEN

Heavy



Jacob Latimore, Kelvin Harrison Jr. and Charlie Plummer star in *Gully*.

Violence begets violence in 'Gully'

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor

nash@dallasvoice.com

Gully is a heavy, heavy movie. It has an almost physical weight that sits on your shoulders and on your chest as you watch. It sits on your mind and your heart. It is a weight that stays with you long after the credits have rolled. That's not a bad thing; no one should be able to put this movie aside and ignore what it has to say.

Gully is set in what the promotional material calls "a slightly dystopian" version of Los Angeles. I'm assuming they mean it is only "slightly imaginary," because I'm pretty sure that this depiction is real life for a lot of people. It is the story of three friends — Calvin, Nicky and Jesse — and the violence that defines their lives. It is about the violence inflicted on them and the violence they, in turn, inflict on others.

I read on IMDb that the name of the film comes from the Hindi word "gul-

ly," meaning "narrow lane." Where I'm from, "gully" is a Texas word meaning "ditch." Either definition, I guess, is appropriate, because for Calvin, Nicky and Jesse, life is a narrow lane, a ditch, that leaves you only one way to go.

The basic plot is simple: Three best friends marked from childhood by trauma and violence finally break out into violence themselves, going on a 48-hour rampage of drugs, drink, destruction and death. And then they have to pay the price.

It's not a new story, but what makes it worth watching is the emotional intensity the young actors bring to their roles.

Keith Harrison Jr. is Jesse, the narrator of the story who actually never speaks; he's been left dumb by the trauma in his childhood. His two friends are protective, going to extremes to defend Jesse, but at the same time, he seems to be the quiet at the middle of their storm.

Charlie Plummer is Nicky, whose

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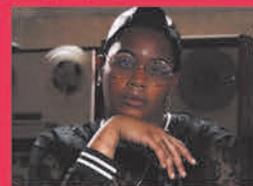
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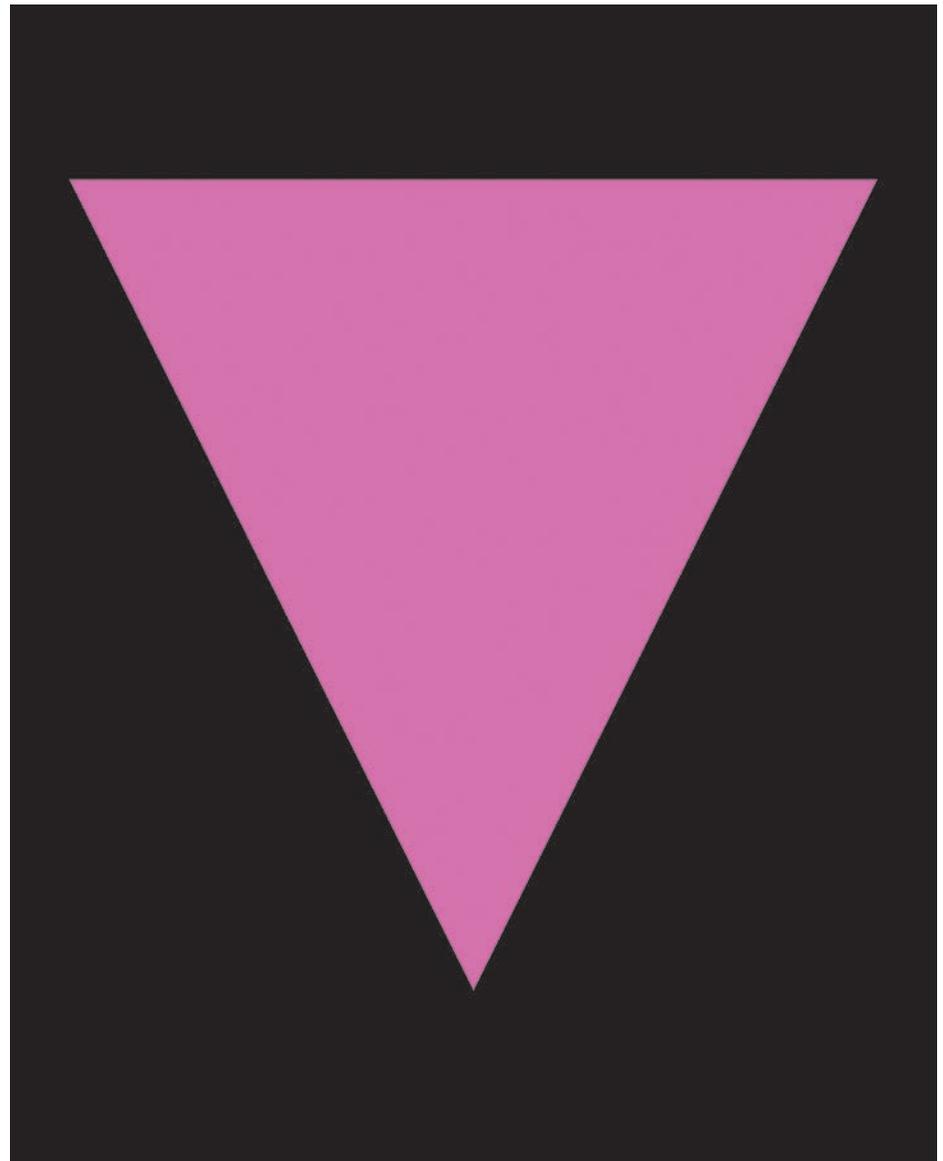
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HISTORY

The Pink Triangle



Reclaiming a symbol of hate

ANTHONY T. EATON | Contributing Writer
8anthonyeaton@gmail.com

Humans have used symbols and iconography to communicate and to identify things going back to when someone made the first drawings on cave walls. Using symbols to communicate pre-dates language and the written word, but symbols remained in use even after language became commonplace. This includes symbols and icons used to identify, segregate, promote intolerance and hate for groups of people.

Such usage was especially true when it came to the persecution and systematic targeting of minorities by the Nazis un-

der Hitler.

The SS created a unique classification system to identify those they wanted to target: Jews who had to wear a yellow Star of David, which is formed by two triangles. Criminals had to wear a green triangle. Political prisoners such as social democrats, liberals, socialists, communists, anarchists, gentiles who assisted Jews, trade unionists and Freemasons had to wear a red triangle. People deemed to be asocial elements and work-shy — Roma and Sinti, the mentally ill and mentally disabled, alcoholics and drug addicts, vagrants and beggars, pacifists and conscription resisters, prostitutes and lesbians — all wore some version of a black triangle.

And then there was the pink triangle. That was the badge for homosexual men.

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It is important to note that early on, gays were not singled out for who we were but instead lumped in with criminals or political prisoners and made to wear a colored triangle representing that group of individuals, perhaps giving us more "cover." The pink triangle came later and was often combined with some other color triangle to designate those belonging to more than one group.

It is no wonder that Hitler would target our community, as so many other societies have, especially given the prominent and visible gay and lesbian culture in Berlin at the time. Even though homosexuality was technically illegal before the rise of Hitler under the Paragraph 175 statute, that law was rarely enforced.

But, as was true of so many groups of people, Hitler saw us as a threat to his efforts to create the perfect race. Just as so many still are today, politically and socially, Hitler was afraid of us. And he used that fear and the hate it bred as his weapon. The pink triangle was his way of identifying, shaming and targeting us.

Wearing the Pink Triangle made gays easily identifiable, thus they were easy targets for other prisoners and guards in the concentration camps. And the pink triangle made it easy for others to continue persecuting gays even after the war ended. Many who wore the pink triangle were transferred from concentration camps to prisons after the war, because Paragraph 175 was still in effect, which meant it was illegal to be a homosexual.

What is unique about the pink triangle — compared to other symbols used to identify, segregate and hate certain people — is that it has been reclaimed and turned into a symbol of perseverance, strength and unity. (The Star of David

was a symbol of Jewish identity before the Nazis co-opted it for their own hateful purposes, and it remains a symbol of Jewish identity, faith and pride today.)

Heinze Heger's 1972 book, *The Men With The Pink Triangle*, brought greater awareness to the origins and use of the pink Triangle by the Nazis. As a result, a German gay liberation group used the symbol as a memorial to those early victims and as a new symbol of protest. After the Stonewall Riots in June 1969, our community took what had once been a symbol of hatred and turned it into a symbol of Pride.

We have also used it as a symbol of protest, as was seen during the early years of AIDS and the common "Silence=Death" slogan combined with the pink triangle.

It is important to note that some — a small minority — have criticized using a symbol that originated in hate to represent LGBTQ Pride. In 1993, senior editor Sara Hart of the gay magazine *10 Percent* wrote on the topic and received significant backlash for it.

As unique as it is to have reclaimed the pink triangle as our own, it is easy to overlook its historical significance as time goes by. I look at my lack of knowledge and understanding as a young gay man coming out in the early 1980s and how I initially just knew it to be a symbol of our community without proper context.

Yes, the Pink Triangle is now a symbol of Pride, but it should also serve as a reminder of how easy it is to have all we have fought for and earned stripped away from us. As we begin another season of Pride, we need to understand what our community's symbols represent now, but we also need to understand their origins and what they represented before. ■



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PARTY

, From Page 45



community, they can feel very cliquish, and the music can seem repetitive and eventually mundane.

I know this sounds very critical of these bars, and I don't mean to sound that way. These bars mostly play top 40 music, and that is fun, and there is certainly a market for it. These are successful bars and staples of the community for a reason.

However, there are many like myself that enjoy true electronic dance music — house, techno, trance and progressive music. We love to feel the music, the bass vibrating through our bodies — music we can put our own story to.

I miss the days when I could go to a gay club, and there would be people of all colors and genders, dancing and "vibing" together. Today, many clubs/bars are segregated. We have Lesbian bars, Latino bars or Latino nights and Black clubs or hip-hop night. Queer is everyone.

There is a lot of thought and attention to detail that goes into these dance parties, from production to each individual attendee. Dance music gives people an outlet to express themselves not only through dance but fashion and art.

This community has an unwritten law of peace, love, unity and respect. We give each other space to be unequivocally and unapologetically our true selves, and that is Queer expression. It's liberating. Everyone is welcome, but ego is not. There is no space at a Queer Riot for homophobia, transphobia, racism, xenophobia or any other phobia that projects fear onto someone.

These parties take on a life beyond the club. We are a community; our common ground is the dance floor, but these connections become bonds that extend into our personal lives. People sometimes show up alone to our parties, but they leave knowing they have made lifelong friends. I know this because all of my friends, my closest and dearest, I have met on a dance floor somewhere on this big, blue planet.



Plus, the music is freaking amazing, because it's dance music!

You are kicking off your series on Pride weekend with Reclaiming My Time on June 5-6. What comes after that?

We have several more shows we will be announcing by June 5, as we ramp up to bring at least two Queer Riots a month — from more pool parties to club parties to after-hour raves and, my personal favorite, day raves. Sunday Funday with mimosas, brunch and, of course, dance music.

What else do you want to mention? What have I not asked you about that you want people to know? Our Pride party on June 5 will be held at our downtown warehouse club, Elm & Pearl, which used to be Dallas' first queer Black club. We were very honored to partner with this venue and bring back the name Elm & Pearl for the history it has. This is how queer people "Reclaim Their Time" in this social justice movement, where it all began — on the dance floor!

We would like for people to follow us on Facebook or Instagram @CrystalQueerRiot and share those pages with their friends. Our movement is essential to the curating and production elements we bring to each party we produce. We will be showcasing many queer producers and DJs from all across the country and world.

We are also looking for people here in Dallas who want to bring their talents forward to continue our dance movement. We welcome anyone interested or who has questions to reach out to us through our social platforms.

Crystal Queer Riot: Reclaiming My Time on the Dance Floor starts at 10 p.m. Saturday, June 5, at Elm & Pearl, 2202 Elm St., with DJ Angel and special guest Don Gentry. Tickets start at \$10. The Reclaiming My Time on the Dance Floor Rooftop Pool Party, with DJ Angel and Danny Zalefsky, starts at 1 p.m. at Canvas, 1325 Botham Jean Blvd. Tickets start at \$20. Tickets for both events available at EventBrite.



GULLY, From Page 66

mother is a drug addict who looks barely older than her son, and whose father beat him mercilessly when he was little, until the day his father was killed. Nicky's girlfriend is pregnant, and even as his life spins out of control, he insists his own child will have a better life.

And then there's Jacob Latimore as Calvin, the mentally ill teenage genius who seesaws between childlike wonder at the beauty of the universe and an almost incoherent rage that he vents at everyone around, except for Jesse and Nicky. All three young actors stand out in their own way, but Latimore burns with intensity, making even the opposite extremes of Calvin believable and understandable.

The grown-ups in the movie — most of whom are much more recognizable actors — all do their jobs well. Particular standouts, though, are Jonathan Majors, the newly-out-of-prison former gang-banger who tries to keep the three teens from going down the same path, and Terence Howard as Mr. Christmas,

the kind of one-man Greek chorus of the movie.

Director Nabil Elderkin, who made a name for himself directing music videos, proves adept in his feature film debut at using images to press into your perceptions the isolation and insignificance his characters feel — the upward shot of two or three towering palms against the blinding brightness of the sun in an almost colorless sky; a single, distant airplane droning through that same colorless sky; shots of a neighborhood from a bird's-eye, bland blocks of housing and near-empty streets.

This is not a fairy tale, so needless to say, there is no happy ending. In fact, as the film progresses you might well believe the three don't deserve a happy ending. But what is never in doubt is that they DID deserve a happy beginning. That they never had a chance at that is the weight that will stay with you. ■

Gully opens in select theaters today (Friday, June 4) and will be available digitally on June 8.

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It started with a hug

Free Mom Hugs founder Sara Cunningham talks about celebrating Pride and what's next for her organization

JENNY BLOCK | Contributing Writer
JennyBlock@iCloud.com

It really did all start with a hug. But not just any hug — a mom hug.

Sara Cunningham is the founder of Free Mom Hugs (FMH), which officially began as a non-profit organization in July of 2018. FMH's mission is "to empower the world to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community through visibility, education, and conversation. And yes, we still give hugs."

It's been quite the journey.

To put it in modern parlance, where she started: Cunningham wore a "free mom hugs" button to Oklahoma City Pride after finally, gratefully and joyfully honoring her son Parker's coming out as a gay man.

Where she is now: Chapters of hugging moms all across the country; Jamie Lee Curtis making and starring in a film about her; speaking engagements; a book; a documentary; becoming a wedding officiant.

And that's just the beginning.

I've had the honor of speaking to Cunningham on a number of occasions, including for a story for the New York Times. She is one of the most thoughtful, passionate, and downright delightful advocates I have had the pleasure of talking to. So, I was thrilled to have the chance to once again speak to her, this time for the Dallas Voice about Pride, about what's in store and about the wild ride this all has been.

— Jenny Block

Dallas Voice: What does the word Pride mean to you? Sara Cunningham: I was taught to believe Pride meant you had a haughty spirit, and nobody wanted one of those. I was in my 40s when I first heard about this gay bar in New York City called the Stonewall Inn — yes, I lived under a rock — and learned about Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Harvey Milk and Gilbert Baker.



Jamie Lee Curtis, left and Sara Cunningham

I now know the importance of this history and that it must be told to our children over and over and over again so we can remember and never forget the cost of Pride, Pride month, the marches, the movements and the flag. As an ally, to show up at Pride is to support a community that no longer has to hide or be ashamed. As a mother I can see how it paved a way for my son. Side note: Parker's birthday is in June; I'm so proud of him.

What surprises you most about this wild endeavor? What surprises me the most is that I'm still alive, still happily married and can't wait to do it all over again tomorrow. In all seriousness, I'm most surprised and impressed with the resilience of the gay community after all these years of bullshit and the grace they extend to people like me.

What do you think surprises others most about it? That they didn't think of Free

Mom Hug first. And that it's so easy. You show up, offer a simple hug and surprise! You're profoundly and forever changed. That's what we at FMH call the "spark."

I experienced my first "spark" in June of 2014 at the Oklahoma Pride Festival. It came in the form of a beautiful young girl. We made eye contact; I offered her a hug, and, as we embraced, she whispered in my ear "I haven't had a hug from my mom in four years because I'm a lesbian." That spark started a fire.

Can you tell us a little about the "lost SPAM files" and lost social media messages you have been posting about lately? Oh my God. I don't even know how I stumbled upon them, but I found a SPAM folder in my Facebook private messages with hundreds of messages from people all over the world going as far back as from 2018! I've been going through and replying to each one, except those wanting to see my tits or condemning me

to hell, of course. Some sing my praises; some want a signed book, and some ask how to find a FMH Chapter.

The ones getting my first and full attention are those that make my heart sink upon reading — precious people, though strangers to me, sharing from the most tender, intimate parts of their lives. Conversion therapy survivors. The mom living with the deepest regret of all — shaming her gay child to suicide. The 63-year-old lesbian who had a 12 month nervous breakdown when her one and only living relative, a sibling, refused to attend her wedding. And the most haunting to me, the 18-year-old gay Iranian fleeing for his life.

I've been — anonymously — sharing their stories, because I know stories matter.

What does Jamie Lee Curtis making your story into a film mean to you? The mak-

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HUG, From Page 74



ing of the film is special to me for two reasons. One — hello? Jamie Lee Curtis is making a movie about me! And two, most importantly, I know there's a mom out there like me then who needs to hear from a mom like me now.

Even as the LGBTQ community is gaining traction in terms of visibility and equal rights, why is the work of FMH still so vital? Because same-sex marriage is legal in Oklahoma at the same time conversion therapy is still legal, sought out and paid for in Oklahoma.

Because our Transgender friends are fighting for their lives.

Because my gay son can be refused housing, healthcare and even refused service in a public space because of who he is.

What do you wish every parent who has rejected their children because they are LGBTQ knew? I wish they could see what a gift their gay child is to the world.

What's the most exciting thing coming up for FMH? The Lifetime film; the Mama Bear Documentary; going international; equipping the chapters; the Free Mom Hugs Tour, and, if I told you the rest, I'd have to kill you.

What words of support can you offer to those who have been rejected by their families? Those who reject you don't have eyes to see you shining there where you are. It gets better. Find and surround yourself with people who allow you to live your life just as you are. We're here — a teacher, a fellow student, a Mama Bear. We will always be hopeful your family will come around, but if they don't or until they do, we are your chosen family. We



are celebrating you and cheering you on!

How can people help move the mission of FMH further? If you can show up, go to FreeMomHugs.org and find and follow your state chapter's Facebook page. That will keep you in the loop of everything happening where you are. As the country opens up, show up. If you can pray for us and the community we serve, do that. If you can give financially, go to FreeMomHugs.org and give what you can when you can.

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Unsung story

An interview with gay filmmaker Aaron Bear

GREGG SHAPIRO | Contributing Writer
GreggShapiro@aol.com

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the term “unsung hero” was tossed around a lot as average, yet extraordinary, people struggled to find alternative means of survival because the government failed to protect them. To a whole generation of gay men, this experience had an eerily familiar feeling.

If the late Ric Weiland (1953-2006) — a true unsung hero if ever there was one — were still alive, he would most likely agree. Weiland, an openly gay man who co-founded Microsoft along with Bill Gates and Paul Allen, still found a way to make a lasting impact on causes near and dear to him, including HIV/AIDS

research and marriage equality, by leaving significant financial endowments to various LGBTQ organizations.

With his informative documentary *Yes I Am: The Ric Weiland Story* (World of Wonder), gay filmmaker Aaron Bear illuminates Weiland’s story, shining a well-deserved spotlight on a man who deserves the attention and accolades. Bear was kind enough to answer a few questions for us recently.

Dallas Voice: For some people, Ric Weiland’s name isn’t as familiar as his Microsoft cohorts Bill Gates and Paul Allen. Would you say that was what attracted you to telling his story in *Yes I Am: The Ric Weiland Story*? Aaron Bear: Much of Ric’s life was unknown, and that was on purpose and of his own choosing. He wanted to be someone behind the scenes making things happen. Being a filmmaker and someone who works behind the camera, I could relate to how Ric felt.



The deeper I dug into his life, it became clear that his life has paralleled a lot of my own. The film also touches on the subject of mental health and taking care of yourself. While making this film, I turned to working on my own mental health for the first time ever. I felt and continue to feel deeply connected to him on so many levels.

How much of your awareness of Ric was derived from your being a gay man

living in Seattle? Seattle is undoubtedly a special place, but in regards to my awareness of Ric, I had only read headlines about him upon his passing in 2006. Years later, I was approached at the Seattle International Film Festival by Ric’s friend Michael Failla about perhaps making a film about his life. It wasn’t until I was deep into the research of this film that I realized what a significant impact he

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had on Seattle, marriage equality, AIDS/HIV research and the list goes on. Ric has inspired me to be a better human being.

Ric's long-lasting contributions to LGBTQ philanthropy are truly revolutionary and central to his story. One of the doc interview subjects says that Ric was "so brilliant with code, he would write more, so he could make more money, so he could give it away." How do you think Ric would feel about the ongoing impact of his endowments? Ric's accomplishments are unsurpassed, and that is putting it mildly. Seriously, Google his name, and it's astonishing of his achievements, and nobody knows who he was. Ric would feel quietly delighted of his impact from his ongoing endowments.

The doc is full of fascinating interview subjects, many of whom were friends of Ric's including Bill Gates and LGBTQ activist Urvashi Vaid. When you approached people about being interviewed for the doc, did you meet any resistance, or was everyone willing to sing Ric's praises before the camera? Everyone wanted to be a part of singing Ric's praises. From Bill Gates to Urvashi. Zachary Quinto's involvement came later after I contacted him and expressed what an impact Ric has had on me while making this film.

The only unfortunate and sad turn of events was that I never got to interview Paul Allen. We had a filming date, and he passed two weeks before that date. Paul and Ric were incredibly close, and I wish I would have been able to show the brotherly type of love they had for each other.

Fenton [Bailey] and Randy [Barbato] at World Of Wonder were heroes of mine since high school, so working with those two was a dream come true. I really did have the gay dream team working on this film with me.

You mentioned out actor Zachary Quinto who provides the voiceovers during the parts of the doc in which we are given access to some of Ric's journal entries. What was it about Zachary that made him right for that? After finding Ric's diaries, I knew I wanted an out gay actor to read as Ric's voice. Someone who had seen some life, met some resistance along the way and knew the tone of Ric's voice. I made a short list, and Zach was someone I've always been drawn to. In all of my dreams, I never would have thought he would say yes. Zach had the tone nailed from the beginning and was such a gentleman to work with.

You also incorporate animation in the doc. Why did you include that visual element? The animation was something I had in my brain and storyboarded from the get-go. Since there wasn't a ton of

material of Ric [no actual video interviews of him exist], I knew I was going to have to create some visuals that were compelling but also helped guide the story along. My associate producer introduced me to this incredible talent located here in Seattle named Neely Goniodysky. She understood the heart and heartache of Ric from our very first meeting.

Nearly 40 years into the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the subject continues to be presented onscreen, not only in *Yes I Am*, which deals with Ric's seroconversion, but also in Russel T. Davies' *It's A Sin*.

Say something about the importance of not forgetting the ongoing AIDS all these years later? The history of HIV/AIDS should never be forgotten. Period. We have pills like Truvada that protect us these days, but history still remains and should be taught. I was able to show the film to a couple of late teens and early 20-somethings and they had no idea.

Some of the older folks I knew said there was "too much" about it. So, I found a balance with how much history I put in there. That said, Ric's contributions to [fighting] this disease were and continue to be paramount. He was giving money for research when nobody else was.

Oh, and if you can follow the @TheAidsMemorial on Instagram, it also provides a glimpse as to what it was truly like.

What do you hope to achieve by increasing public awareness of both Ric Weiland's life and death? I hope *Yes I Am* helps inform people about Ric's life and accomplishments, yes. But I really hope that the viewer leaves with the essence of — death is not the end and your life achievements can make a serious impact on the entire world.

Your next project, the TV series *There Is A Light That Never Goes Out*, is the second upcoming release to feature the title of a song by The Smiths as its name, the first being *Shoplifters of the World*. Can you please say something about the influence of Morrissey and The Smiths on your work and life? Being a suburban gay teenager in the Midwest, pre-internet, was an incredibly isolating and lonely experience. Music back then was my absolute outlet and savior. I'm not sure how I would have survived that experience otherwise.

The Smiths, more specifically Morrissey's voice and lyrics, truly spoke to the isolation and longing of that era in a way nobody had before. The way he sang about alienation and wanting someone to, "Take me anywhere, I don't care, I don't care..." was anthemic in wanting to escape from the oppression I found myself in and how I was willing to do anything possible to find my tribe outside that world.

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BEST

, From Pag 59

life! It never occurred to me that Gloria Estefan would consider me a friend and a talented actress. Morgan Freeman, George Chakiris, Whoopi Goldberg — for Pete's sake! I didn't know there was such a person as Lin-Manuel Miranda!

So, I simply want to say how much I appreciated what they said about me, particularly knowing that they went through very similar difficulties. And color sometimes had nothing to do with it. Sometimes it was just a very tough business to be in.

In *Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It*, you talk about how the late gay playwright Terrence McNally (who is interviewed in the doc), incorporated the Googie Gomez character you created into his play *The Ritz*, for which you won the Tony Award, a role you reprised in the movie version. It made me think about how, in the late 1970s, you were in two gay-themed movies — *The Ritz* and *Happy Birthday, Gemini* — something you did before a lot of other actresses did. Can you please say something about your decision to be in those films, as well as your LGBTQ fanbase? Being in two films that had gay themes was really not a difficult decision [laughs]. They were wonderful. They were delicious. They were funny. Being a part of that was just not a big deal. I've had gay friends forever. In fact, let me tell you something. I had the most wonderful little

girlfriend as a seven-year-old child. This girlfriend was around for at least seven years of my life, and her name was Eddie Lopez. Because I just knew there was something different about him at the time. We had the best time. So I always thought of him as my little girlfriend.

I've had an LGBTQ fan base for a long time and it started way before *The Ritz* and the movies. It's just something that is so much a part of me. I love the humor. I think gay people are just hilarious, and I think they're heartbreaking. I think they're brave, and I think they are here forever. Anybody who's unhappy about that, tough titty [laughs]!

With your show-stopping Best Picture Oscar presentation in April, *Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It* being released in June, and the forthcoming Steven Spielberg-directed *West Side Story* remake arriving in December, 2021 is turning out to be an especially big year for you professionally. In Tony Kushner's revised script, you play shop owner Valentina, a gender-swap with the original Doc character. How does it feel to be able to be involved in this project? I just don't think there are enough words to express my happiness at being in the new *West Side Story*. Being with Steven Spielberg is a dream come true. I've always loved his work. It has such breadth. He can do almost any-



A photo of Rita Moreno of *West Side Story* from the film *Rita Moreno Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It*. (Courtesy of MGM Media Licensing)



Oscar winners for *The West Side Story* George Chakiris, left, Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise and Rita Moreno, pose at the Academy Awards in Santa Monica on April 9, 1962. Moreno won best supporting actress. (Associated Press)

thing! He can do *E.T.*; he can do *Lincoln*, and now he's doing something that, by the way, he's wanted to do from the day he saw our original movie.

Let me just say that he is brilliant. Oh my God, he's so cinematic! Some of the shots in this movie are not to be believed. I literally followed him around like a child. He, in turn, behaved like a child so much, because he loved doing it. He'd say, "Rita, what do you think of this shot?" It was one of the greatest experiences of my life!

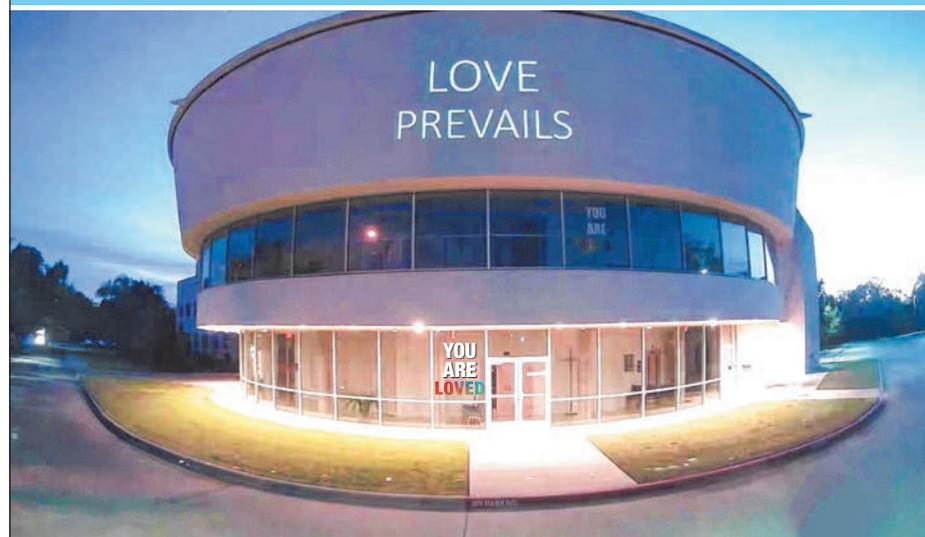
The set design is incredible. That has everything to do with Steven. He chooses his people. The cinematography is unreal. The young actors are spectacular, and here's what really means the most to me: that he and Tony Kushner had a great deal to do with the fact that the Sharks are Hispanic for real. They're not all Puerto Rican; that's not necessary. What's necessary is that they had to be Latinx and they are. That makes me so proud.

Steven and Tony went to the University of Puerto Rico and had a panel. They invited anyone who wanted to come and tell them how they feel about *West Side Story*. Some people didn't love it. Some people, like the mayor of San Juan at that time, said she was not crazy about it because she felt that the Hispanic kids were depicted in a negative way, being in gangs and all that. I don't think she quite understood, or maybe she did, that it was really *Romeo and Juliet*. That's what made it so different and so original and so brilliant.

But they went there, to the University of Puerto Rico, had a big panel meeting with people who literally just walked in to make demands: "So how are you going to do it?" It mattered so much to them that it be authentic, and if you were going to play a Puerto Rican kid you had to at least be Hispanic. There's a lot that I admire about both of those fellas. I'll never forget being invited. When I spoke to Steven on the phone and he said, "Would you be interested in doing this movie?" I practically dropped the phone. Certainly, my jaw dropped. I said, "Well, yeah. I think so yes." [Laughs] I was peeing my pants, really. Then I said, and good for me for remembering, "I wouldn't want do a cameo. Number one, I think it would be a terrible distraction just to sort of pop in and pop out." He said, "No, it's a real part. You will play Doc's widow. You have a real part in this. It's not a cameo." It was a great day in my life.

Finally, do you have something special planned for your 90th birthday in December? It seems that, perhaps, I can actually have a birthday party again. I always had one, and I don't think I'll have as many people as I used to have, but I think I'm definitely going to create something very special. It has to be with costumes of some kind. I don't know what that will be yet. I realized that people love to wear costumes; they just love it. So I don't want to disappoint them. But more likely than not, I will be having a 90th birthday party. Ninety — I can't believe it!

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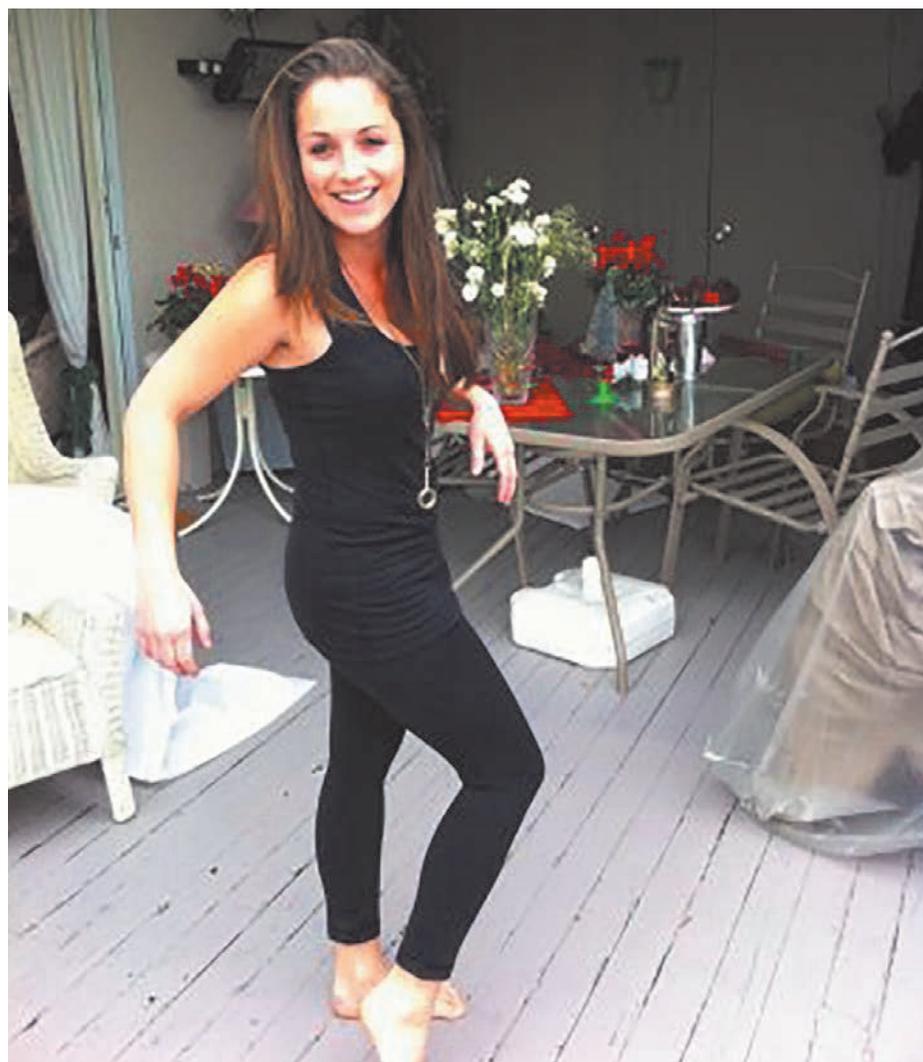
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BUSINESS PROFILE

Fab frozen



Texas among the newest spots
for Wreck Beach Spirits

RICH LOPEZ | Contributing Writer
richlopezwrites@gmail.com

Pride is going to taste a bit sweeter this year thanks to Wreck Beach Spirits. The lesbian-owned company has brought its signature Boozie Freezies to Texas just in time for Pride and for summer. And from bootlegger origins to a legit business, Wreck Beach Spirits founder Alana Thompson and CEO Emily Dewsbury are ready to take on the world — or the United States at least — with their boozy ideas.

Based out of British Columbia, Canada, the company has begun making its way into U.S. markets, hitting Texas this year.

“Yeah, we’re new to the states,” Thompson said via Zoom. “We actually couldn’t launch Boozie Freezie in the B.C. market, so we launched our seltzer here and decided to head to the U.S.”

Wreck Beach Spirits had a soft launch online and in Colorado and Kansas in 2020. For 2021, they also entered the Rhode Island, Missouri and South Carolina market, which has given the company some confidence.

“We were definitely keen to go there for the business, and now the possibilities seem endless,” Thompson said.

So what’s a Boozie Freezie anyway? Go back to your childhood summers when a frozen Fun Pop hit the spot. Now add liquor to that.

The team has created a variety of flavors that begin with real fruit and premium spirits. To date, flavors include Brisky Frisky Daiquiri, Glacier Margar-



ita, VodkaBerry Snow and Sunshine on the Rocks.

Thompson has come a long way from the inception of her idea. In fact, Wreck Beach Spirits' story is often a fun selling point.

"Back in 2008, in my mid-20s, I was thinking about what I wanna do in my life. I started making my version of a frozen pop with double shot cocktails, and I would walk down to the Wreck Beach, which was also clothing optional," Thompson said. "I wasn't trying to do something blatantly illegal. But somehow the police found out, and I was, like, actively hunted."

Thompson said her place was searched; she received warnings; she was under surveillance, and, in short, she got busted and was even arrested and fined \$10,000.

"When it escalated to all that, I realized that was not for me," she said. "But I knew I wanted to pursue this, and I circled back to it after a couple of years. I grew up a bit and found a consultant and even a food scientist to work on this."

Thompson's timing however is of particular note. She recalls soon after getting busted that she'd also decided to work on her love life and signed up on a dating site. That's where she met Emily Dewsbury. And although they dated a bit, their compatibility landed more on the business side of things.

"I thought it was very interesting and brilliant what she thought up," Dewsbury said. "When she talked about how she worked the whole bootlegging business, it was very sophisticated. Plus, be-

cause of all that, she was like this local celebrity."

A year later, Dewsbury found herself as the CEO for the company, and their goal was to hit the markets in 2018. Today they find themselves navigating their continued entry into the U.S. markets as well as developing new flavors for their Boozie Freezies.

"The goal was more classic cocktail flavors. Alana used to be a bartender, so she knows those," Dewsbury said. "But also, trends change so quickly, so we are researching cocktails constantly."

Wreck Beach Spirits work with small-batch distilleries and other resources primarily in the United States, which helps with production and distribution. Luckily, the pandemic wasn't a detriment to the company.

"We hadn't seen an effect in our business. We were kinda pandemic proof. There was kind of a growth in the spirits industry, so our sales have gone astronomical," Dewsbury said.

The two women have also not forgotten their community. They have taken part in Pride events and donated to queer-centric nonprofits.

"We have this consumable product, but a mandate of ours is to support and get involved with mentorships of queer people and help fund nonprofits. It's the best of both worlds so why not make a bigger difference," Thompson said. ■

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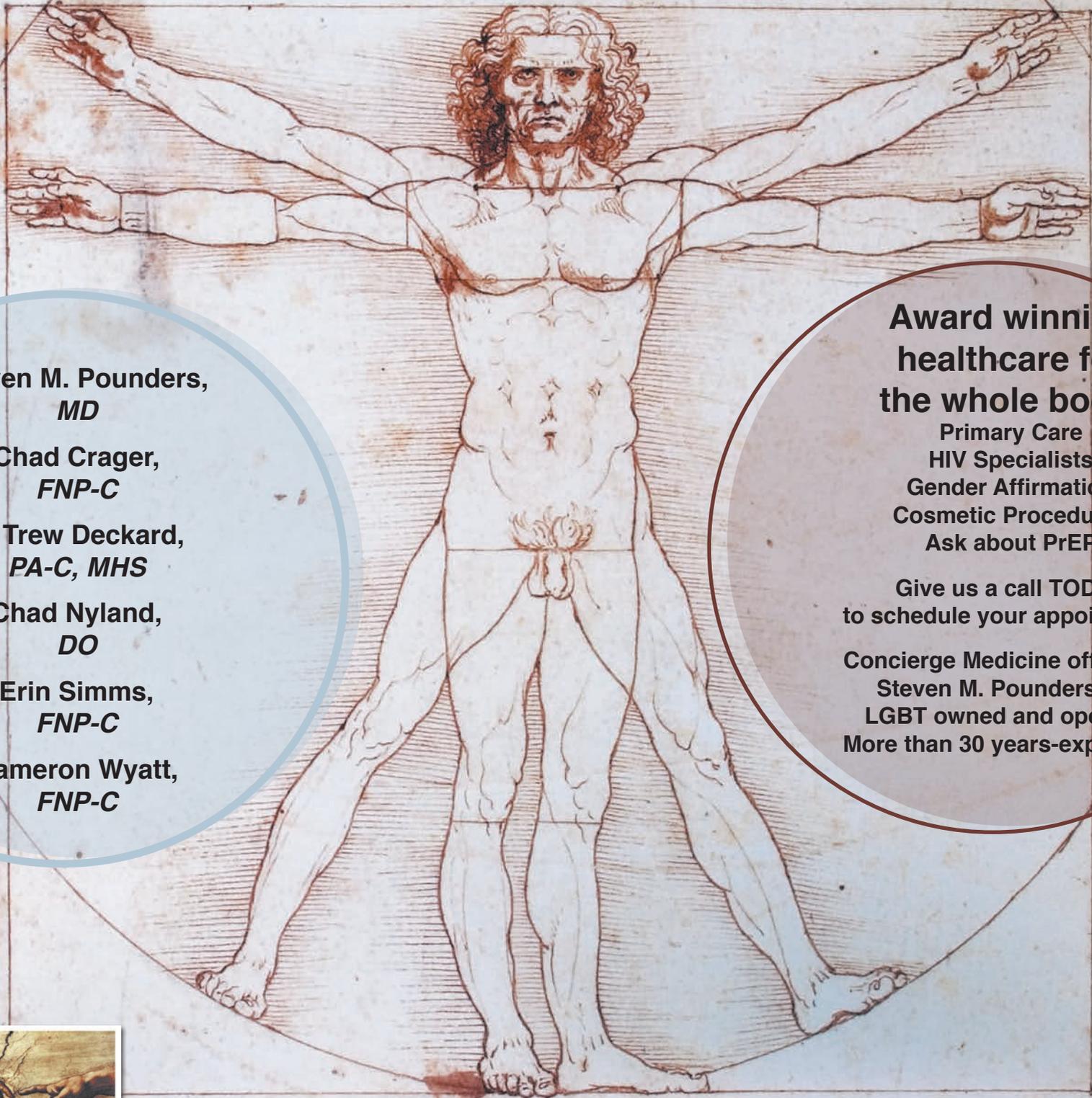
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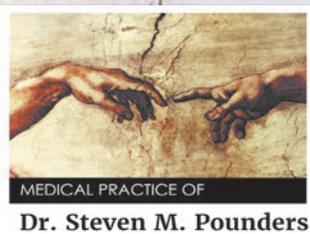
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MUSIC

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A playlist for Pride 2021 that will keep you moving

GREGG SHAPIRO | Q Music
GreggShapiro@aol.com

Happy Pride, y'all! Even without parades and festivals, there are still plenty of opportunities for us to show and share our pride this season. Supporting LGBTQ+ musicians should be close to the top of the list.

In the 2010s, Frank Ocean paved the way for queer black male musicians, and then in the 2020s Lil Nas X took the initiative and ran with it. In between the two, you will find the brilliant serpentwithfeet (aka Josiah Wise). *Deacon* (Secretly Canadian), the second full-length serpentwithfeet album, is sexy, sly, seductive and spiritual, often in the same song. "Derrick's Beard" says more in just over a minute and a half than most songs twice as long.

Queer musician Xiu Xiu (aka Jamie Stewart) has a career-long history of making some of the most compelling, yet difficult, pop music. Just as he lures in the listener, he abruptly shoves them away. This tendency has increased over the years with each subsequent album. All that changes with *Oh No* (Polyvinyl), subtitled *An Album of Duets*. Still employing his fluttery vocal style, Xiu Xiu not only sounds like he's happy to be collaborating with indie rock goddess Sharon Van, gay singer/songwriter Owen Pallett, punk feminist legend Alice Bag, Shearwater frontperson Jonathan Meiburg and alternative electronic musician Twin Shadow among others, but also with anyone taking the time to listen.

There's more to Prism Bitch and its debut full-length album *Perla* (prismbitch.com) than just its wicked inventive band name. There's lesbian drummer Teresa Cruces, solidly keeping the beat over the course of 11 rocking numbers. Also impressive is the way that Prism easily shifts from power pop to grunge to riot grrl to retro rock — and that's just the first four songs!

Speaking of queer drummers, Gina Schock of The Go-Go's certainly had a way with the skins. This was made abundantly clear on some of the band's biggest hits. After the all-female quintet's 1984 *Talk Show* album, they parted



serpentwithfeet, aka Josiah Wise

ways. But they regrouped and released *God Bless The Go-Go's* (Eagle) in 2001 and now have newly re-issued in a 20th anniversary edition (including a vinyl debut), as well as expanded CD and digital versions (with new cover art). On the whole, *God Bless The Go-Go's* is a harder-rocking effort than its forebears.

Northampton-based, queer and gender-nonconforming musician Carrie Ferguson invites listeners from all walks of life to join *The Grumpytime Club* (carrieffergusonmusic.com). The 11 songs boast "welcoming and inclusive messages" dealing with "accepting feelings and celebrating differences," while encouraging everyone to love themselves precisely as they are. Ferguson also plays melodica, piano, accordion and ukulele. Most listeners will find it hard to be grumpy for long.

San Francisco-based singer/songwriter Andrew Bundy describes his eight-cut debut EP *Good As I Came* (andrewbundy.com) as a "personal collection of original songs recounting my journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance as a gay man and artist." While that sounds like a mouthful, Bundy delivers on that promise. Opener "Shame," from which the EP draws its name, contains the meaningful lines, "I am who I am/Not ashamed to be/ The man I've buried deep inside/ You can tease me, you can leave me/I just want the world to see me/So the younger boys won't ever have to hide."

As all LGBTQ+ folks know, we need our allies. That's where singer/songwriter Grace Pettis comes in with her album *Working Woman* (MPress). The daughter of folk musician Pierce Pettis, Grace has music in her blood. Pettis' "Landon" does an amazing job of providing a personal viewpoint on what it was like to see a gay childhood friend suffer and to offer what amounts to a heartfelt apology. Indigo Girls join Pettis on the song, giving it even more depth. ■



PRIDE

2021



The staff of The Hidden Door extends best wishes to all our community for a memorable Pride Celebration!

WEDNESDAY, JUN 16TH, NOON!

After 15 long months, The Hidden Door will once again open to our family and friends. We are honoring the legacy of Tony Bobrow on his birthday, and will return to usual business hours on June 17th.

While we were closed, and to better serve our patrons, some improvements were made. This includes expanded outdoor seating.

“Still the friendliest bar in Texas”

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Drag legend Kennedy Davenport is among the entertainers who will be performing Saturday night, June 5, at Dallas Pride in the Coliseum at Fair Park. Kennedy is also among those giving pop-up performances on the Sammons Park Community Stage June 19 during the Dallas Arts District's Pride Party+. (Photo via Kennedy Davenport's Facebook page)

PRIDE AGENDA

A special calendar of events celebrating Pride and the DFW LGBTQ community.

• June 4: Ty Herndon

Kick off Pride with Ty Herndon and special guest performance by Arlo, live at 9 p.m. at Cedar Springs Tap House, 4123 Cedar Springs Road. \$10 admission and limited \$50 meet-and-greet tickets at [Eventbrite.com/e/ty-herndon-live-tap-house-tickets-156255242637](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ty-herndon-live-tap-house-tickets-156255242637).

• June 4-5: Dallas Pride

Dallas Pride is back with a 2021 celebration to raise awareness and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. Events start at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights; doors open at 7 p.m. and livestream will begin at 7:30 p.m. at [DallasPride.org](https://www.DallasPride.org).

• June 5: Imperial Court Pride Show

The Imperial Court de Fort Worth/Arlington holds a special Pride Show at 8 p.m. at Changes, 2637 E. Lancaster Ave. in Fort Worth.

• June 5: Northaven Pride

Northaven Church celebrates Pride with its second annual parade. Decorate your car and gather in the south parking lot for a parade at 4 p.m. After the parade, stay for a picnic and a live streaming of Pride in Fair Park at 8 p.m. Northaven Church, 11211 Preston Road.

• June 5: Reclaiming My Time on the Dance Floor

Queer dance party Pride weekend celebration with Angel and special guest Don Gentry at 10

p.m. at Elm & Pearl, 2202 Elm St. Tickets at [Queerriot.Eventbrite.com](https://www.queerriot.com).

• June 5: Save Our Youth

Virtual Pride celebration from the Tarrant County group LGBTQ Saves. 3-5 p.m. at [YouTube.com/LGBTQSAVES](https://www.YouTube.com/LGBTQSAVES).

• June 5: Pride Weekend Drag Brunch

Barbie Dupree Davenport, Mayra D Lorenzo, Angelique Rodriguez, Sasha King and Star Michaels. \$200 best Pride costume contest. 2 p.m. at Blue Cenote, 312 W. Davis St.

• June 5: Pride at Doublewide

Frida Monet, Kylee O'hara Fatale, Mulan Alexander, Barbie Davenport Dupree and Bleach take center stage around Midnight, and hot local rap duo the Fagadelics performing immediately after. Four DJs on the bill include Charlie Phresh, Ursa Minor, Blake Ward, and Rikzalla. The center piece of the party is a mechanical bull, so be prepared to see some sexy bull riding action. If you get hungry, easy slider is on site. While there is no dress code, the louder and prouder the looks, the better. Oh, and did we mention the dildo races? 9 p.m.-2 a.m. Tickets at [DiscoTx.com](https://www.DiscoTx.com).

• June 6: Reclaiming My Time on the Dance Floor

Rooftop pool party Pride weekend celebration with vibes by Angel and Dany Zalefsky from 1-7 p.m. at Canvas Hotel, 1325 Botham Jean Blvd. Tickets at [Queerriot.Eventbrite.com](https://www.queerriot.com).

• June 12: Drag Bingo: Bubbles+Bingo

Oso Climbing Gyms, 1330 Conant St. in the Design District, hosts Drag Bingo: Bubbles+Bingo, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., featuring host Cassie Nova. The event includes prizes, mimosas and pancakes, all free with a membership or day pass. This inaugural event is in celebration of Pride Month, and is the first of what will be monthly events. For information visit [ClimbOso.com/schedule](https://www.ClimbOso.com/schedule).

• June 12: OutFTW Field Day and Picnic

OutFTW holds a family-friendly field day with games including tug-o-war, spoon races, a water balloon toss, and obstacle course, bounce houses and more. Every player gets an OutFTW Field Day shirt and swag. There will also be music and food trucks. Register at [OutFTW.com](https://www.OutFTW.com).

• June 12: Denali at The Urban Cowboy

Denali Foxx, one of the contestants on the 13th season of RuPaul's Drag Race, also known as a figure skater and choreographer, performs at 9 p.m. at The Urban Cowboy Saloon, 2620 E. Lancaster Ave. in Fort Worth. For more information visit [Facebook.com/TheUrbanCowboySaloon](https://www.Facebook.com/TheUrbanCowboySaloon).

• June 13: Catholic Pride

New Ways Ministries is hosting Catholic LGBTQ Pride with an interactive prayer service on Zoom from 2-3 p.m. central time. Register at [NewWaysMinistry.org](https://www.NewWaysMinistry.org).

• June 13: DIFFA Picnic in the Park

DIFFA presents a picnic in the park that includes a picnic blanket with a space for up to four people, a DIFFA-curated picnic meal with wine and spirits, adult snow cones, entertainment by DJ Jen Miller and surprise performances. 1-4 p.m. at Klyde Warren Park. \$300 for four. Tickets at [one.bidpal.net/diffapicnic/welcome](https://www.one.bidpal.net/diffapicnic/welcome).

• June 13: Glamazon Prime Drag Brunch

The Urban Cowboy Saloon, E. 2620 Lancaster Ave. in Fort Worth, presents Glamazon Prime Pride Drag Brunch from noon-3 p.m. Tickets are \$10-25 at [EventBrite](https://www.EventBrite.com). For information visit [Facebook.com/TheUrbanCowboySaloon](https://www.Facebook.com/TheUrbanCowboySaloon).

• June 15-17: DEI Conference

The Texas Diversity Equity & Inclusion Conference virtually brings together LGBT Chamber member businesses and other certified businesses, DEI professionals, supplier diversity professionals, employee resource group members and more.

• June 18: Pride Party +

Virtual kickoff of Dallas Arts District's Pride Party + with Terry Loftis as Master of Ceremonies, Miss Dallas Southern Pride, Porsche Paris, Dezi 5, and Miss Southern Pride, Kennedy Davenport. 6:30-7:30 p.m. [Vimeo.com/showcase/prideparty](https://www.Vimeo.com/showcase/prideparty)

GAY AGENDA



Ashley Brundage will be signing copies of her book, *Empowering Differences*, June 12 at Sue Ellen's.

PLAN YOUR WEEK

Have an event coming up? Email your information to Managing Editor Tammye Nash at nash@dallasvoice.com or Senior Staff Writer David Taffet at taffet@dallasvoice.com by Monday at 5 p.m. for that week's issue.

The Gay Agenda is now color-coded: Red for community events; blue for arts and entertainment; purple for sports; green for nightlife and orange for civic events and holidays.

• June 4-5: Cinderella

Ballet North Texas presents the story of an ordinary girl experiencing one magical night, thanks to her Fairy Godmother and a pair of glass slippers featuring Prokofiev's jubilant score. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Tickets at ATTPAC.org.

• June 4-6: Bruce Wood Dance: Unite

Bruce Wood Dance returns to the stage for Unite, world premieres by Omar Román De Jesús and Joy Bollinger and two works by Bruce Wood. Moody Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. \$35-100. BruceWoodDance.org.

• June 4-10: Rooftop Cinema

Summer series of outdoor films at Dallas Heritage Village, 1515 S. Harwood St. June 4: 10 Things I Hate About You. June 5: Clueless. June 6: Scream. June 7: The Goonies. June 8: Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar. June 9: Coming To America. June 10: Back To The Future. Tickets at RooftopCinemaClub.com/heritagevillage.

• June 5: Dallas Black Dance Theatre

The BIG Dance is Dallas Black Dance Theatre's annual fundraiser, this year with in-person and virtual options. 8 p.m.-midnight at Meyerson Symphony Center, 2301 Flora St. Tickets at DallasBigDance.com.

• June 6: Prime Timers

Sunday afternoon games, Uno, trains. Bring a snack. 2-5 p.m. RSVP/text for location 214-218-0912.

• Through June 8: Daniel James Brown

Dallas Museum of Art's Arts and Letters Live presents Daniel James Brown, author of Facing the Mountain. Virtual through June 8. \$44. DMA.org.

• June 10: PFLAG Dallas

Virtual support meeting for parents, family and friends of LGBTQ people meets the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. Register for link at PFLAGDallas.org.

• June 11: Name, gender change clinic

UNT College of Law and Resource Center hold a name and gender change clinic via Zoom. Register at Resource Center's Facebook events page. Facebook. [com/events/2341757352621789/?a-context=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D%7D](https://www.facebook.com/events/2341757352621789/?a-context=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D%7D).

• June 11-17: Rooftop Cinema

Summer series of outdoor films at Dallas Heritage Village, 1515 S. Harwood St. June 11: *The Princess Bride*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, June 12: *Dirty Dancing*, *Scary Movie*, June 13: *The Notebook*, June 14: *Grease*, June 15: *Pretty Woman*, June 16: *Fight Club*, June 17: *Legally Blonde*. Tickets at RooftopCinemaClub.com/heritagevillage.

• June 12: Queer Reads

Queer Reads is an online book club that meets the second Saturday of every month from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Register at dallaslibrary.librarymarket.com/events/queer-reads-book-club-0.

• June 12: Ashley Brundage book signing

Ashley Brundage is a trans woman and former executive director of the Tampa LGBT Chamber of Commerce. She'll be in Dallas promoting her new book, *Empowering Differences* at Sue Ellen's, 3014 Throckmorton St. EmpoweringDifferences.com.

• June 13: Catholic Pride

New Ways Ministries is hosting Catholic LGBTQ Pride with an interactive prayer service on Zoom from 2-3 p.m. central time. Register at NewWaysMinistry.org.

Look for extended listings online at DallasVoice.com



LISTEN TO THIS

Country music singer **Ty Herndon**, and special guest performer Arlo, perform live at Cedar Springs Tap House, 4123 Cedar Springs Road,

beginning at 9 p.m. Admission is \$10, but tickets are limited.



TASTE THIS

Taste of Addison, featuring musical entertainment along with a menu of culinary treats showcasing the city's restaurant history, runs June 4-5 at 4970 Addison Circle. Get your

tickets at TasteAddisonTexas.com.



WATCH THIS

Bruce Wood Dance presents *Unite*, which includes world premieres by Omar Román De Jesús and Joy Bollinger and two works by Bruce Wood, Friday through Sunday at

Moody Performance Hall on the SMU campus. Tickets and info at BruceWoodDance.org.



GET CHARITABLE HERE

Thelma Houston and **Denise Lee** perform at the annual Bloomin' Ball, Saturday, June 5, benefitting AIN, Saturday

night at Renaissance Dallas Hotel, 2222 N. Stemmons Freeway. Find info at AINDallas.org.



WATCH THIS, TOO

Dallas Black Dance Theatre presents The BIG Dance, its annual fundraiser, with in-person and virtual options, Saturday, June 5, at the Meyerson Symphony Center, 2301 Flora St. Tickets

and info available at DallasBigDance.com.

Jenny Block

GIRL ON GIRLS

Freedom to go - and to return

As we kick off Pride Month, I am personally proud for two reasons. First, because I'm a lesbian. Second, because I am living an authentic life, something I wasn't always sure I could have — both because I am a lesbian and because, as much as I love being in a couple, I also love having my time alone. I knew I had found true love when I met someone who understood that keeping me forever and happily attached is all about my feeling free.

Someone told me once that when you put children in playpens, they spend all of their time trying to escape and get into trouble. But if you just set children in the room with you — without any open flames or other obvious and immediate dangers, of course — they will likely play right nearby.

Maybe it's more metaphor than reality, but I am that child. If you fence me in, I will spend all of my time trying to break free. But if I feel free to roam at will, I will not only spend most of my time close to home, I will also spend that time happily exploring those surroundings.

A couple of weeks ago I went to visit my best friend from high school for a week. I know my wife would have preferred that I either stayed home with her or that she come along. But the truth is she had to work, and my friend had just lost his mom, and it made more sense for me to fly solo. Upon my return, even before I touched back down in Texas, I was excitedly meal planning to spoil her and looking forward to seeing my wife and enjoying Memorial Day weekend together.

Being away does not make me long to be away more; it makes me appreciate the life I have at home more. And I have a wonderful life.

But even when you have a partner and a house and work you love, it can be easy to stop truly seeing it. It can be easy to become complacent. It can be easy to no longer want to participate fully in your own life.

For me, time away makes me want to take in every moment when I'm home. It makes me want to cook wonderful meals and go for sunset golf cart rides and host friends in our home and embark on long, meandering boat rides along the shores of the lake.

I volunteer as a bone marrow courier for Be The Match, picking up from donors across the U.S. and delivering to recipients wherever they might be. My wife travels for work. She, of course, would prefer that I travel when she does. But it doesn't always work out that way. I go when I'm needed.

I know it's a pain for my wife to have the two dogs at home all day while she's trying to work and field a zillion calls. But her supporting me taking those trips fills me up. I feel like I'm making a difference. I get



to see new cities. I venture out of our tiny lake town and remind myself of the world that lies just outside my personal slice of heaven.

I need those trips — the personal ones, the professional ones, the volunteer ones. And I am forever grateful to my wife for understanding that. I am a better version of me when I am not only actually traveling but also living with the awareness that I can hit the road any time I like, because she knows how much I need that.

I need to be out in it, and I also need time on my own. I love to be alone in a hotel room and order in local fare and watch bad TV of my choosing and stay up too late and write — or not. It makes me happy. It makes me love my wife more. It makes me want my life more. It makes me want to be present every minute when I am home.

I know it can be difficult sometimes for my wife to not take personally my desire to be alone and to be away. But her giving me that time makes me love her more, not less. I want that for myself so I can be my best self both for her and for me.

I don't do caged or over-managed well. I know that 100 percent from experience.

None of this has anything to do with sex. When it comes to that, my wife is all I want and need. Chosen monogamy is my happy place.

But it does have everything to do with self-care. And if I can't take care of me, I can't take care of her — or anyone else for that matter.

Two things to keep in mind: One, just because you don't need time away or alone doesn't mean that's true for your partner, and two, just because if you wanted to be alone or away it would mean you wanted to be with someone else or have another life doesn't mean that's true for your partner, either.

It's imperative to never assign our feelings to our partner's actions.

Having someone on a leash does not mean that they are yours. It's when they don't need a tether to draw them home that they truly are yours. My wife never clips my wings, and that is why I will always fly home to her.

this week's solution

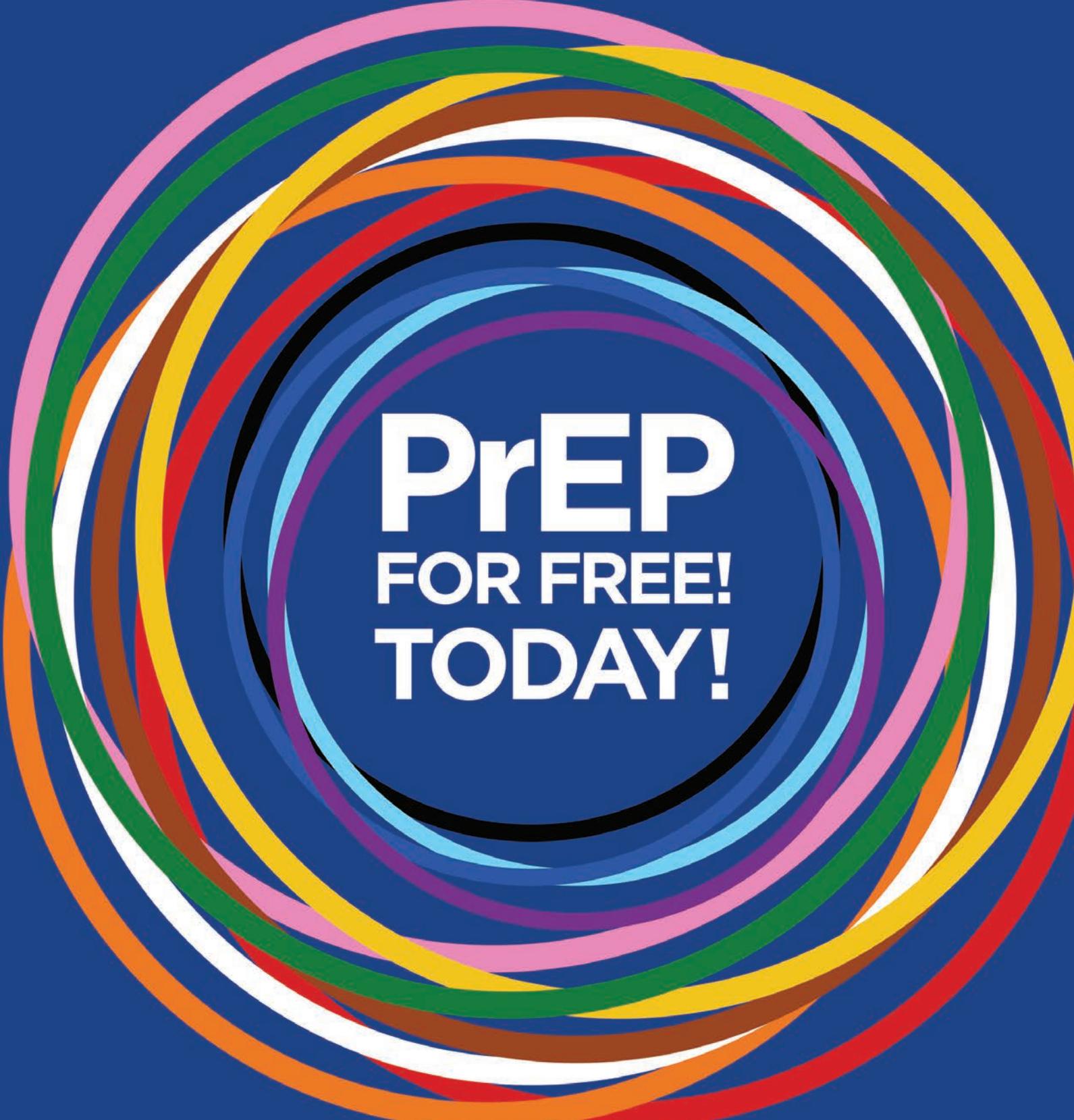
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For a more complete Community Calendar online, visit Tinyurl.com/dvevents.

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To submit an item for inclusion in the Community Calendar, visit Tinyurl.com/dvevents.



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- Allen, Ron, CPA | ronallengpa.com
2909 Cole Ave., Ste. 119 | 214-954-0042

ADULT

- After Hours Video
2528 West Walnut | Garland | 972-276-0893
- Alternatives
1720 W. Mockingbird Lane | 214-630-7071
- Club Dallas | theclubs.com
2616 Swiss Ave. | 214-821-1990

AESTHETICS

- Total Med Solutions | 214.247.1766
totalmedsolutions.com
- 5445 La Sierra, Ste. 305 | Dallas

AIR CONDITIONING & HEATING

- Jade Air | Air Conditioning & Heating
jadeairdallas.com | 214-522-2805
- Rescue Air | Heating and Cooling
rescueair.com | 972-351-8307

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- Antique Gallery of Mesquite
antiquegallerymesquite.com
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1208 N. Riverfront Blvd. | mydulce.com
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steph@ladylawnsah.com | 214.693.2959
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CLOTHING RETAIL

- Outlines Men's Wear | Men's Clothing Store
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spaceforlifetexas.com | 972-769-2526

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- Coaching Beyond | Dale Holdman, BSN, MA
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3824 Cedar Springs Road, #410 | 888-423-5372

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS

- Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau
arlington.org/lgbtq | 800-342-4305
- VisitDallas | visitdallas.com
325 North St. Paul St., Ste. 700 | 800-232-5527

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- Lovell, Cynthia, M.Ed. | CynthiaLovellllpc.com
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- Meador, Christopher PhD, LCSW | 214-674-8806
momentumpychologicalservices@gmail.com
- Owen, Jimmy, LPC-S | jimmyowen.com
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thepaugroup.com | 972-241-2000

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- Terrell, Kevin, DDS, PC | terrelldental.com
2603 Oak Lawn Ave., Ste. 100 | 214-329-1818

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- DJ Deluxe Productions | djdeluxe.com
214-823-1424

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- Hair & Now Electrolysis | LGBT Owned
hairnowelectrolysis.com | 214-865-8345
- Hair Today Gone Tomorrow Electrolysis
htgetlectrolysis.com
4245 N. Central Expwy, #450 | 682-593-1442
- We Only Wax | weonlywax.com
5610 Lemmon Ave. | 214.833.5958

ENTERTAINMENT

- Turtle Creek Chorale
TurtleCreekChorale.com | 214-526-3214
- The Women's Chorus of Dallas | twccd.org
214-520-7828

EYEWEAR

- Fashion Optical | fashionopticaldallas.com
3430 Oak Lawn Ave. | 214-526-6006
- Uptown Vision | uptownvisiondallas.com
3710 Rawlins St., Ste 100 | 214-953-3937

FERTILITY

- Conceive Fertility conceivefertilitycenter.com
6750 N. MacArthur, Ste. 100 | 214-224-0778
- Fertility Specialists of Texas
fertilitytexas.com | 214-618-2044
- The Fertility Consultants
thefertilityconsultants.com | 713-827-0301

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2273 E. Continental, Ste. 120-A | 817-366-1119

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- All Blooming Florist | allbloomingflorist.com
2615 Oak Lawn Ave., Ste. 103 | 214-238-3283
- Hair Salon | Barber Shop
■ Salon Aura | salonauradallas.com
3910 Cedar Springs Road | 214-443-0454

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- AIDS Outreach Center | aoc.org
400 N. Beach St., Ste. 100 | 817-335-1994
- CAN | cancommunityhealth.org
616 Matlock Centre Circle | 817-693-1000
- HELP Center for LGBT Health & Wellness
helpfw.org | 1919 8th Ave. | 817-332-7722
- Prism Health North Texas | phntx.org
351 West Jefferson, Ste. 300 | 214-521-5191
- Resource Center | myresourcecenter.org
LGBTQ services & info. 214-521-5124

HOSPICE

- Visiting Nurse Association of Texas
vntexas.org | 800-CALL-VNA

HOTELS

- Hotel St. Germain | hotelstgermain.com
2516 Maple Ave. | 214-871-2516

INSURANCE

- Alex Long Agency | Allstate Insurance
Allstateagencies.com/AlexLong
4425 Plano Parkway, Ste. 1001 | 972-570-7000
- Balsley Insurance Group | CindyBalsley.com
Cindy Balsley, Agent | 972-478-4304
- Beseda, Scott | State Farm|ScottBeseda.com
4411 Lemmon Ave., Ste. 203 | 214-219-6610
- Irvin, M. Angel | Farmers Insurance
14651 Dallas Parkway, Ste. 110 | 972-367-6200
- Medicare4USA | Individual & Group Health
Medicare4USA.com | 214-989-7900
- Steven Graves Insurance Abco Home Plus
abcohomeins.com | 972-423-0005

MATCHMAKERS

- Fern Connections | fernconnections.com
469-785-6136

MEDIA

- Affinity Magazine | affinityinmagazine.com
844-882-8864
- Dallas Voice | The Premiere Media Source
for LGBTQ Texas | dallasvoice.com
1825 Market Center Blvd, #240 | 214-754-8710
- DFW Gay Live!
Online source for LGBTQ Events | DFWGay.com
- He Said Dallas | Must see, do, eat & more
for gay Dallas | hesaidallas.com
- National LGBT Media Association
nationalgaymediaassociation.com
- OUT North Texas | The premier LGBT Visitors
Guide for North Texas | outntx.com
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Branch Manager | homeloansbychristian.com
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Fort Worth | 817-738-1933
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nashersculpturecenter.org
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uptownphysiciansgroup.com
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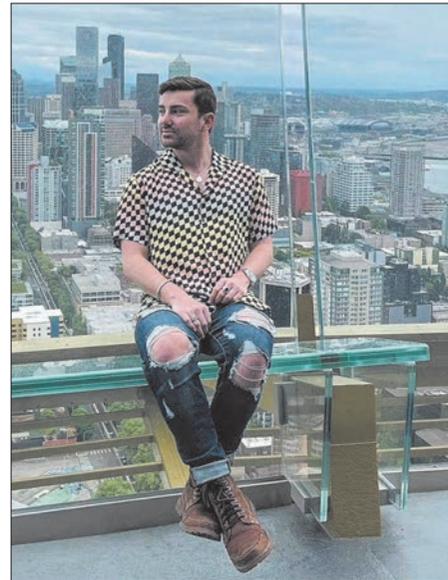
Hey Sis!



Fan Me Daddy



The Ladies of Fly Queen Drag Brunch



Andy shows his Pride at The Space Needle



Adrian at Cedar Springs Tap House



Allan, Orlando, Emmanuel and Antonio



Soraya and friends



Jonathan looking beachy



Roy G's Crew Celebrates Pride



Utica with The Rose Room Cast



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Steve Kemble looking FABBBBBULOUS in feathers



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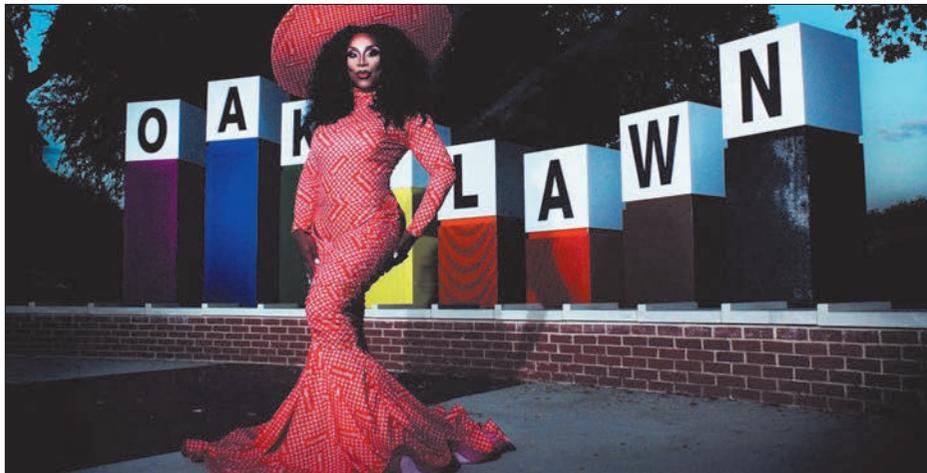
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Who was that masked man?



The Prep Squad kickball team



Barbie Davenport Dupree takes a casual stroll through Oak Lawn. (Photo by Frida Monet)



BeyonShade Lee Starr



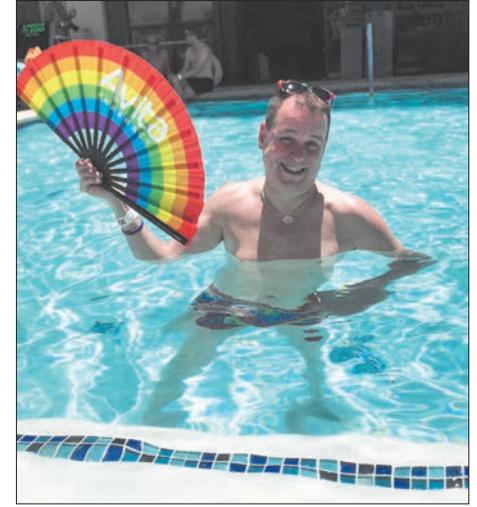
Keith at City Tavern



Emilio, Carmen and Josh at the premiere of Voces De Boriken DFW



King and queen



Big gay pool day!



Kissin' Karens



Look at this big ol' flag



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Robb and Jada



Maleea, Sara, Ethan, David and Katrina celebrate Pride at Wanderoo Lodge



Pretty in pink



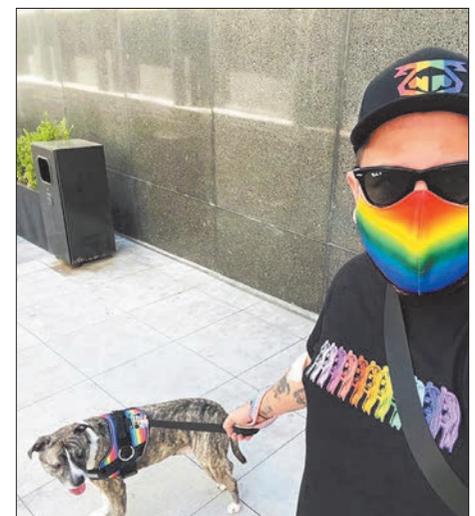
Randle, Liquor Mini and Robert at Fly Queens Drag Brunch



Rainbow Roundup is back with a trip to Dallas Zoo



Take Back Oak Lawn



Thats a good lookin's bitch



Happy Pride Month

After a year full of hardship for many around the world, we're finally returning to some sense of normalcy. Join the smiling crowds, roaring laughter, and dance the night away at the Gayborhood – where pride is celebrated every day of the year. Welcome back home, y'all.



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Sunday
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PUZZLE |

Somewhere Under the Rainbow

1	2	3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15								16						
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62	63				64					65		66	67	
68					69					70				
71					72					73				

Solution on Page xx

Across

- 1 Movie icon Jane
- 8 Rosie's *Sleepless in ____*
- 15 Toronto's province
- 16 Cut
- 17 Start of a line from a Randy Rainbow takeoff
- 19 Catwoman portrayer Eartha
- 20 Lucci in *All My Children*
- 21 Art Deco design name
- 22 Get the cappuccino foamy
- 24 Having no play
- 27 "Get out!" to Orton, with "off"
- 28 Condenses, as a book
- 32 More of the line
- 36 End of the line
- 40 Melville tale
- 41 Where to find hot buns
- 43 Part of a *Tommy* title
- 44 R&B singer Lou
- 46 A. Lincoln, e.g.
- 48 Some actors have big ones
- 49 Call placer
- 51 Is in the hole
- 53 Summer for Rimbaud
- 54 Crazy like a fox
- 55 Vardalos of *Connie & Carla*
- 57 Salt licks

Down

- 59 Singer of the original song
- 62 Vows now legal for all
- 64 *Hollywood Squares* choice
- 65 Skin designs, for short
- 68 Sam twitched it on *Bewitched*
- 69 Kevin Bacon movie of the '80s
- 70 Crude material
- 71 Cry out for
- 72 Drag spikes
- 73 *Dallas* actor Keenan

rank

- 25 "I'm not touching that!"
- 26 Some like them hot
- 29 Harper Lee's *Radley*
- 30 Say whether you're coming
- 31 Popeye's ____ Pea
- 32 What Hamlet was reading
- 33 Online letters
- 34 "When pigs fly!"
- 35 Turnpike fee
- 37 Like the rep of 59-Across
- 38 Act badly
- 39 Hoped for answers to come-ons
- 42 Movie preceder, once
- 45 Tickle pink
- 47 Packaging devices
- 50 Saudi Arabian capital
- 52 Patty Hearst's former org.
- 56 Texas A&M athlete
- 58 Trailing behind
- 60 Treated as a sexual object
- 61 Composer Thomas
- 62 P-town's Crowne Pointe, e.g.
- 63 Deer in Maria's song
- 66 Caesar's X
- 67 Taxpayer's ID

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41
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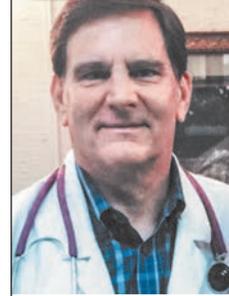
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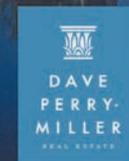
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