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Subscriptions via First Class Mail are available: Three months (13 consecutive issues), \$65. Six months (26 consecutive issues), \$85. One year (52 consecutive issues), \$130. To subscribe call 214-754-8710 x114.

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WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com

Cause of Alan White's death still not determined



The Alan White homicide has been one of the most frustrating cases in the LGBTQ community. Not only did it take months to find the body after White's abandoned car was located, cause of death has still not been determined.

Responding to an inquiry from Dallas Voice, Sgt. Sigala of the homicide unit wrote, "The cause of death has not been determined by the Medical Examiner's office. No new updates to provide. This is still an active ongoing investigation."

While the cause of death hasn't been determined, the case is being investigated by homicide now. Until the body was found, the case was under missing persons.

The difficulty in determining cause of death is possibly because of the state of decomposition of the body when White was finally found in a field in South Dallas near Paul Quinn College.

— David Taffet

Anyone with insurance should receive PrEP free

The federal government announced that all health insurance providers should offer Truvada or Descovy, the two drugs approved for HIV prevention, free.

Currently, Descovy is the preferred drug and since its introduction, the price of Truvada has come way down. So physicians would have to convince the insurer to cover Descovy, which is less toxic but more expensive. Truvada has been associated with bone density and kidney function issues.

According to guidance from the federal government under the Affordable Care Act, insurers have two months to comply.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that as of 2019, 285,000 people were on PrEP and that use of one of the drugs is 99 percent

effective on men and about 90 percent effective with women. Since use of the drugs to prevent the disease became more widespread about five years ago, new cases of HIV have declined about 8 percent.

Before going on PrEP, the guidance says a person should be tested for HIV as well as Hepatitis B and C. Women should be tested for pregnancy. And everyone should be given sexually transmitted infection testing and counseling as well as PrEP adherence counseling.

— David Taffet



NHL player comes out

Luke Prokop, 19, a draft choice of the NHL Nashville Predators, came out as gay today, Monday, July 19. He's the first NHL player under contract to come

out.

In his statement, Prokop said the past year and a half gave him time to no longer be scared or want to hide who he is.

"Today I am proud to publicly tell everyone I am gay," he wrote.

He credits his family, friends and agent saying he can now bring his whole self to the rink.

"I may be new to the community," he wrote, "but I am eager to learn about the strong and resilient people who came before me and paved the way so I could be more comfortable today."

He said it was just the beginning of his journey and he was eager to see where it took him "both in hockey and in life."

The NFL responded by writing, "On behalf of the National Hockey League, we are proud of Luke Prokop for today's announcement and I would like to thank him for sharing his truth and for being so brave."

The statement continued that the league hoped this was just the beginning for LGBTQ players, coaches and staff so they can "live their lives as their full and true selves." The league pledged to do what it can to support him.

— David Taffet

California appellate court rules trans pronouns law violates freedom of speech

SACRAMENTO – The State of California Third District Court of Appeals ruled on Friday, June 16, that a state statute requiring nursing home staff to use the correct pronouns for trans and non-binary patients is a freedom of speech violation.

The Court, in a unanimous 3-0 decision, struck down this key provision of the LGBTQ Long-Term Care Facility Residents' Bill of Rights, created by SB 219 in 2017. The Court upheld the provision in the law that requires nursing homes to place transgender patients in rooms that match their gender identity.

SB 219, also known as the LGBTQ Senior Bill of Rights, protects LGBTQ seniors in long-term care facilities from discrimination and mistreatment based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

— Washington Blade via National LGBT Media Association

Fundraiser set at Woody's for injured bartender Harold Smith



Friends of Harold Smith are holding a fundraising show Thursday, July 22, to raise money to help the Woody's bartender after he was injured on July 1. The show starts at 9 p.m. at Woody's, 4011 Cedar Springs Road, and is presented by Anita Bump and Trayla Trash of Trailer Park Productions.

A friend explained that while walking home from work, Smith was confronted by a beggar asking him for money. When he refused to give the man money, the man became belligerent pushed Smith into the road where he was hit by a car.

The friend said the accident left Wilson with rods, screws and plates in his right leg, and that he is recovering at home now under the care of his family.

— Tammye Nash

Adoptable / AMBER



About Amber: I'm a retriever mix. I'm seven months old and spayed. Me and my siblings recently came to the SPCA of Texas and we're looking to find forever homes. We're sweet pups searching for families who will spoil us.

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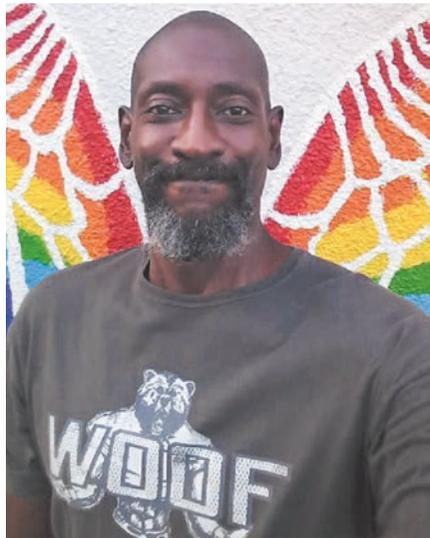
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OBITUARY



Larry Derrick, 61, died after battling throat cancer for seven months.

Larry was a reference librarian at the Dallas Morning News during the 1990s and early 2000s at its former building on Young Street. In his memory, the newspaper flew the Texas state flag at half staff on Sunday, July 18.

In its story remembering Larry, the News said, "He's remembered by loved ones and former colleagues as a patient and unflappable man who was passionate about support-

ing and helping others, both in everyday life and in his role helping reporters at The News with research."

Friends at the Morning News described him as a gentle giant and easygoing, always with a smile on his face.

He grew up in Garland and graduated from Garland High School where, at 6 feet 7 inches, he played basketball.

In the LGBT community, he was active with Silver Pride. Each year he participated in LifeWalk and every Saturday he was at Cathedral of Hope serving meals to the homeless.

He had five siblings and is survived by his brother, Neil, and two sisters, Carol and Shirley.

His sister Carol told the News that he was the type of person "who usually went overboard on Christmas presents, and his younger relatives loved spending time with him 'because they knew he was going to buy them something.'"

A balloon release was held in his memory on July 17 at Garland High School. On Aug. 15, a memorial service will follow Sunday morning service at Lift Community Church, 3015 Gulden Lane.

In lieu of flowers, friends suggest a donation to Silver Pride, LifeWalk or Dallas Hope Charities. His family suggests a donation to Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

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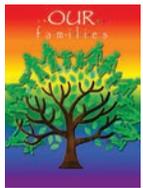
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Adulting is hard

Making a will, or updating an existing one, is the right thing to do

There is nothing like writing a will to smack you with a hefty dose of recognizing your own mortality. As I prepared to have surgery to replace my bum knee, my partner and I decided we probably ought to get our paperwork in order in case anything unforeseen happened.

Both of us had made wills previously. But they were more than 20 years old, so it was time to update them, and we needed to get the Medical Power of Attorney paperwork together, as well.

So we scheduled an appointment with our attorney, and last Monday morning we showed up to review everything and sign all the papers. There were a lot of papers.

Here in Texas, even though he and I have lived together for more than 26 years, we are legally strangers. Therefore, we needed half a dozen documents to make sure that the Great State of Texas doesn't meddle in our business should one or both of us die.

If we were married, this would be simpler. But marriage is something we haven't done — for a variety of reasons, including the whole heteronormative aspects of it. Nevertheless, we wanted to get things in order.

Luckily, we engaged a very good and very LGBTQ-friendly attorney, Rebecca Covill, who gently walked us through the process and made sure our wishes were asserted in legalese so things would go well with state authorities.

What really gob-smacked me was how much we had forgotten to consider. For example, what would happen to our cat, Merlin? We had to find a willing trustee to take care of him should we both move on before he did.

Again, luckily, I found a friend who knows cats and who graciously agreed to be his godparent.



Hardy Haberman
Flagging Left

Neither of us knew each other's usernames or passwords. This could be a big problem when a surviving partner needs to get into a computer or bank account or social media account.

So we began the process of creating

And then there is the matter of passwords.

Both of us have dozens of accounts and social media apps that all require passwords.

a list of accounts, usernames and passwords that would be locked away with our other legal documents in case of calamity. Without these, managing an estate or, frankly, just letting friends know what was happening would be a royal pain.

Then there was the matter of bank accounts. Neither of us had set up a POD (Pay On Death) for our accounts. That's a happy little acronym, but an important one.

When my mother passed away many years ago, I was executor of her will. But because she didn't have a POD on her bank accounts, I had to cover everything out of my pocket until the will was probated.

And finally — that word probate!

My mother was a frugal woman, and

she decided to use a boilerplate will she found in a book somewhere. It was all notarized and signed, but because one word was missing in it — one word — it took a court appearance and several months of haggling to get things settled. A court battle is not the way you want to remember a loved one.

The moral of this story? Thinking about one's demise is never fun and, honestly, mortality is a bitch. But that shouldn't stop you from buckling up and getting things done to make life easier for the people you love when you are no longer here.

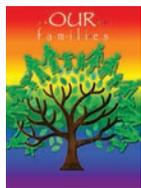
It is a lot of work, but it's worth it in peace of mind. Doing the "adulting" thing is never easy, even if you are an old curmudgeon like me, but it's the right thing to do. ■

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The next chapter

FAMILY PROFILE

After their twins turned 20, one couple had another baby, but it wasn't to fill an empty nest

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Mark Le Doux and Bryan Carr insist their new son Beau wasn't their response to empty nest syndrome, and even though he was born this March, he wasn't even a pandemic baby.

When the couple met, Carr already had two-year-old twin daughters. He was a single man who wanted children and 20 years ago, adoption agencies wouldn't work with a single gay man unless he wanted to adopt special needs children or, possibly, older children in the foster system that were considered unadoptable.

So he decided to go the surrogacy route and found an agency in Los Angeles to use. Again, he noted, that was 20 years ago when surrogacy was new and unavailable locally.

How did he manage a full time professional career and newborn twins?

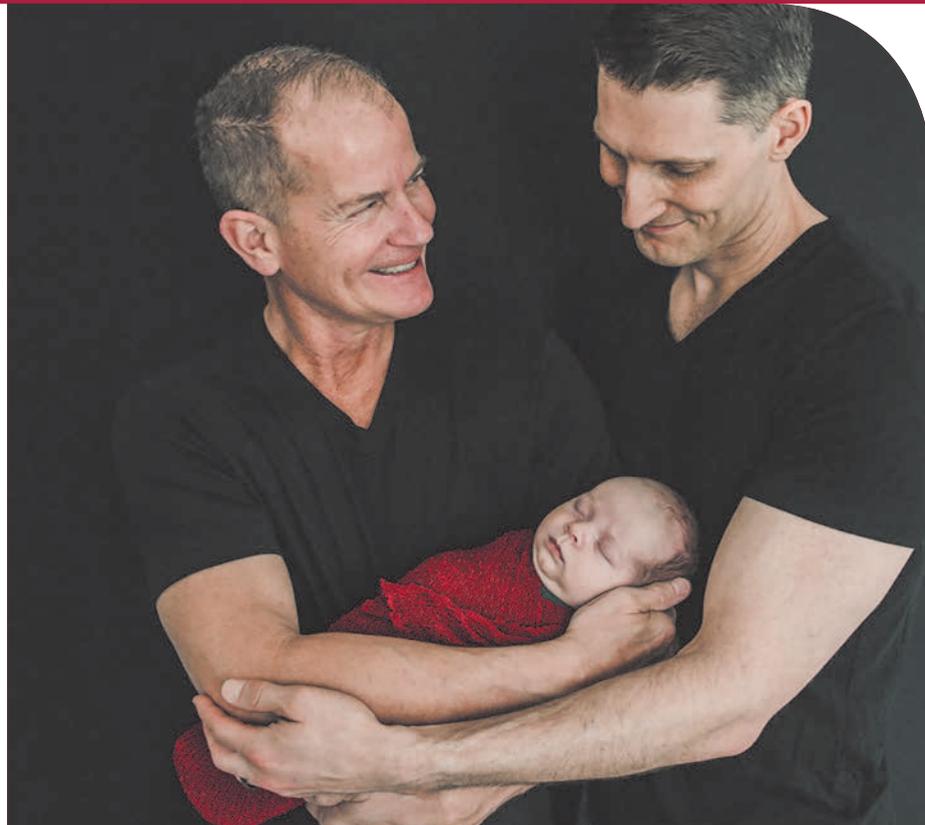
"A friend who acted as nanny," he said. And the two girls have maintained a relationship with her to this day.

When Le Doux met Carr, he said it was a matter of who he was most crazy about — Carr or his girls. But he quickly realized they were one wonderful package deal.

As the girls remember it, Le Doux was always there. He actually didn't move in until a couple of years later because he was mostly out of town doing his medical residency.

But once he moved back to Dallas to finish his residency at UT Southwestern, he adopted the twins and they became a family.

That's when Le Doux said he came out to his family. And while we should never minimize how difficult coming out can



Bryan Carr, left, and Mark Le Doux cradle Beau. (Photos courtesy Mark Le Doux and Bryan Carr)

be, his was one of the easier stories. He wasn't just coming out, but, at the same time, he was introducing his parents to their new grandchildren.

"Our girls are very different," Le Doux said.

Carr said had they not been born together, we wouldn't even be having the discussion. But their daughters do defy the stereotype of twins.

For instance, they've never gone to the same schools. One got into Hockaday and the other into Green Hills. Now that they're in college, one goes to UT and the other attends the University of Northern Iowa.

One's considering law school, the other med school or graduate school, depending where her tennis playing takes her.

"One's a very old soul," Le Doux said. "Very intuitive. She observes. The other one kicks the door down."

Sending children off to college is often a time when parents start to suffer from empty nest syndrome. The house is suddenly quiet. All the daily activity is gone. Meals are for half the number of people.

sudden reaction to the girls going off to college. He'd been planned for years. They didn't suddenly just get pregnant.

"We talked about this since the girls were 10 years old," Le Doux said.

Which meant he certainly wasn't a pandemic baby either. They weren't bored at home and suddenly woke up one day expecting an unexpected child. At the time, both girls were home from college because of COVID-19. There was no empty nest, and they'd already been working with the surrogacy agency for a couple of years.

Because of the good luck Carr had with their surrogacy agency in L.A., they decided to go with the doctor they already knew, even though those same services were now readily available in Dallas.

They recounted the steps the agency walked them through. First they found an egg donor. Then they fertilized the eggs. This time Le Doux is the biological father.

Then they found a surrogate — one who had already had a successful pregnancy — to carry the fertilized egg. The



It's a time to adjust to the next phase of your life.

Not so in the Le Doux-Carr household. In March, Le Doux and Carr and their two girls welcomed Beau into their family.

But the two men say Beau wasn't a

first time they tried implanting the egg failed. But they had success on a second try.

Carr said the process gets expensive, and the more tries needed, the more expensive it gets.

What was different about this surro-



Mark Le Doux, left, and Bryan Carr with their daughters.

gacy was Le Doux and Carr didn't meet their surrogate until delivery.

"We were in touch by video," Le Doux said.

While they paid for medical care through the pregnancy and talked on Facetime, because of the pandemic, they were unable to meet in person.

Carr described their new addition as "not an angel and not a textbook baby." By eight weeks, though, he was sleeping through the night.

And they had the advantage of having two doting big sisters home from school and helping take care of him.

But the girls have returned to campus and the couple is left alone with their new son.

"He surprisingly is not a problem at all," Carr said. "And he's just one baby."

Despite being 20 years older, this time Carr is sharing baby duty with his husband rather than caring for two by himself.

Carr's advice to same-sex couples or LGBT singles thinking of having children is that children are not a status symbol.

"Make sure you're having children for the right reason," he said.

He warns that surrogacy is expensive but then it's very expensive to raise kids.

Le Doux adds that if you're having kids for the wrong reasons, "you'll pay even more to fix things later."

But if you are having kids for the right reason, there's never a good time. Or any time is a good time, but there's never a perfect time.

Carr said something that helped him with twin girls was family involvement. His mom moved to Dallas for awhile when the girls were one.

"Have patience with the process," Carr

said.

Having a child through surrogacy is a multi-year process.

Le Doux said to expect surprises.

"We're two controlling personalities," he said. "As perfect as you plan, things are still not under your control. Let loose the reins. It's not always up to you."

That goes from picking the egg donor through the rest of your children's lives, he said.

Carr said being a parent, "is just as rewarding as I thought it would be."

Le Doux warned you'll miss some of the friendships you would have had.

"The friend pool gets smaller," he said.

But even that's changed in recent years with groups like Rainbow Round-up made up of hundreds of LGBT families in the DFW area.

"And Cathedral of Hope has a robust children's center," he said. "It's a good place to meet families like ours."

In addition, Carr served on the board of Family Equality for nine years and is still involved in some committee work that he's found very rewarding.

Right now, the couple is looking for a nanny. Anyone interested in the position can contact them through Facebook. And we're happy to help them find the perfect addition to their household with this little plug.

So with their new addition to the family, Le Doux said they're not starting over again because "your parenting never stops."

And Beau isn't a reaction to their empty nest or an accidental pandemic baby. He was very much planned and years in the making.

"He's just another chapter," Le Doux said. ■

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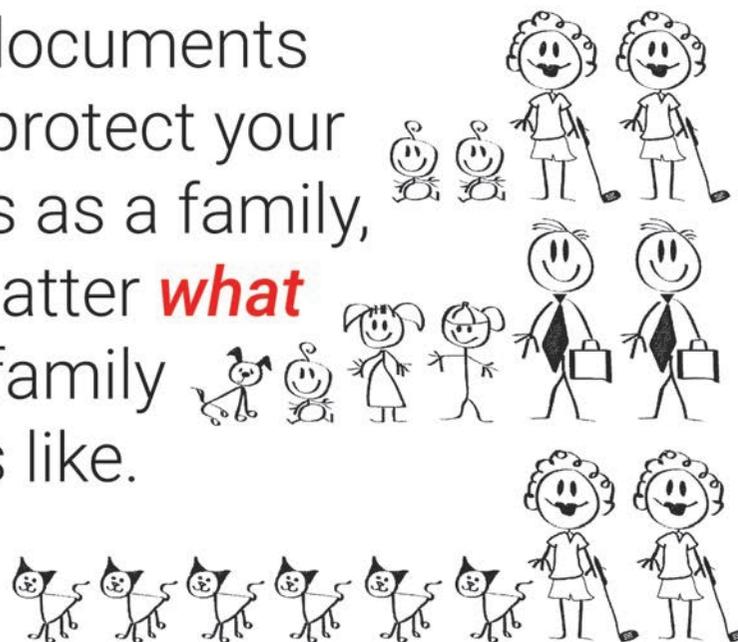
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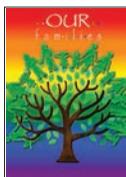
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Blended family

FAMILY PROFILE



Kimberly Kantor, top left, Lorie Burch, and their three daughters. (Photo courtesy Kimberly Kantor)

As Kimberly Kantor drove to her doctor's appointment to begin treatment for receiving a fertilized egg, we spoke about growing her family

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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L spoke to Lorie Burch and Kimberly Kantor as Kantor was on her way to a doctor's appointment preparing to have another child.

Burch is a well known attorney in the LGBTQ community in North Texas who ran for Congress several years ago and Kantor founded Rainbow Roundup. Together the couple has one child together and two that they're co-parenting with Kantor's ex.

Asked for details on the IBF procedure that Kantor hopes will get her pregnant, both said they rely on their doctor to

guide them each step of the way. But they were taking that first step this week with a check-up to make sure Kantor was in good health.

Kantor said she'd probably get an ultrasound to check for polyps and to see if there was "anything of concern" before getting her body ready to implant the fertilized egg.

The fertilized egg that will be used was harvested from Burch several years ago and is the only viable potential embryo left. The other was used successfully several years ago and Adlee was born.

Kantor said she expected some shots to regulate her cycle for several months before the fertilized egg is implanted.

As she drove to her doctor's appointment, the conversation turned to blended families. Both women agreed, theirs worked well.

"I'm their wicked stepmother," Burch said, joking about her relationship with their two older daughters. They share parenting with Kantor's ex and her ex's new wife.

But for their blended family to be suc-

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cessful, Burch said the focus is on the girls.

"And we're supportive of their other mom," she said.

"From the git go, my ex-wife always wanted to do what was best for the girls," Kantor said.

Burch said she first met Kantor's ex at an event for their oldest daughter. That made the meeting less awkward because the day was about their daughter, not about them.

"I was nervous," Burch admits about the meeting. "But the kids already liked me."

And from the beginning, they all decided to make it work.

Burch said she has the freedom to independently guide each girl with the encouragement and appreciation of Kantor's ex.

She described her first meeting with the two girls who were 5 and 10 years old at the time. For the older one, she made a big card with a word puzzle game in it. The answer to it was told her how much she liked her. For the younger one, she got stickers. She said she connected with both of them quickly.

"I've gotten to a great place with my ex," Kantor said and the two couples have even planned a date night together. They're planning to go to the interactive 3D Van Gogh exhibit this fall. "It takes time to get to that point, though," she explained.

Of the four moms, Burch describes herself as the one who sets boundaries.

"I'm the only one that tells her she has a curfew," Burch said.

But she's only helping provide structure and said she never hears, "You're not my mom."

This blended family works and it's pretty seamless between the two homes that are about 30 minutes apart. Sometimes someone forgets something they need at the other house. With the oldest now driving, things are a little easier, but sometimes they meet halfway. Everyone makes sure it works.

Because of the age difference between Adlee and her older sisters, the couple wanted another sibling for her closer in age.

Burch said she hopes this next try is successful.

"I haven't spent my adult life raising kids," she said. But now she seems to be enjoying every minute of it.

Asked where someone should start if they're thinking about having kids,

Kantor said, "Start with your spouse." Have an honest discussion to make sure you're both ready and have similar expectations.

"I've always sought medical advice," Kantor said. "Make sure you have the best medical advice and do what's best for you."

She said beginning with an exam will help ensure the most successful opportunity.

Then she said to rely on your instincts. "Do what feels right for you," she said.

And while she said there are some incredible doctors in the area, make sure to choose someone LGBT-friendly.

"Because it's not cheap," Burch said.

Kantor said her first experience wasn't the best. She founded Rainbow Roundup as a result to find LGBT-friendly service providers.

Today, Rainbow Roundup provides so much more than just an exchange of information for parents. The group has started in-person events again. In May, about 100 members visited the Dallas Zoo together. Since then they've had an afternoon together at Hawaiian Falls waterpark in Mansfield and an evening at the drive-in.

Kantor explained why these events are so important to the kids who participate.

"Our kids need to see families like theirs," she said.

She said it was so important for their children to have a safe space and a respite from what they regularly encounter.

"Our kids have to come out every day," she said.

The latest group Rainbow Roundup is working with are teens who identify as LGBTQ. Kantor said they're meeting with events in different areas even beyond the four largest North Texas counties.

Burch said she started her law practice to benefit the LGBTQ community. As a family practice attorney, she works with lots of families to make sure they receive equal legal treatment as any family.

"I want my two-year-old to know her family is as valuable as any other family," she said.

And as we finished speaking, Kantor was pulling into her doctor's parking garage for her appointment to begin her treatment before implanting the fertilized egg. She walked to the office and checked in. And Burch joined her wife for the appointment via Facetime. ■



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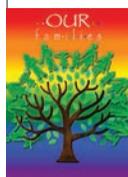
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Broadening horizons

THE MOMBIAN



The new Netflix kids' show *Ridley Jones* features a nonbinary bison and a mummy girl with two mummy dads.

LGBTQ representation
in children's television
moves forward

DANA RUDOLPH | Contributing Writer

Several television shows for young children, including the venerable *Sesame Street*, have recently introduced LGBTQ characters, and a new one launching this month promises even more inclusion.

For the episode "Family Day," on June 17, *Sesame Street* included a two-dad couple in the main "Full Street Story" segment of the show for the first time. (Same-sex parents had been briefly mentioned or shown in a few smaller segments before.)

In "Family Day," we meet Dave (Chris Costa), his husband Frank (Alex Weisman) and their daughter Mia (Olivia Perez), who are all visiting Dave's sister, existing cast member Nina (Suki Lopez).

They're introduced just like several other families — and no one blinks.

Abby's stepbrother Rudy observes, "Wow, all these families are so different!" And Frank comments, "Yeah, there's all kinds of different families. But what makes us a family is that we love each other."

It's a little on the nose, but if there's one message to convey here, that's it.

The episode, which can be viewed on HBO Max or free on YouTube, was directed by cast member Alan Muraoka, who has played the proprietor of Hooper's Store for more than two decades and who, in real life, lives with his husband, Herb Perry, and their cat.

Muraoka announced the episode on Facebook, saying, "I am so honored and humbled to have co-directed this important and milestone episode. Love is love, and we are so happy to add this special family to our Sesame family. Happy Pride to all!"

In May, Dreamworks Animation's *Madagascar: A Little Wild* (Hulu and Peacock), about a group of animals in a rescue habitat in the Central Park Zoo,

introduced new character, Odee the Okapi, who is nonbinary and is voiced by nonbinary actor Ezra Menas. In the episode “Whatever Floats Your Float,” by queer writer Laura Zak, the animals

prepare for the annual “Animal Pride Parade,” and Marty the Zebra (Amir O’Neil) tries to decide which float Odee should ride on, since Odee seems part zebra and part giraffe.

Odee tries to oblige and act like each animal in turn but doesn’t quite fit either role. Ultimately, both Marty and Odee learn to celebrate the things that make Odee unique.

This is a great step forward, although I hope the analogy isn’t lost on kids. The animals do refer to Odee with “they” pronouns, but this is never explained. And

Odee’s nonbinary identity is never associated with gender.

Still, the message of celebrating people for who they are is always a good one.

The Paramount+ reboot of the children’s TV series *Rugrats* in May also introduced a single queer mom. In the original series, toddler twins Phil and Lil’s mom Betty was married to a man. In the reboot, however, she’s queer and single, voiced by queer actor Natalie Morales.

Betty likes to play football, owns a coffee shop and slings cappuccinos as she keeps an eye on her toddler twins. Although she’s single, she mentions an ex-girlfriend in an offhand comment.

Nick Jr. show *Blue’s Clues & You* released a special video for Pride, featuring a range of queer families and flags, and a song sung by drag queen Nina West. The show also posted a special “Celebrating Pride Month With Blue & Josh! Opening Mail” video, with real kids talking about Pride, LGBTQ equality and the LGBTQ people in their lives.

Both videos were released on YouTube, however, not on the broadcast show.

Finally, *Ridley Jones*, premiering July 13 on Netflix, promises ongoing queer inclusion among core characters. It’s the

latest show from the Emmy- and Peabody Award-winning Chris Nee, creator of Disney Junior’s *Doc McStuffins* and also a lesbian mom.

The titular character is basically Indiana Jones as a six-year-old girl, right down to the fedora. Alongside her mother and grandmother, Ridley (Iara Nemirovsky) protects the museum she calls home — no easy task, because when the lights go out, the exhibits come to life. Her friends include a nonbinary bison named Fred (again voiced by Ezra Menas) and a mummy girl (Ashlyn Madden) with two dad mummies.

“Is Fred a he or a she?” Ridley asks astronaut monkey Peaches (Laraine Newman) in Episode 1. “I don’t know, they’re just Fred,” Peaches replies. “Cool,” says Ridley, with unconditional acceptance.

These aren’t the first shows for young kids to include LGBTQ characters, but *Sesame Street* is arguably the one with the highest profile — and certainly the longest tenure. And the nonbinary characters indicate representation is broadening beyond the staple of same-sex parents (or in Betty’s case, a single lesbian or bisexual parent).

Are things changing for the better? In a tweet on June 15, Nee referenced a 2017 episode of *Doc McStuffins* that featured a two-mom family and noted, “Having fought so hard in the past to do a single episode with same sex parents ... it was a joy to introduce recurring characters [in Ridley Jones] without any pushback at all.”

Whether that indicates an industry shift or just her experience with Netflix remains to be seen.

Likewise, it’s unclear if we will see recurring instances of the queer characters on the other shows named here. And the only mainstream television series for young children that focused primarily on a family with queer members was Hulu’s *The Bravest Knight*, which ran for one season in 2019; a second has not yet been announced.

Kids of LGBTQ parents, LGBTQ kids and their peers all need these shows, which reflect their families, their selves and their world. The progress above is heartening, but we must keep pushing networks and producers for more. ■

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 700+ LGBTQ family books, media, and more.



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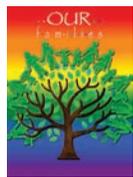
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An expert shares tips

FAMILY TRAVEL

Traveling with unvaccinated kids during COVID-19

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Summer is back, and if you haven't noticed, people are traveling. As more states and countries start to open up, many of us are, frankly, itching to visit family or experience a vacation again. But while many of us parents and older kids are vaccinated, our younger children are not vaccinated, which is a concern for many families wanting to travel.

Whether you are scouring online to find a great getaway deal or looking to book tickets soon, we chatted with Dr. Steven Gelman, director of Outpatient Pediatrics at New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, about traveling with unvaccinated kids this summer.

New York Family Magazine: First, is it safe for kids to travel if they have not been vaccinated? Dr. Gelman: Yes, it is safe for kids to travel if they have not been vaccinated. That said, I would advise that families head to destinations where the positivity rates are lower, which does knock off some locations.

But if kids are too young at this point to be vaccinated, I do encourage their travel companions, such as their par-

ents or relatives, to be vaccinated before travel. This will minimize the potential spread to the children. If parents are not vaccinated, then I discourage travel.

Realistically it's tough to get a toddler or, even in my case, my special needs child to wear a mask. Any tips that can help keep our kids safe this summer? Is this still something that a parent should be concerned about? It is challenging to get some kids to wear their masks and certainly not easy to get them to wear them properly. One of the benefits of summer travel is that many activities are outdoors, decreasing the spread. I would recommend dining outdoors with unvaccinated children and not yet eating indoors.

As much as possible, I would keep your family in a bubble and try to keep the kids close. In some ways, travel now is more challenging than it was a few months ago in that most adults wore their masks then, and you could avoid those that didn't. Now so many vaccinated adults have removed their masks, so it is harder to know who is vaccinated and who isn't.

This comes back to the idea of traveling to cities and states where the COVID positivity numbers are low and conducive to outdoor activities as much as possible.

We have been seeing, and expect to continue to see, an increase in other viral pathogens, like common cold germs, increasing in the younger group as the COVID numbers drop. Like in

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flu season, these kids have to be monitored for any respiratory problems and dehydration. Most clear it like they always did.

Any idea when young children will be able to get vaccinated? Currently, children under 12 years old are not eligible for the vaccine, but we hear and are hopeful it will be available to younger children in the fall. While I am excited and hopeful for it to be expanded soon, unless it happens imminently, it wouldn't help for summer travel. ■

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A family tale

ON THE PAGE

Story of a gay uncle stepping up for his niece, nephew is a sweet read

***The Guncle* by Steven Rowley, c.2021 Putnam; \$27; 326 pages.**

The situation you're facing isn't one you wanted. You had no wish for it; in fact, it's 100 percent the opposite. Not your circus, not your monkeys, as they say.

So usually, you'd follow your instincts and run, but this time you surprise yourself by stepping up and taking ownership.

Now it is your problem. But, as in the new novel *The Guncle* by Steven Rowley, that's more than okay.

Sara had been his friend first. Patrick wasn't exactly happy when she married his brother, Greg. But she managed to make it work, and he loved her for it. He loved her first, actually, and he never let her forget it.

But now she was gone, and Greg had asked the impossible: Would Patrick — gay man, former TV star, Palm Springs fixture, no-responsibilities Patrick — take Greg and Sara's kids — 9-year-old Maisie and 6-year-old Grant — for the summer so Greg could go to rehab while grieving the death of his wife? Could the kids' GUP (Gay Uncle Patrick) step up?

No. There was no way that Patrick was taking temporary custody of two kids. But then his older sister, Clara, copped an attitude, rolled her eyes and told him he was "off the hook."

And so Greg headed to rehab after the funeral, and the kids went home with Patrick to Palm Springs. It would be a

long 90 days.

Grant was cute but full of questions; Patrick learned to make things up. Maisie was nobody's fool, and Patrick learned to hide his passwords. He gave them "Guncle" Rules (gay + uncle = guncle), life lessons and stories about their mother.

But past that, what does a gay man who never wanted kids do when he suddenly has two of them?

He takes them to the museum way too often, that's what. He takes them to five-star restaurants and cringes when they



order kid food. He lounges with them in the pool, gets them a dog, lets them put up a Christmas tree in July, hugs them and throws a party.

And he loves them.

There are four words that best describe *The Guncle*: A. Dor. A. Bull.

That's it. This novel is simply as charming as they come, and don't be surprised if you can almost hear your favorite actors as any of the characters here. Don't be surprised, either, if you spend your vacation racing to reach the ending you think's coming, and you're wrong.

Indeed, author Steven Rowley offers the perfect mix of snorts and sobs here, snarky fun one minute and pathos the next, but neither emotion is belabored or forced. That gives readers room to enjoy the tale as it unfolds and grows like an inflating pool toy and to watch the characters twisting wistfully in irresistible, concentric circles.

Your ticket's in your hand; your suitcase is packed; your destination is close, but you need a book to get you there. If you'd love to immerse yourself inside a sweet novel like *The Guncle*, then step right up.

— Terri Schlichenmeyer



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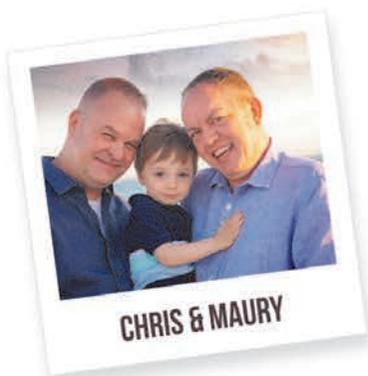
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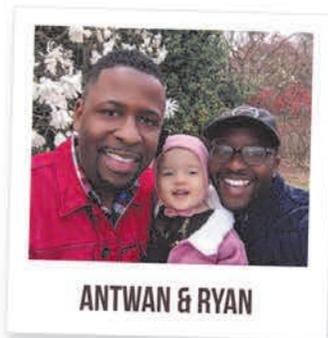
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All about Bette

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Hollywood legend takes the stage by way of actor Fowler

RICH LOPEZ | Contributing Writer
richlopezwrites@gmail.com

Another theater is getting back on stage this week with live audiences — and an icon! MainStage Irving/Las Colinas continues its season with *Me and Jezebel*, only this time in real life. The play centers on a true story by Elizabeth Fuller who recalled the time cinematic legend Bette Davis stayed at her house for a rather lengthy visit. That may sound like a fabulous time, but actor Doug Fowler helps to answer the question: Was it really?

Fowler takes on the role of Bette Davis in the new show, sharing the stage with Bailey Maxwell, who plays Fuller, the author and host. Before opening night this Friday, Fowler talked about exploring the icon and making sure his performance isn't a drag.

Dallas Voice: So, you're Bette Davis.

How's that going for you so far? Doug Fowler: Well, so far it's been great. Since this is a true story, we find ourselves talking about how people would really react in this situation, and we've talked about the characters at length as we've gone through rehearsals. The premise is that Bette stays with this woman in Connecticut for a month because of the hotel strike in New York and how their relationship evolves.

How did you feel about returning to the stage in a pandemic? I was a little nervous about COVID at first, and it helps that it's a two-person show. But everyone has been really great about it, and I felt completely safe.

As an actor, there must have been feelings to receive the call that you got the role. It has been over a year-and-a-half since I've been on stage, and there's been a lot of reflection in that time. It's been a good thing, and I think much of that has manifested with this show, from choosing to audition for a show that I was interested in.

I mean, I love Bette Davis. So when I got the



Doug Fowler is Bette Davis, and Bailey Maxwell is Elizabeth Fuller in *Me and Jezebel*, now onstage at MainStage Irving/Las Colinas. (Photo courtesy of MainStage Irving/Las Colinas)

offer, I was just thrilled. There's excitement but a little bit of nerves, honestly.

OK, enough about you. Let's talk about you as Bette. What's interesting about your role is that you're creating a character who's a real person but who was

also kind of a character. Can you talk about crafting her? When people do her, they do a characterization of the actress that you see. To a certain degree, that might be a bit melodramatic today, but it's also of her time.

A lot of what I've done is watch her movies, but I also watched lots of interviews to get her mannerisms and cadence.

Sounds like a balancing act. I don't want to do a parody of her. This is more of the real Bette Davis the person.

In the show, there are moments you see that the diva we see on the screen or in interviews was definitely part of her real life. She acted the part of the star in public.

On top of creating this character, do you have to toe the line also between the performance and a drag performance? Yes! I definitely didn't want to do drag.

I mean, of course, I'm a man in a dress doing Bette, but after the initial shock of a man in this role, the audience should just see Bette. In this aspect, it has to be her.

This is a two person show, but who would you say the show is about: Bette or Elizabeth? I haven't had anybody ask me that. In a lot of ways, Bette gets the attention, but really, it is about Liz and this dichotomy of having this idol with her and how it affects her family and her life.

In this experience, what has Bette taught you? Someone asked how we are alike, and I don't think we are. (Laughs) To be honest, I'm a gay man, and I can be a diva. So maybe there are those aspects, but she taught me to really stand up for yourself. Strength is not something to hide. She didn't care what people thought, and she was determined to be strong.

There are likely some young gaybies who don't know who Bette Davis is. That is very true. A coworker I was telling about this didn't know who she was. I hope they come to see that there was a really strong, powerful woman in an age where men ruled. She was a trendsetter for women today to make their own path. I hope that will spark some interest in having younger generations come out.

And finally, what are your three essential Bette Davis flicks to recommend? Oh gosh. I'd say *All About Eve*, *Now, Voyager* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*? I think those three cover her different stages. By the time of *Baby Jane*, she had just morphed into a caricature of herself, but those are definitely must-sees.

Me and Jezebel by Mainstage Irving/Las Colinas opens Friday, July 23, and runs through Aug. 7 at the Irving Arts Center. mainstageirving.com.

News from around the world

FROM WASHINGTON BLADE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LGBT MEDIA ASSOCIATION



Leyna Bloom Sports Illustrated cover shoot from Instagram

Leyna Bloom is first ever Trans cover for Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue

FROM STAFF REPORTS

NEW YORK — Leyna Bloom, a 27-year-old Chicago native, who identifies as Black and Filipina, reflected on her Instagram account Monday of being the first Trans woman of color on the cover of the venerable Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue saying. "This moment heals a lot of pain in the world."

The news first broke in June during Pride month, speaking to NBC News OUT who noted that model and actor had previously broken through barriers as a transwoman when in 2017, she became the first trans woman of color to be featured in Vogue India, and in 2019, she became the first to star in a film that premiered at the Cannes Film Festival for her appearance in "Port Authority."

"These are huge moments," Bloom told NBC News at the time. "But it's just like, why has it taken so long?"

In her Instagram post Bloom wrote, "We deserve this moment; we have wait-

ed millions of years to show up as survivors and be seen as full humans filled with wonder.

I'm am so happy, honored, and humbled to share that I'm the 1st trans woman to grace the cover of Sports Illustrated! Thanks so much @mj_day & @si_swimsuit team for recognizing the importance of representation; this is all of our responsibility. Thank you @joshrotten@caafashion and most importantly @damianbao for taking a CHANCE on me. My friend & teacher @modelthaddeus thank you for helping me make this possible. To my bloodline and father, thank you for the courage & sacrifices you made to ensure that I stand tall in every step I take. Now I'm flying."

Chilean Senate approves marriage equality bill

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS | Washington Blade

The Chilean Senate on Wednesday approved a bill that would extend marriage rights to same-sex couples.

The vote took place less than a month after President Sebastián Piñera announced he supports marriage equal-



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NEWS, From Previous Page

ity and urged lawmakers in the South American country to quickly act on the issue. The bill now goes to the Chilean House of Representatives.

Same-sex couples have been able to enter into civil unions in Chile since 2015.

The Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation, a Chilean LGBTQ advocacy group, in 2012 filed a lawsuit with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of three same-sex couples who were seeking marriage rights in the country. The group entered into an agreement with the Chilean government over marriage equality and adoption rights for same-sex couples, but withdrew from it last October.

Out athletes going for gold

BY KEVIN MAJOROS | Washington Blade

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games begin on June 23, with competitions continuing through Aug. 8. The Games were



Michael Gunning narrowly missed out on qualifying for this year's Olympic Games. (Photo courtesy Gunning)

postponed in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For many aspiring Olympians, the quadrennial event is the culmination of a lifetime of sacrifices to compete against

the best athletes in the world while representing their country on an international stage.

The road to get there is filled with obstacles and this Olympic cycle produced

one more barrier in the form of training disruptions that happened in almost every sport.

After all the dust settled during the qualifying process, 627 athletes were named to Team USA. More than 30 of those athletes are out members of the LGBTQ community.

Regarding the other countries competing, according to a recent story by Outsports, "At least 142 publicly out gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and nonbinary athletes are headed to Tokyo for the Summer Olympic Games."

Flashback to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games when a correspondent from The Daily Beast used hook-up apps such as Bumble, Tinder, Grindr, and Jack'd to message gay athletes. His published story went on to describe the athletes, creating potentially dangerous situations for the athletes from countries with high anti-LGBTQ violence rates.

What should we expect from the environment in Japan?

There have been a handful of Japanese athletes who have come out recently but for the most part, they are competing in other countries — notably trans soccer

NEWS, Page 24

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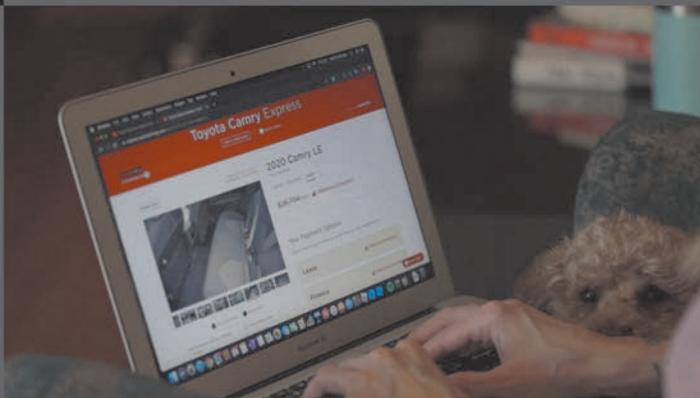


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Our Mission

Rainbow Roundup is a nonprofit organization committed to providing LGBTQ+ families and allies a safe place to connect through education, social activities, and resources.

Monthly Events

Join us for one of our monthly family-friendly events. We organize outings in the DFW area - from waterparks to movies to camping trips and more.

Online Community

Rainbow Roundup has a public and closed Facebook group where members can share suggestions or seek advice on a variety of unique challenges faced by our community.

Join us!

Have a question? Want to become a Sponsor? Rainbow Roundup 1-855-MYRRFAM
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find us under Rainbow Roundup!
Find us online at www.rrup.org
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NEWS

From Page 22

star Kumi Yokoyama who plays for the Washington Spirit and out lesbian Shiho Shimoyamada who plays soccer for SV Meppen in Germany.

LGBTQ activists in Japan were hoping that the worldwide attention on the Tokyo Olympics would help push their ruling Liberal Democratic Party to pass EqualityAct Japan banning discrimination against LGBTQ people. Their legislature went into recess without passing the measure.

That setback did not stop Pride House Tokyo Legacy from opening in October 2020 in Shinjuku, Tokyo. It will serve as a permanent LGBTQ support center where individuals can feel safe and at home.

Pride House Tokyo Legacy has been authorized as part of the Tokyo 2020 Official Program by the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games along with full support from the International Olympic Committee. Those endorsements make it the first Pride House worldwide to achieve this status.

Visibility for the LGBTQ community is important for a variety of reasons and in the sports world, we tend to point to LGBTQ athletes as role models for younger generations.

Over the next few weeks we will bear witness to the first transgender athlete to compete in Laurel Hubbard as a weightlifter for Team New Zealand.

We will watch lesbian triple jumper Yulimar Rojas compete and carry the flag for her country of Venezuela in the Parade of Nations.

And we will sit enthralled as gay British Olympic diver Tom Daley is cheered on by his three-year-old son Robbie as he attempts to medal again in his fourth Olympics.

The last time the Blade checked in with out Tongan swimmer Amini Fonua, he was in heavy training to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and struggling with the funding needed to complete that journey.

Fonua was one of the Olympic athletes that spoke out against The Daily Beast story from 2016, which helped to get the story retracted, with an apology. It was the first instance where the International Olympic Committee, which also chimed in, had ever acknowledged an LGBTQ presence.

Pakistan opens government school for transgender students

BY BRODY LEVESQUE | Washington Blade

MULTAN, Punjab, Pakistan — In an action that sets unique precedent in this largely conservative Muslim majority country, the Government of Pakistan earlier this month established and opened its first public school for transgender people in Pakistan's most populous province.

A tweet sent out on July 9, on the official Pakistani Government Twitter account read; "First public school for transgender people has been opened in Multan. This will not just educate the transgender people but will increase livelihood and business opportunities for them as well."

The school, established by the educational department in Punjab province, where Multan is located, opened its doors on the first day of school with 18 students enrolled the Associated Press reported.

"We have provided them everything that is required" for their schooling, tweeted Murad Rass, Punjab's education minister. He added that he hopes that the school will help transgender youth get better job opportunities later on in life.

Ayesha Mughal, a trans advocate in Punjab, told the Associated Press that the trans community is "grateful" to the government for opening the school and "for providing free education to our community."

Mughal tweeted about the historic occasion. "Today I am so happy, proud and emotional at the same time."

Life in Pakistan for trans people is often fraught with the danger of being physically assaulted, denied basic healthcare, and exclusion from society. Often forced to live on streets reduced to begging for food or everyday necessities, the opportunity presented for good education is a lifeline to many trans Pakistanis.

In 2018, the country's Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act which established broad protections for trans people in the country which was followed in 2019 by the Pakistan Supreme Court which ruled transgender people would be designated as a third gender. ■



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GAY AGENDA



Friends and family will gather Sunday, July 25, at 5 p.m. for a Celebration of the Life and Legacy of longtime community activist and fundraiser Michael Champion, aka Sable Alexander. The celebration takes place in The Rose Room inside S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road; doors open at 4 p.m. and the show starts at 5 p.m. The event is presented by The Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System, which was founded by Michael and his husband, Bill Lindsey, aka Linze Serrell. The couple created the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System as a way to recognize and honor the talents of drag performers across the state while at the same time raising funds for nonprofit organizations serving the LGBTQ community, and proceeds from the show will benefit the pageant system and LGBTQ S.A.V.E.S., a Fort Worth-based organization serving LGBTQ youth. Michael Champion was a registered nurse and worked as director of nursing at a nursing home. He contracted COVID-19 last November while caring for his patients there and succumbed to the disease in January this year.

PLAN YOUR WEEK

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.

JULY

• July 23-Aug. 7: Me & Jezebel

On May 28, 1985, star-struck Elizabeth Fuller's dream came true when the legendary Bette Davis came to dinner at her Connecticut home. Four weeks later, as the hotel strike in New York dragged on, she was still there. This is an intimate, funny, and true story of a Hollywood legend coming face-to-face with her most ardent fan. Directed by B.J. Cleveland. \$19-29. MainStage Irving, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd. MainStageIrving.com.

• July 23-29: Rooftop Cinema

Summer series of outdoor films at Dallas Heritage Village, 1515 S. Harwood St. July 23: *The Greatest Showman* (Sing-along), *Scream*. July 24: *Ratatouille*, *Half Baked*. July 25: *Hocus Pocus*. July 26: *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. July 27: *Love & Basketball*. July 28: *Legally Blonde*. July 29: *Jumanji: The Next Level*. Tickets at RooftopCinemaClub.com/heritagevillage.

• Through July 24: Confederate Currency: The Color of Money

The exhibition investigates the importance of slavery in the economy of the South. Artist

John W. Jones has researched and documented 126 images of slavery depicted on Confederate and Southern States money. The juxtaposition of the framed Confederate currencies, which the acrylic paintings inspired the slave images on the currencies, makes a very powerful statement on the contributions of enslaved Africans to the American economy. African American Museum, Fair Park. AAMDallas.org.

• Through July 24: Lucha Teotl

The Elevator Project presents *Lucha Teotl*, an immersive experience with the audience ring-side watching luchadores wearing the masks of Aztec gods playing out a sincere and exciting wrestling storyline. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. ATPAC.org.

• July 25: Celebration of life of Michael Champion

The Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System will be holding a Celebration of Life and Legacy of Michael Champion, aka Sable Alexander, on Sunday July 25 at 5 p.m. at the Rose Room, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Doors will open at 4 p.m. and show at 5 p.m. All money raised will benefit the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System & LGBTQ SAVES.

• Through July 25: When Pigs Fly

Uptown Players presents a revival of the company's first show. Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m. at Kalita Humphreys, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. UptownPlayers.org.

• Through July 25: Cubism in Color: The Still Lives of Juan Gris

First U.S. exhibit of cubist Juan Gris in 35 years with more than 40 of his paintings and collages. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood St. DMA.org.

• July 27: Name and gender change workshop

Lambda Legal discusses what the process looks like in Texas to secure state and federal identity documents. Lawyers can receive CLE credit. Meeting via Zoom. LambdaLegal.org.

• July 30-Aug. 1: Rooftop Cinema

Summer series of outdoor films at Dallas Heritage Village, 1515 S. Harwood St. July 30: *The Sandlot*, Friday. July 31: *Christmas in July — Elf, Die Hard*. Aug. 1: *Casablanca*. Tickets at RooftopCinemaClub.com/heritagevillage.

• Through July 31: Visible: Asian and AAPI Artists in America

A group exhibit featuring new works by 17 artists. Ro2 Art Downtown, 110 N. Akard St. Opening reception on July 3 from 7-10 p.m. Ro2art.com.

AUGUST

• Aug. 3: Name and gender change workshop

Lambda Legal discusses what the process looks like in Texas to secure state and federal identity documents. Lawyers can receive CLE credit. Meeting via Zoom. LambdaLegal.org.



PARTY HERE

Daddy Ersin Presents is bringing two big parties to DFW this weekend, starting Friday night, July 23, with **HAMmer Party Dallas**,

featuring DJ J Warren, from 9 p.m.-2 a.m., and continuing Saturday, June 24, with **RAM Party Dallas' Gear Dance Party**, featuring DJ Dani Brasil, from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. Both nights' events take place at 1350 Manufacturing St., Unit 120, and tickets start at \$30. For tickets and information, visit Facebook.com/Events/197416508929349.



PARTY FOR A CAUSE HERE

Dieseled presents "**Valor: The Next Generation of Heroes**," a Cosmic Circuit Party event raising funds to

help build housing for homeless LGBTQ youth, on Saturday, July 24, from 10 p.m.-3 a.m., and a poolside party 3-9 p.m. on Sunday, July 25, at Aloft Downtown Dallas, 1031 Young St. DJ Cesar Hernandez headlines the Saturday night party, with an opening set by DJ Ventura, and DJ MDMATIAS headlines the Sunday pool party which also features sets by DJ Jamey Boozer and Tyler Moore. Special room rates available at the hotel. Tickets start at \$24 and are available only online at Universe.com.



DRAG YOUR BRUNCH HERE

Raquel Blake hosts the **Legs & Eggs Drag Brunch** at 2 p.m. (doors open at noon) Sunday, July 25, at the

Lorenzo Hotel, 1011 S. Akard St. in Dallas. This week's show features Nayda Montana, Pinche Queen and Lana O'Hara. Tickets are \$20-\$155. For information visit Facebook.com/LorenzoHotel.



DRAG YOUR BRUNCH HERE, TOO

Jenny P hosts the **Champagne Drag Brunch** at Mr. Misster's, 3900 Cedar

Springs Road, from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, July 25, featuring an indulgent brunch menu, an expansive champagne selection and a variety of large format bottles. After the show, hang around to party with the queens. Tickets range from \$25-\$350. For information visit MrMissterDTx.com.

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 Wednesday at 5 p.m. for that week's issue. Look for extended listings online at DallasVoice.com

Cassie Nova

ASK A DRAG QUEEN

Missing birds, homeless dogs and childhood friends

Good day to all of you good people. I woke up today a little sad and a little in my feelings. That is totally okay; everyday cannot be smiles and rainbows. I hope it is okay with you, but I wanna talk about some of the things that are making me sad today.

First off, the birds in my backyard are gone. Just about every morning I wake up, take the dogs outside and chill for a few minutes on my back porch. My backyard is my happy place, usually. But a few weeks ago, I noticed that all of our doves, cardinals and various other wild birds have just disappeared.

Our backyard is usually so alive with bird activity. We have bird feeders that stay full and bird baths that we keep clean and full of fresh water.

We have two hanging baskets that are usually occupied by a nest of doves. Last year, the mama birds raised four clutches of babies in each nest. This year only one set before they all disappeared. Not having all of this avian activity in my sanctuary has really made me sad.

I think I have figured out where they have gone. Yesterday, circling above our yard was a young hawk. I think that asshole has made my birds feel unsafe here, and they have moved on. Why can't that hawk run those jerk-ass squirrels away?

Another thing weighing heavy on my heart is the abundance of dogs in the shelters right now. We were contacted this week by Tri-City Animal Shelter, asking if we could post and promote

their flyer to get the word out that their shelter is at capacity. Apparently, a lot of people have gone back to work and now don't have time for the dogs they adopted during quarantine.

If you can, think about fostering or adopting a pup. I'm not trying to be all Sarah McLachlan on you, but if it eases my guilt over not being able to foster a dog right now, so be it. I have five little jerks running my life right now; three of them started out as foster kids, but I suck at fostering. We get attached very easily.

Maybe my problem is more guilt than sadness. I guess the guilt I feel over a few things in my life right now is fueling my melancholia. (I sound as dramatic as Victorian era heroine.)

I feel a lot of guilt for walking away from friendships and relationships that are toxic. Maybe it's not guilt, but it definitely has me feeling some kind of way.

One is an old friendship that I just had to end. Thanks to Facebook, you can't just let old friendships fade into oblivion like you used to. Now you have to put a period at the end of that friendship, so they know it is over.

Other relationships are not as easy to walk away from. Although these relationships are toxic, you have to maintain some kind of relationship for the benefit of the people you do care about. This almost always involves family, otherwise I would knock the hinges off the door by slamming it so hard.

Recently I have been thinking a lot about the people I was close to when I was young. I don't think anything hurts as much as realizing that someone who meant the world to you barely even



cared for you. It took me years to actually learn that.

My best friends growing up were a set of twins. I thought that we would be best friends forever. Their family took me in as one of their own, and I stayed at their house at least three or four nights a week. They were like brothers to me. They were totally cool with me being gay when they found out our senior year.

Then, as is the natural progression in life, we grew apart as our lives and paths changed. I thought we would at least stay in touch and talk every once in a while — but no. I tried to keep in touch, and I remain in contact with their mom and brother. But the twins just wrote me out of their lives.

They went into the military, then to college and got married and had kids; I went to art school and started doing drag. I guess my life was too weird for them to want to be a part of it.

The last time I actually saw them was at their younger brother's funeral. It was such a sad day made sadder to me when my one-time best friend introduced me to his son with, "You know your friend Jason that sleeps on our couch a lot? He was our Jason."

It was his brother's funeral, and I shouldn't make it about me. But I think about that so much — no interest in catching up or reconnecting at all.

The only reason this has been on my mind so much lately is because I keep having dreams about them. It's like part memory and part wishful thinking. The dreams are almost a "what if" kind of thing where we stayed close and supportive of each other throughout our adult lives. Then when I wake up, I'm sad.

I fucking hate dreaming about them.

Then last Wednesday, their sister-in-law — the wife of their older brother that I still talk to — texted me because one of the twins' 16-year-old daughter wanted to meet me. She is apparently a huge fan of Drag Race and all things drag. I told her next time she is in town I would take us to a drag brunch. So I guess that is something.

It is totally okay to feel your feelings and be sad, but it is not a place I want to dwell in for too long. I have so much to be happy about, but some days I just feel like I want to cry — and that is okay! Ain't no shame in my tear game.

Remember to always love more, bitch less and cry if you want to. XOXO, Cassie Nova

this week's solution

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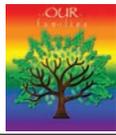


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PUZZLE | The Helmsman's Epitaph

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Solution on Page xx

Across

- 1 B.D. ___ of *M. Butterfly*
- 5 Nemesis of Tinkerbell
- 9 *The Way We ___*
- 13 Composer Stravinsky
- 14 Type of sci, in college
- 15 Trump portrayer Baldwin
- 16 Gin flavor
- 17 Pg. in a photocopier
- 18 One with a tricky tongue
- 19 Start of what the helmsman said his epitaph would be
- 22 Toni of *United States of Tara*
- 23 Merman of Broadway fame
- 26 Online provoker
- 30 Jackie O.'s second husband
- 31 Rough house
- 36 *Once Upon a Mattress* bit
- 37 More of the epitaph
- 39 With 40-Across, series of the helmsman
- 40 See 39-Across
- 41 Pound sound
- 42 "___ Get a Witness" (Marvin Gaye)

43 Brontë's Jane

- 44 Learn about
- 47 Duel weapon in *Hamlet*
- 50 Sudden coup
- 54 End of the epitaph
- 57 Close at hand, to the Bard
- 58 Special delivery?
- 59 Boston cager, for short
- 60 Ending for auto
- 61 Caesar's final reproach
- 62 Future queen of *Star Wars*
- 63 ___ Christian Andersen
- 64 Penetrate slowly
- 65 Vermont, to Vivien

Down

- 1 Genie's offering
- 2 Gaze at gays, e.g.
- 3 Former queen of Jordan
- 4 Land of Socrates
- 5 Screw up
- 6 SautÉed delicacy
- 7 Beethoven's "F,r ___"
- 8 Cukor's *Dinner at ___*
- 9 Karen of *Will & Grace*
- 10 *Baby Doll* director Kazan
- 11 Top priority of a top

12 Light brown

- 20 Hang out
- 21 *Leave ___ Beaver*
- 23 Not hard to get in bed
- 24 Broadway bio homophone
- 25 San Francisco's Nob ___
- 27 *Aida*, to Gomer?
- 28 Look at a hottie in a bar
- 29 *Swan ___*
- 32 Frilly greens
- 33 Not much
- 34 Half of Mork's good-bye
- 35 Foiled
- 38 They were erect for Kopay
- 40 Octopus arm
- 45 Shoe store spec
- 46 Not closet-bound
- 47 Dressing type
- 48 *The Seven Samurai* Kurosawa
- 49 One who kneels before Apollo
- 51 Shooting type
- 52 *As You Like It* woman
- 53 Try to bash
- 55 Kind of learning
- 56 Peter's place

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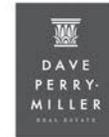
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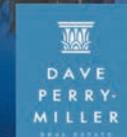
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