

dallasvoice

The Premier Media Source for LGBTQ Texas

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ALL LIT UP

Amid a hectic schedule, Shangela brings her 'Fully Lit Tour' home to the city where she first found drag
By Rich Lopez, page 8

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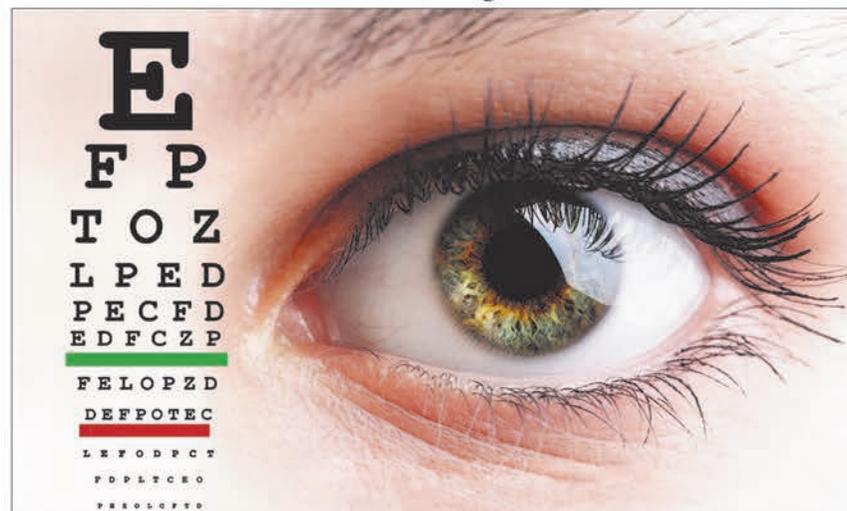


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Bites from our blog

WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com

10th annual OUT visitors guide available



The 10th anniversary edition of OUT North Texas, Voice Publishing's annual visitor/relocation guide, is now available. It features up-and-coming singer and North Texas native Allison Ponthier on the cover. And inside, in addition to all the info you need to either plan a visit to DFW or relocate within the Metroplex, you will find features on LGBTQ icons Chef Abraham Salum, activist Sharon Herrera and more, including business and community directories.

Pick up yours today.

— Rich Lopez

DFW Sisters to canonize Edna Jean



The DFW Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence have announced the upcoming canonization of longtime Gayborhood treasure Edna Jean Robinson (a.k.a. Richard D. Curtin) as Saint Anna Bortion.

The canonization will take place at Alexandre's Bar, 4026 Cedar Springs Road, at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 18. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

While perhaps best known as his larger-than-life drag persona Edna Jean Robinson, Curtin is also an accomplished actor, singer, activist and fundraiser. As both Edna Jean and Richard, Curtin has appeared in several movies, TV shows and stage plays, as well as hosting events, and producing a short film. Curtin is known for his prolific fundraising and activism and, most recently, his painting.

— Tammye Nash

ABC News drops bombshell report on Santos

Just as gay Republican Rep. George Santos of New York told GOP colleagues Tuesday, Jan. 31, that he was "temporarily" stepping down from his two congressional committees amid a host of ethics issues, and a day after he met with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, ABC News launched a blockbuster report full of allegations against Santos of catfishing, threats and dating teenagers.

According to the ABC News report, "multiple men" have described relationships with Santos, some of which happened when these men were still teenagers, in which Santos lied to try and manipulate and trap them. Santos has faced numerous calls for his resignation and is facing multiple investigations by prosecutors over his personal and campaign finances and lies about his resume and family background. He still says he will not resign from Congress, though.

— Staff and Wire Reports

Beyonce announces Renaissance World Tour

Some good news to distract from all that dang cold outside came Wednesday morning: The Queen Bey will be arriving in North Texas this fall. *The Renaissance World Tour* marks Beyoncé's first solo tour in more than six years. Promoters Live Nation dropped the news early Wednesday morning, Feb. 1, about the tour that kicks off in Europe and will then hit North America later in 2023.

The news foreshadows her Grammys this Sunday where her latest album, *Renaissance*, is vying for all the trophies as the most-nominated release of the year. We assume she'll snatch some trophies so this is likely a good week for Texas icon.

With two Texas dates announced so far, Beyoncé's *Renaissance World Tour* will make a stop at AT&T Stadium in Arlington on Sept. 21 and then NRG Stadium in Houston on Sept. 23.

— Rich Lopez

Adoptable / BRADLEY



Meet **Bradley Boo**, an 11-year-old, 15-pound domestic shorthair mix hoping to be in a forever home soon. He has white fur with large black-and-gray patches and large yellow eyes. He is a little timid at first meeting, but becomes affable enough after proper introductions are made. Bradley does very well with other cats and

would love a roommate. Children can be a lot, so Bradley would prefer to go to a home where all the children were at least 12 years old. He is at the Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center.

Adult dogs and cats are normally a \$75 adoption fee from the SPCA of Texas. Puppies and kittens under the age of six months are \$150. Adoption fees vary for small mammals, equestrian and livestock. Fee includes spay/neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a heartworm test for dogs six months and older and a FIV/FelV test for cats four months and older, initial flea/tick preventative and heartworm preventative, a microchip, 30 days of PetHealth Insurance provided by PetHealth, a free 14-day wellness exam with VCA Animal Hospitals, a rabies tag and a free leash. The Jan-Rees Jones Animal Care Center is open to the public seven days a week, noon-6 p.m. Appointments are required for foster animals and animal housed in the Russell E. Dealey Animal Rescue Center. Please browse available animals at [SPCA.org/FindAPet](https://www.spcatexas.org/FindAPet) and visit [SPCA.org/DogAdopt](https://www.spcatexas.org/DogAdopt) to inquire about a dog or [SPCA.org/CatAdopt](https://www.spcatexas.org/CatAdopt) to inquire about a cat.

Talking about teeth

WOOF! DR. JOSH TALKS TO THE ANIMALS

Tips on dental hygiene for pets for Pet Dental Health month

We are one month into 2023, and we are back with our Woof column for February. I hope this year is treating you well so far, and thank you for supporting this amazing magazine and my monthly column, as always.

Welcome back!

I am excited for this month's topic because it is such a vital issue that we see with almost all of our pets, and it is an issue we can easily address. Every February, we celebrate National Pet Dental Health Month in the U.S., allowing us to raise awareness about dental disease in dogs and cats and the importance of prevention and treatment. Dental disease (you may also hear it called periodontal disease) is one of the most common diseases seen in dogs and cats. It includes gingivitis (inflammation of the gums), bad breath, plaque, tartar, oral cavity abscesses, pain, wiggly teeth and bone loss around the teeth.

I would like to point out that once we see that there is tartar accumulated on our babies' teeth, only a proper dental cleaning can actually remove it. These dental cleanings are usually performed once yearly while under anesthesia, although some cats and dogs have "better" teeth than others and may not be in desperate need of yearly dental cleanings.

That being said, even if their teeth and mouth look normal, they can still have issues that may only be found through a thorough dental cleaning and dental radiographs (if available), which is why most veterinarians recommend these procedures be performed once a year. When discussing these issues with your veterinarian, the vet will examine your baby's teeth, and, as a team, you can determine what the next steps should be.

It is important to know that not every fur baby is considered a good candidate to un-



Dr. Josh
Woof

dergo anesthesia, which means your doctor will discuss with you whether you should consider a dental cleaning or not. Typically, if pre-anesthetic blood work and physical exam are fairly normal, we consider the anesthetic-related risks to be low.

While treating and addressing dental disease are important, prevention is important as well. The gold standard for prevention of dental disease is brushing our pet's teeth daily, even though that is surely easier said than done. I recommend consulting your veterinarian about

how to make this job easier for both your pets and you. If for any reason you are not able to brush your pet's teeth, you can still offer the toothpaste as a treat daily, as it has enzymes that break down some of the plaque. The tartar, though, will still remain and can only be properly removed with an actual dental cleaning (which is not the same as brushing the teeth).

In addition to brushing their teeth, you may also want to consider adding dental treats to your pets' dental care routine. There are other products out there that may be added as well, but, in deciding which products are best, I recommend visiting the Veterinary Oral Health



Council's website (VOHC.org), where you will find a thorough list of approved dental products for both dogs and cats.

Always consider introducing any dental care routine slowly, and be sure to associate it with a positive experience, since we want to be proactive and perform these tasks daily.

It all starts with your veterinarian performing a dental exam on your baby, and then, based on that assessment, they can recommend a more specific dental care routine. If you currently do not have a veterinarian, feel free to contact my office in Addison, and I will perform a thorough exam and take my time to make sure all of your questions are addressed.

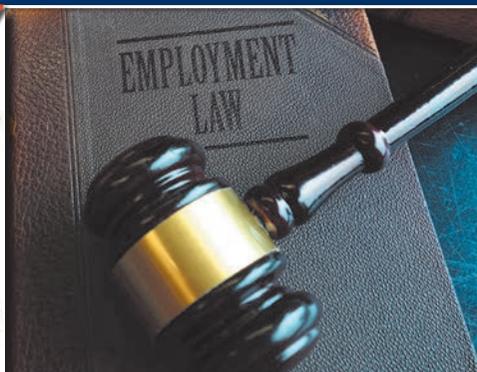
February's National Pet Dental Health Month should be a reminder of the importance of being proactive about our loved ones' dental health and should remind us that we all have tools to assist with that!

I hope this information has been helpful, and thank you for allowing me to share some thoughts on the well-being of our loved babies. As always, abrazos for you, and I look forward to sharing more knowledge next month. See you then!

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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The girl I didn't tell—

A lesson for anyone hiding an important secret

We all have our regrets in life. Mary is mine. Mary and I were both young reporters at the Cleveland News. The morning we met she had been with the paper just a week.

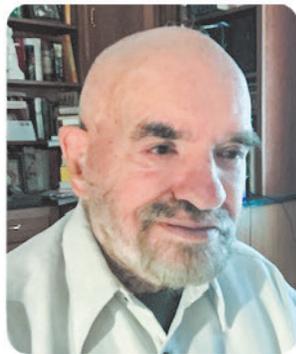
"Hello. I'm Mary," she said, startling me as I was typing. I looked up to see, standing next to me, a young woman, perhaps two or three years older than my age of 21, clad smartly in a navy suit. I saw her round face and short, ash brown hair, but what I fixated on was her broad, welcoming smile and clear blue eyes.

I stood up to introduce myself, but she stopped me, saying, "You're Vincent, and you're on the police beat. I saw you the other day and asked about you." Mary added that she had time to go to breakfast with me as soon as I finished typing my story.

We went to breakfast that morning and to many long lunches in the days and weeks to come. I always hated for lunch to end because I so enjoyed our conversations. Our get-togethers always included laughter.

Mary was knowledgeable on everything; she became my mentor. Through talking with her at our lunches, I was being educated and learning more than in the evening college classes I was taking. She was the rare kind of woman that I could relax with, without worrying whether I was handsome enough, macho enough, sophisticated enough. Maybe it all came down to her being a little plain, so that I didn't feel inferior to her. What importance we all put on physical attractiveness!

Mary was a wee bit overweight — just a few pounds. But those few pounds made her face too round. I could see that she worked to overcome this, and she succeeded, mainly. She always wore a fine, tailored suit, a frilly white or flowered blouse and a simple strand of pearls



Vincent Burke
Special Contributor

or gold chain. She easily outshone the other female reporters at the paper.

Soon, Mary and I were seeing each other several times a week. I never had told anyone at work that I was gay, and that included Mary. As a result, I became aware of a growing problem: I considered our friendship platonic, but Mary was frequently hinting at a romance. I was trying to limit our meetings to the daytime, but she kept coming up with ideas for the evening: a play, dinner with friends on a Saturday night, an event at her college. I had to create excuses.

Mary had the idea that the two of us should go visit her relatives in San Francisco. But I resisted. If I were going to San Francisco, it's the gay scene I'd want to see, not Mary's relatives.

Then one day a malevolent missive appeared in my mother's mailbox. I was home alone that day and collected the mail. It was a small, white envelope, addressed to my mother in rather child-like printed handwriting.

For some reason, I felt compelled to open that envelope, and when I did, I was stunned. Inside was a single piece of white lined notebook paper with printed letters handwritten in ink. I remember the exact wording: "Stop turning your son into a mama's boy."

My heart sank. I felt humiliation, but I



was relieved that no one would see the note but me.

I examined the address on the envelope. It was written as "222d Street." I noted the peculiar way the number was written, as the address is customarily written as 222nd Street, with an "nd" after the number rather than just a "d."

The next time I went in to work, Mary was out. I casually sauntered over to her desk and observed her calendar on the wall: "32d Street, 142d Street." Both addresses were also missing the "n" after the number.

I never spoke to Mary again. There was never another lunch, no more animated conversations. It was the end of

one of the best relationships of my life. And it ended because I had not had the courage to tell Mary at the start that I was gay — in an era when it took courage to do so — so that, upfront, she would not assume our relationship would progress to romance.

Even after I relocated to Manhattan, I never forgot Mary and yearned for her friendship I had lost. I tracked her life closely: She never married, but she did become a celebrated journalist.

One time when visiting my mother at Easter, I saw Mary's photo in the paper in the Easter Parade. How long had it been? Twenty years, 30?

I pondered over the photo of Mary for long minutes, recalling happy memories and yet sad at all the time I had missed with my friend. I wanted to call her, yet I felt I would have to tell

her, and I still didn't have the courage to do that.

Was I to blame for the breakup? Did I drive Mary to send that letter by not telling her I was gay? She naturally expected more. Should I have ignored her letter as a misstep to be forgiven?

Several years later when I was again visiting, I got the paper from my mother's porch one morning and opened it to the front page. There, prominently placed, was an article with photo: Mary's obituary. She had died suddenly.

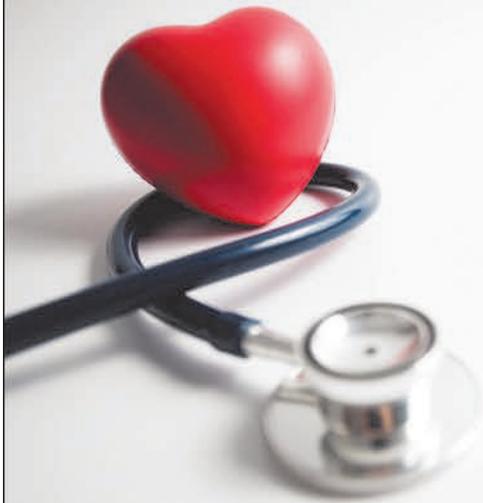
I did not go to the funeral. It was too late now. It was too late for honesty. ■

*Vincent Burke is a former ad man. He is the author of *Forgiveness*. A *Gay Man's Memoir*.*



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DRAGTASTIC

Shangela brings her first U.S. solo tour home

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Shangela is making her way back to Dallas, which isn't a rare thing, really. But this time, she's the headliner of her own tour.

Coming off her

recent stint on *Dancing with the Stars*, the drag performer also known as DJ Pierce continues a busy schedule with her *Fully Lit Tour*, a first for the *Drag Race* alum. This marks her premiere tour in the United States as the sole headliner — and she is ready to deliver music, stories and more at her show on Feb. 9 at the Majestic Theatre.

On the day of this interview, Shangela was in her hometown of Paris, Texas, as the cold weather was setting in. She had just decided to fly out a day early to get to her next show in enough time. But she was glad to squeeze in some time to be with her family.

But before she hit the road again, she talked with Dallas Voice about her busy schedule, coming to the city that helped her find drag and some wise words from her mentor that help keep her drag superstardom balanced.

Dallas Voice: First and foremost, are you keeping warm? Shangela: I am fully cloaked at this moment. I was going to fly out tomorrow, but it looks like I need to book a flight tonight. Mama's gotta make her own tour.

Congrats on the tour. What can you tell us about your live show? Well, first, I'm incredibly blessed. I did my *Shangela is Shook* tour in Europe and Australia, which you can see on YouTube. But this is the largest solo tour I've produced, and I'm so excited to have AT&T and Live Nation in my corner. This show really is a love letter to my fans — a 90 minute ride through all the fun and embarrassing pieces of this life.

You've said before that you got your start here. Now you're coming back as a headliner.

And I came to perform! I'm so excited to come to Dallas because it's where I came into my own. Now I get to celebrate the drag that has inspired me. I also love the community of supporters, and we have some of the fiercest allies in Texas. I've performed in Dallas at Pride and club events, but this is my first time to bring the Shangela experience to Dallas and give fans a chance to see more.

You are one consistently working queen with high profile projects. We see you filming *We're Here* on HBO, then you're on *Dancing with the Stars* and now on the road with the *Fully Lit Tour*. I love it! I'm grateful to have the energy and excitement to do it all. It's how my entire life

has been for so long. It really is hard to slow down.

When you see an empty day on your calendar, how do you react to that? I don't panic. I am getting a lot more comfortable in those moments of space. But since *Dancing with the Stars*, it has been nonstop.

OK, can we talk about your appearance on the show? It was three months of my life; of course we can talk about it! I didn't win the prize, but I feel like I have it in my heart. You know, I got a *Drag Race* crown on my head and that Mirrorball in my hands — they're just invisible. I'm so grateful to the fans, and I wanted to win. But I do feel like I won.

Your appearance there really was a moment of queer history happening. I was so happy to represent the LGBTQ+ community. In its 31 seasons, I was the first drag performer there. It was the first male-male pairing on the American version. And you know, I may not have been the most professional dancer, but I was also this small town girl from Paris who made it all the way. I mean, look at what we did!

We're in such a conversation about drag at the moment — or perhaps more vitriol. Do you feel that your appearance on this family-favorite popular show had any impact? DWTS gave me an opportunity to be in the homes of people who maybe weren't drag fans. I know initially there were people who said to me they were not on board with a drag queen. But they didn't know what to expect. I feel like I gave them an idea of who I am, and maybe it inspires people to get to know the person above all else.

You mentioned being more comfortable not having a busy day. What changed for you? There was a moment earlier last year, and I said something about having a break to my friend and mentor, Jenifer Lewis. She said "Thank God you slowed down a minute." Then she told me "We can create more out of purpose and less out of necessity."

It was very profound to me. There are so many times on the calendar where I have to create what I need, but in that space and free time, that serves the purpose to create fully.

Visit Shangela.com for tickets.



New guidelines issued

FOLLOWING THE SCIENCE

FDA moves to ease rules for blood donations from gay men

MATTHEW PERRONE | AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON — The U.S. has moved to further ease restrictions on blood donations from gay and bisexual men and other groups that typically face higher risks of HIV. The Food and Drug Administration on Jan. 27 announced draft guidelines that would do away with the current three-month abstinence requirement for donations from men who have sex with men.

Instead, all potential donors would be screened with a new questionnaire that evaluates their individual risks for HIV based on sexual behavior, recent partners and other factors.

If finalized, many gay and bisexual men in monogamous relationships would be able to donate blood for the first time in decades. It's the latest move by the FDA to broaden donor eligibility, with the potential to boost donations.

"We feel confident that the safety of the blood supply will be maintained," FDA's Dr. Peter Marks told reporters.

Gay rights groups have long opposed blanket restrictions on who can give blood, saying they discriminate against the LGBTQ community. Medical societies including the American Medical Association have also said such exclusions are unnecessary given advances in technology to test blood for infectious diseases.

"Current and former blood donation policies made unfounded assumptions about gay and bisexual men and really entangled individuals' identity with their likelihood of having HIV," said Sarah Warbelow of the Human Rights Campaign.

The U.S. and many other countries started blocking blood donations from gay and bisexual men during the early 1980's AIDS epidemic, aiming to



prevent the spread of HIV through the blood supply.

In 2015, the FDA dropped the lifetime ban and replaced it with a one-year abstinence requirement. Then in 2020, the agency shortened the abstinence period to three months, after donations plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regulators said there has been no negative impact on the blood supply as a result of those changes.

The FDA sets requirements and procedures for blood banks throughout the U.S. All potential donors answer questions about their sexual history, injectable drug use and any recent tattoos or piercing, among other factors that can contribute to the spread of blood-borne infections. Donated blood is then tested for HIV, hepatitis C, syphilis and other infectious diseases.

Under the new proposal, men who have sex with men will be asked if they have had new or multiple partners in the last three months. Those who answer affirmatively to either question and also report having anal sex would be barred from donating until a later date. The policy would also apply to women who have sex with gay or bisexual men.

Anyone who has ever tested positive for HIV would continue to be inelig-

ible to donate blood. Those taking pills to prevent HIV through sexual contact would also still be barred, until three months after their last dose. The FDA noted that the medication, known as PrEP, can delay the detection of the virus in screening tests.

Marks said the agency is willing to consider further easing restrictions "but we have to have the science to do that."

FDA regulators will take public comments on the proposal for 60 days before beginning to finalize the guidelines. The proposed policy mirrors those used in Canada and the U.K.

LGBTQ groups welcomed the FDA's announcement but said the proposal should not exclude people using PrEP medications.

"We must be conscious to not further stigmatize these safe sex practices and uplift individuals taking precautions," said Jose Abrigo of Lambda Legal, which has long pushed to change the FDA policy.

The FDA based its latest proposal, in part, on a recent study of 1,600 gay and bisexual men. The FDA-funded research compared the effectiveness of a detailed, personalized questionnaire on sexual behavior to the current time-based abstinence rules.

It will take several months for blood banks to make the changes, according to Cliff Numark, an executive with Vitalant, a blood center that participated in the study. The changes will require new questionnaires, training for staff and updating computer software.

The Red Cross said it supports the FDA changes but added that it's too early to know if they will result in more blood donations.

Lukas Pietrzak of Washington D.C., said he eagerly volunteered for the FDA study. He credits emergency blood transfusions with saving his father's life after a cycling accident in 1991. Pietrzak donated blood in high school but became ineligible after becoming sexually active as a gay man.

"Until I fully came out to my friends, I had to skirt around why I never went to blood drives with them," says Pietrzak, 26, who now works for the federal government.

When there are calls for blood donations "now we're able to be part of that," Pietrzak said. ■

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Around the world



NEWS BRIEFS

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pope clarifies comments on homosexuality and sin

ROME — Pope Francis has clarified his recent comments about homosexuality and sin, saying he was merely referring to official Catholic moral teaching that teaches that any sexual act outside of marriage is a sin. And in a note on Jan. 27, Francis recalled that even that black-and-white teaching is subject to circumstances that might eliminate the sin altogether.

Francis first made the comments in an interview Jan. 24 with The Associ-

ated Press, in which he declared that laws criminalizing homosexuality were “unjust” and that “being homosexual is not a crime.”

The Rev. James Martin, an American Jesuit who runs the U.S.-based Outreach ministry for LGBTQ Catholics, asked Francis for clarification and printed the pope’s handwritten response on the Outreach website.

In his note, Francis reaffirmed that homosexuality “is not a crime,” and said he spoke out “in order to stress that criminalization is neither good nor just. ... When I said it is a sin, I was simply referring to Catholic moral teaching, which says that every sexual act outside of marriage is a sin,” Francis wrote in Spanish, underlining the final phrase.

Utah lawmakers approve ban on transgender treatments

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah lawmakers on Jan. 27 gave final approval for a measure that would ban most transgender youth from receiving gender-affirming health care like surgery or puberty blockers. The bill now goes to the desk of Republican Gov. Spencer Cox, who hasn’t yet publicly taken a position on the legislation.

It comes as legislators in at least 18 states consider similar bills targeting health care for young transgender people. Montana lawmakers discussed a measure there on Jan. 27, also.

The bills have drawn strong opposition from critics who say it is irresponsible to meddle in important decisions that should be left to parents and their

children.

Utah’s measure prohibits transgender surgery for youth and disallows hormone treatments for minors who have not yet been diagnosed with gender dysphoria. The state’s Legislature made the topic a top priority, hearing the first draft just two days after the session started earlier this month.

College halts diversity training to comply with DeSantis law

ORLANDO, Fla. — An optional training class on diversity for faculty at a

WORLD, Page 15



Luis Valdes Castillo, FNP-C | Peter Triporo, ACNP-BC | Marc Tribble, MD



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Peter Triporota, NP named Top 10 in America's Top Nurse Practitioner Awards.

Saved by the bellhop

BEYOND THE STAGE

Actor brings the bi vibes to his 'Pretty Woman' character

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Actor and singer Trent Soyster has been living it up on the stage. His time in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has been spent singing and dancing as Giulio the bellhop in *Pretty Woman the Musical* (minus any ice day cancellations) at the Music Hall at Fair Park this week, and then the same at Bass Hall next week. As the actor approaches one year with the show, Soyster reflects on just how lucky his career has been.

Save for the cold weather.

"It's been so chilly here. We're spending all this time in Texas, but it feels like New York," he said by phone the day after opening night in Dallas. "But other than that, it's been fabulous."

For him, this national tour has been a life changing one. At 25 years old, this is his second tour. But it's also been a different experience from his first one in the cast of *Margaritaville*.

"First, I love this role. But also, I feel like I found my groove of life on the road with this tour. Plus, I get to see so many more cities this time," he said.

Joining the cast was, however, a hasty experience. It started soon after the pandemic restrictions began letting up, but the audition and casting process surprised Soyster.

"It was 10 days between my final callback and the tour," he said. "I learned the show in, like, four days in Milwaukee with no mirrors. It really was an insane journey to pick up my life and go on tour. That it's a year later is nuts."

As he reflects on the past year with *Pretty Woman*, he cites another musical: "It's like 'Seasons of Love' from *Rent* — how do you measure a year? For me it's by places. Fall was in Wisconsin, summer in California and now cold in Texas," he said.

As a queer kid growing up in Pittsburgh, theater was an outlet for Soyster — a safe space. He said it was a play to



Trent Soyster's character in *Pretty Woman*, Giulio the bellhop, dances with another male character in one scene, above and, Trent Soyster, left

explore himself fully without judgment or critique. But as he matured and went on to study theater, the arts intersected with his own identity.

In short, theater and dance and singing are all a very existential thing for Soyster.

"The arts have those conversations that others don't have, which all comes back to who I am. I truly feel the arts have only supported my humanity," he

said. "It was an escape then, but now there is this community that reflects on what I do, and in turn, the arts are a reflection of the world. I gain so much being a part of it."

He also gives that back.

"I teach a lot now with master classes and workshops, and I find it so special to see myself in the students I teach and helping them find their way and their escape through this," he said. "That's

definitely so uplifting to me."

Until his next class, Soyster's got a show to do. As Giulio, the lovable bellhop, he plays an energetic role that was well expanded upon from the movie version. He describes Giulio as sort of the audience's eyes as they experience Vivian's journey from the streets to Rodeo Drive.

As a queer actor though, Soyster says he likes to play Giulio with a hint of mint.

"He kind of falls in love with Vivian — or he's kind of obsessed with her," he said. "But there are two moments when I tango with another male character. So I think he's bi — and I play him that way. He's queer-leaning in some way for sure, which lets me add my queerness to the role." ■

Pretty Woman the Musical runs through Sunday, Feb. 5, at the Music Hall and opens Feb. 7-12 at Bass Hall. Visit BroadwayDallas.org or BassHall.com for tickets.

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DRIVE

2023 Kia Niro crossover finds its efficient hybrid soul

CASEY WILLIAMS | Auto Reviewer
AutoCasey@aol.com

It didn't look like much from the outside, but the first generation Kia Niro became a smash success, employing hybrid and EV technology far more advanced than its simple two-box shape would indicate. But it always seemed to while away in the shadow of its more flamboyant and taller sibling, the Soul.

Not anymore.

A flashier exterior, slick interior and enhanced hybrid powertrain help the redesigned 2023 Niro find its inner soul.

2023 Kia Niro SX Touring

Five-passenger, FWD Crossover

Powertrain: 1.6-liter I4 Hybrid, 6-spd

Output: 139 hp/195 lb.-ft

Suspension f/r: Ind/Ind

Wheels f/r: 18-inch/18-inch alloy

Brakes f/r: Regen disc/disc

Must-have features: Style, MPGs

Fuel economy: 53/45 mpg city/hwy

Assembly: Kwasung, Korea

Base/As-tested price: \$26,490/\$36,435

It finally looks the part of an electrified stylemeister. Front styling borrows from the larger Sportage with vertical LED headlamps and angled driving lights. But the two-box side is illuminated by black roof rails, distinguished black rear side panel, and tail lamps that appear lifted from a Cadillac.

It's small, but upscale. Paint it all over stylish 18-inch wheels.

The plush interior, focused on twin 10.25-inch screens for gauges and infotainment, could have been lifted from the Kia EV6 electric crossover. It's slick but intuitively connects devices to the bumpin' Harman Kardon audio system through Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and wireless charging in the console.



Vegan leather seats are heated and ventilated up front. Grip a leather-wrapped steering wheel, dial in the dual-zone automatic climate control and power open the sunroof, too. Use your phone as a digital key.

Kia does not play around with safety. Our Niro Touring came with automatic emergency braking, adaptive cruise, blind spot warning and rear cross path detection with auto brake. A rear seat monitor and Safe Exit Assist, which

uses the blind spot system to keep passengers from stepping into traffic, go one level higher.

Beneath the stylish attire is a hybrid powertrain consisting of a 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine, batteries, motors and a proper 6-speed automatic transmission. Unlike most hybrids that employ a continuously-variable transmission that

revs like a weedeater, the Niro drives like a normal car. Combined output rates 139 horsepower and 195 lb.-ft. of torque for peppy urban performance. Fuel economy, the Niro's strongest aspect, comes in at 53/45 MPG city/highway. If this doesn't seem efficient enough (unlikely), there are also plug-in hybrid and fully electric versions of the Niro.

In the city or on the highway, the

Niro is a sprightly little "crossover." It only comes in front-drive, but the tight four-wheel independent suspension carves up backroads and steps unbothered over rumples on city streets. It comes off of bridges and plants itself without drama. Compact dimensions allow it to park almost anywhere — big enough for long distance touring but small enough to slip through traffic and parallel park with abandon.

Kia continues to step up its game with an efficient little crossover that excels with a luxurious high-tech interior and advanced safety systems. You and your small family can ride comfortably on long trips with devices seamlessly connected or carve a path through city traffic.

Fuel economy is off the chart, and I expect the fully electric version to be even better. A base price of \$26,490 rose to just \$36,435 with every option imaginable. Competitors include the Toyota Prius, Ford Maverick Hybrid, and Hyundai Tucson Hybrid.

Storm Forward! ■

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



central Florida public college has been canceled so administrators can ensure it complies with a new state law known as the "Stop Woke" act.

Valencia College President Kathleen Plinske wrote in an email to faculty members earlier this week that the school needs time to review the faculty development courses to ensure they comply with the law championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, which prohibits teaching or business practices that contend members of one ethnic group are inherently racist and should feel guilt for past actions committed by others. It also bars the notion that a person's status as privileged or oppressed is necessarily determined by their race or gender, or that discrimination is "acceptable" to achieve diversity.

A federal judge in Tallahassee last November issued a temporary injunction against the law, and the measure is being challenged in two other cases. While promoting the law, DeSantis called critical race theory a "per-

nicious" ideology. Opponents say DeSantis doesn't have an accurate idea of what critical race theory is, and argue that his motives are to suppress an accurate account of Black history.

Bill to criminalize drag shows advances in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. — The North Dakota House on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a bill that would make it a crime to perform drag shows and cabaret performances in the presence of children or in public places.

The House voted 79-13 to advance the bill to the Senate when the chambers exchange passed legislation in March.

A person who violates the law would be subjected to a misdemeanor, with a possible sentence of 360 days in prison and a \$3,000 fine. Repeat offenders would face felony charges, punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. ■



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Film and fashion

BEYOND THE BIG SCREEN

In the lead-up to his new film, Billy Porter talks acting and his trendsetting fashions

TIM NASSON | Contributing Writer
tim.nasson@gmail.com

Tony-, Emmy- and Grammy-winning actor Billy Porter needs no introduction, especially not to the many fans of his character Pray Tell from Ryan Murphy's hit TV series *Pose*. Now fans will get to see Porter on the big screen. Coming to theaters Feb. 10, Porter stars as a Super Bowl half-time show choreographer opposite Oscar winners Sally Field, Rita Moreno and Jane Fonda and Tony winner Lilly Tomlin in the feel-good comedy *80 For Brady*, a comic homage to NFL quarterback Tom Brady. The movie, based on a true story, follows

four best friends, played by Field, Moreno, Fonda and Tomlin, on a trip to watch their hero, Brady, play in the 2017 Super Bowl.

Porter rocketed to superstardom when he originated the role of Lola in the Tony winning Broadway musical *Kinky Boots* just over 10 years ago. But show business has always been in his blood.

"I started singing in church at a very young age," he said. "By fifth grade the bullying had stopped, and, in middle school, I got involved with theater. I dreamed about being on Broadway and becoming the male Whitney Houston."

Porter knew he was onto something when he won \$100,000 on *Star Search*, in 1992. But he never expected success to come easy.

"I took all of the necessary steps to prepare myself for a career in show business," he said. "There have been mo-



Billy Porter stars with Rita Moreno, Jane Fonda, Lilly Tomlin and Sally Field in *80 For Brady*, opening Feb. 10

ments of frustration, but no one is entitled to anything.

"I've practiced acting every day for decades. I went to Carnegie Mellon. I went to graduate school at UCLA," he continued. "To this day, I still take singing lessons. I have the patience of Job. My best advice for anyone who wants to become a professional is to practice—even when no one is looking."

How did Porter prepare himself for a trajectory in acting and a career in fashion? "I decided at a very young age to dress for the job I wanted, not the job I have," he explained.

The "Oscars" dress, which made Por-

ter a viral sensation in 2019, wasn't something that just happened. It was a moment he had worked toward for years.

In 2013, while Porter was in Chicago doing previews of *Kinky Boots*, he met with fans at the stage door after every performance. "It was right at the time when social media was taking off, especially Instagram photos, and I was dressing geek chic," he recalled. "When I looked at the news the day after the first performance, I saw pictures of myself, and I looked like a bag lady.

"From that moment on, I dressed up every day. After every show, before I went out the stage door to go home, I dressed up," he said.

From then on, any candid photos that people took of Porter were not only flattering but trendsetting.

"For three years, while I was on Broadway with *Kinky Boots*, I dressed up after every performance, just to go out to the car to go home," he said.

Then came 2019, just a year before the pandemic hit, and Porter was starting to gain attention for some of the most fabulous outfits that have ever adorned any human.

At the Grammy Awards, he wore an embroidered suit and pink cape. That same year, at the Academy Awards he wore the famous black, fitted tuxedo-and-velvet gown created by Christian Siriano, accompanied by six-inch Rick Owens boots.

The gender-fluid outfits worn by Porter that are now famous the world over were not intended to be labeled, the actor said.

"All of the outfits I have worn aligned with the roles I was playing," he said. "The term 'non-binary' never occurred to me."

And now Billy Porter has become an inspiration for celebs such as Harry Styles, who posed on the cover of *Vogue* last year in a Gucci dress. ("You said that, not me," Porter insisted I disclose.)

"I have a calling," he admits. "It is funneled through artistry." ■

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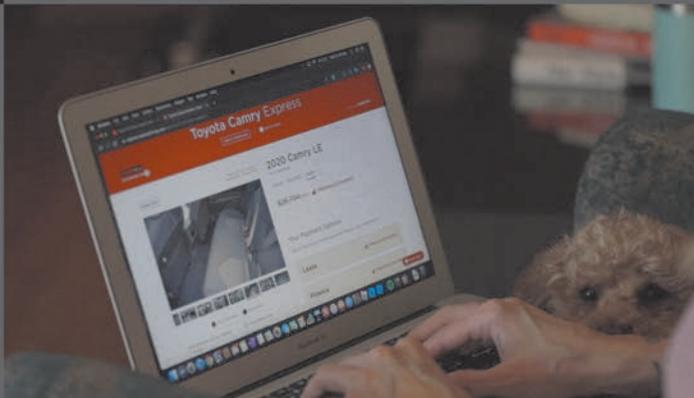


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What's a party without a great after-party? Tarrant County's AIDS Outreach Center marked World AIDS Day last Dec. 1 with the Red Ribbon Gala, featuring dinner, dancing and live entertainment. Now AOC is hosting the Red Ribbon After Party on Saturday, Feb. 4, from 3-5 p.m. at Fort Brewery, 2737 Tillar St., featuring The Inspiration Band (pictured). There's no cover, but be sure you have your wallet ready to donate to AOC. Check AOC.org for more information.

- Red for community events
- Blue for arts and entertainment
- Purple for sports
- Green for nightlife
- Orange for civic events and holidays

■ **Every Monday: THRIVE**

Resource Center's THRIVE Monday Support Group for LGBTQ adults 50 and older meets virtually and is led by interns from the SMU counseling program. For more information on the support group and how to join, please send an email to THRIVE@myresourcecenter.org.

FEBRUARY

■ **Feb. 3: 'Drag Race' viewing party**

Macarena and Pinche host a weekly viewing party for season 15 of *RuPaul's Drag Race* each Friday from 7-9 p.m. at The Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. Visit the Facebook event page for details.

■ **Feb. 4: AOC Red Ribbon After Party**

A fundraiser and concert featuring The Inspiration Band from 3-5 p.m. at Fort Brewery, 2737 Tillar St., Fort Worth. No cover but come ready to donate to AIDS Outreach Center. Receive AOC swag. AOC.org.

■ **Feb. 4: Love Your Pride**

Celebrate your pride as Mr. (Gary Jenkins), Miss (Katie Mae Rostin), and Mx. (Jesse Love) Imperial Pride 2022 presents Love Your PRIDE at 9 p.m. at Club Changes, 2637 E. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth.

■ **Feb. 4: 'Hairspray' screening**

See John Waters 1988 dance craze party *Hairspray* on the big screen and farewell Dallas show from Labretta Suede & The Motel 6. Screening at 8:30. Show at 10 p.m. Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd.

■ **Feb. 4: Dallas County Job Fair**

Dallas County is holding a career fair from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Oak Cliff Government Center, 702 E. Jefferson Blvd. Agencies participating include the Sheriff's Department, Tax Office, County Clerk's Office, Human Resources, Juvenile Department, Health & Human Services and more. For more information contact a recruiter at 214-741-1094 or email recruiting@dallascounty.org.

■ **Feb. 5: Pup Brunch**

PUP Sunday Social sponsored by Mr. S Leather and DFW PaHs. Raffle at 4 p.m. Pup performances from The Queer Off and our favorite pup Emcee - Pup Kylee! Not to mention All pups and handlers will receive a special 25 percent off any food purchase from 1-5 p.m. at J.R.'s Bar & Grill, 3923 Cedar Springs Road. DFWPaHs.com.

■ **Feb. 5: Fly Queens Drag Brunch**

Mesa Mezcal presents The Fly Queens hosted by Liquor Mini from 1-3 p.m. at Mesa Mezcal, 400 W. Las Colinas Blvd., Irving. Reservations on Open Table.

■ **Feb. 5: Get Shot By Cupid**

A Valentine Drag Brunch with co-emcees Linze Serell and Toni Faye Alexander. All entertainers tips and will go to the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant and North Texas Pride at 2 p.m. at Six Springs Tavern, 147 North Plano Road, Richardson.

■ **Through Feb. 5: 'Pretty Woman'**

Broadway Dallas presents *Pretty Woman: The Musical* to Fair Park Music Hall. Tickets at BroadwayDallas.org.

■ **Feb. 7: Classic Chassis Car Club**

Monthly meeting. Come ready to eat, enjoy our cars and catch up with fellow club members from 6-8 p.m. at Ojeda's, 4617 Maple Ave.

■ **Feb. 7-12: 'Pretty Woman'**

The musical version of the hit film comes to Bass Hall, 5225 Commerce St., Fort Worth. BassHall.com.

■ **Feb. 8: Same-sex spouse grief group**

Grief support group for people who have lost a same-sex spouse or partner meets on Zoom on the second Wednesday of the month from 6:30-8 p.m. For notifications, contact Richard DeKnock at tastefullyrichard@gmail.com.

■ **Feb. 8: Carrollton Pride Meetup**

Meetup from 7-8 p.m. at Nico's Cocina, 3065 N. Josie Lane, Carrollton.

■ **Feb. 8: BTD beneficiary apps due**

Black Tie Dinner beneficiary applications are due. BlackTieDinner.org.

■ **Feb. 8: Pride Wednesday at City Tavern**

Downtown Dallas midweek Pride social at City Tavern, 1514 Elm St.

■ **Feb. 9: Shangela Fully Lit Tour**

New date. Your original Dec. 1 tickets will be honored. 8 p.m. at Majestic Theater 1925 Elm St. \$35-75. Ticketmaster.

■ **Feb. 9-12: LGBTQ candidate training**

LGBT Victory Fund and Equality Texas brings LGBTQ Victory Institute Candidate and Campaign Training to Plano at Toyota Motors North America, 6565 Headquarters Drive, Plano. VictoryFund.org.

■ **Feb. 9-26: 'Native Gardens'**

You can't choose your neighbors in this contemporary comedy where cultures and gardens clash, turning well-intentioned neighbors into feuding enemies. Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Liquor Mini hosts Fly Queens Drag Brunch Feb. 5 at Mesa Mezcal.

■ **Feb. 10-18: 'Das Reingold'**

Dallas Opera presents the story of gods and goddesses, giants and dwarves, betrayal, cheating, illicit love and murder. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. on Feb. 10, 12, 15 and 18. ATPAC.org.

■ **Feb. 11: Latin Dance Class**

A Latin dance class for same-sex partners. No dress code but wear clothes and shoes you can move in freely. Each ticket includes a one-hour lesson, horse d'oeuvres and appetizers and a champagne toast. The Rhythm Room Ballroom, 2714 1/2 Greenville Ave. \$24 individual tickets. \$45 for two. Tickets at Eventbrite.com.

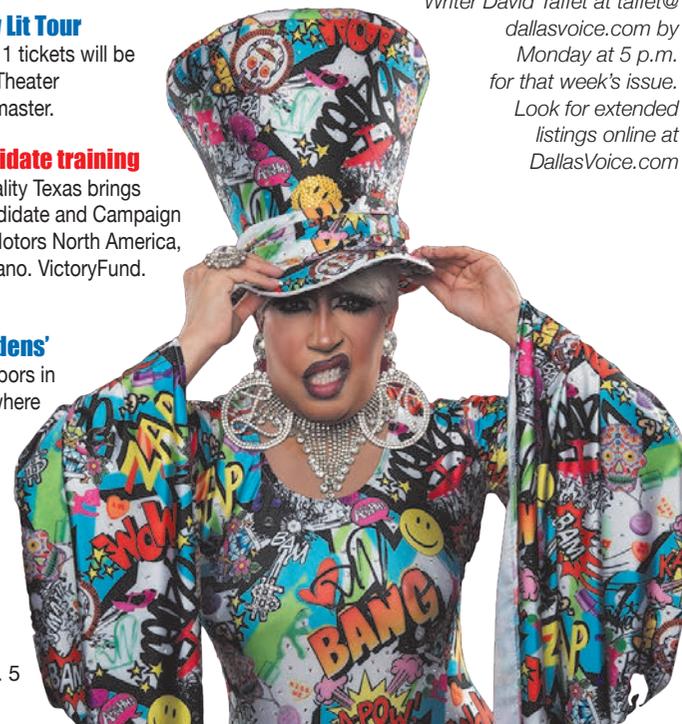
■ **Feb. 12: Teddy Bear Auction**

Join the Dallas Bears on for the return of the annual Teddy Bear Auction. Drop off of donated auction items by 2 p.m. Cocktails at 6 p.m. Auction at 7 p.m. at The Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. CharitableEvents@dallasbears.org.

■ **Feb. 13-14: LGBTQ Chambers of Commerce Day at the Capitol**

Join the LGBTQ Chambers of Commerce for a day of advocacy at the capitol to make sure Texas stays open for all businesses. TexasLGBTQChambers.com/voice.

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



Jenny Block

GIRL ON GIRLS

Change is inevitable;
make room for it

My wife and I joke about how, if our relationship could survive a quarantine together (which it did!), it can survive anything. It's kind of a joke. But it kind of isn't.

I mean, if you still want to be with someone after the stress and the isolation of a global pandemic, that feels like a pretty good sign. But I realize that the one thing harder for a relationship to survive than forced isolation is inevitable change.

I've watched three close friend couples go through divorces over the past year or so. And it was no fault of COVID. Sadly, it was because of the one thing that none of us can stop doing — growing and changing.

At least, the hope is that all of us continue to grow and change. Nothing worse than a 45-year-old acting like a college kid.

And yet, when we marry someone, it can be hard to remember that, although we are marrying that person in the here and now, we are committing to the person they will become in the future.

It's a gamble, sure. I mean, someone could change so radically that they are no longer recognizable. A liberal turned staunch conservative; an atheist turned Orthodox Jew; a casual drinker turned heroin addict — I'm talking major fundamental change.

Chances are, though, that's not what's going to happen. It's far more likely that a person's tastes and interests will grow and morph and become more refined.

And that is what we should hope for our partners, that they will grow into their true, authentic selves; that they will find their passion; that they will have the chance to live out their dreams.

Maybe your partner was a picky eater when you met and now is a foodie. Maybe your partner was scared of dogs when you met and is now a trainer. Maybe your partner went to school to be a fashion designer when you met and now wants to get an MFA to write best-selling novels.

It can be hard. I get it. You fall in love with someone, and you want them to stay that same someone. And they should in



terms of their core values. That is something you should be able to hedge your bets on. Make sure they don't belong to any secret organizations with questionable motives. Ask them if they've ever seriously considered running away and joining the circus. But everything else, well, that's a bit of a crap shoot to be honest.

When we commit to someone, we are committing to a journey, not a destination.

The trick is to stay open and aware, to pay attention all along the way, to listen to what they are telling you and what they are showing you, too. Change doesn't happen overnight, and it's far less abrupt if you keep your head in the game. It can be all too easy to get in a rut. You both just keep on keeping on, so you hardly notice the subtle differences — the mentions about wanting to go back to school, the magazines left open to the

page about Bora Bora, the links they send about changing careers mid-life.

If your partner starts showing interest in making changes, listen up. Ask how you can support them. Inquire about what steps they want to or have taken. Show interest in their evolution. The thing is, when you do that for them, they are far more likely to do it for you. And, hopefully, you're on a journey to become the best version of yourself, too, even if that means seemingly dramatic changes.

My guess is, if you watched your relationship unfold on a movie screen, you would see the signs and how you missed them, and you wouldn't suddenly be looking at your partner and thinking, "Who are you? What happened to the person I married?" Because you would have been witness to the change.

That's one of the best parts of being in a relationship, actually — bearing witness to how your partner changes and

grows, supporting them in their new endeavors and discoveries, getting to go along for the ride as they make their dreams come true.

Now, if we ourselves have long been resistant to change or don't like how we've changed or somehow think we're exactly the same as when we met our partners (even though that's impossible), it makes sense that we wouldn't be able to see and embrace the changes in our partners. So, look deep in the mirror first.

Look and accept.

And then, open your eyes. See your partner — like, really see them, the way a stranger might. Look at all the things that make them who they are today and get onboard for all the marvelous ways they are about to become their whole selves. Otherwise, you just might miss out on the very best parts or you just might lose your partner all together.

Change is not a curse. It's a blessing.

this week's solution

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M	O	A	N	I	S	E	E	U	S	A	I	R
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SCENE

The View Grand Opening

Photos by Jay Fierrez

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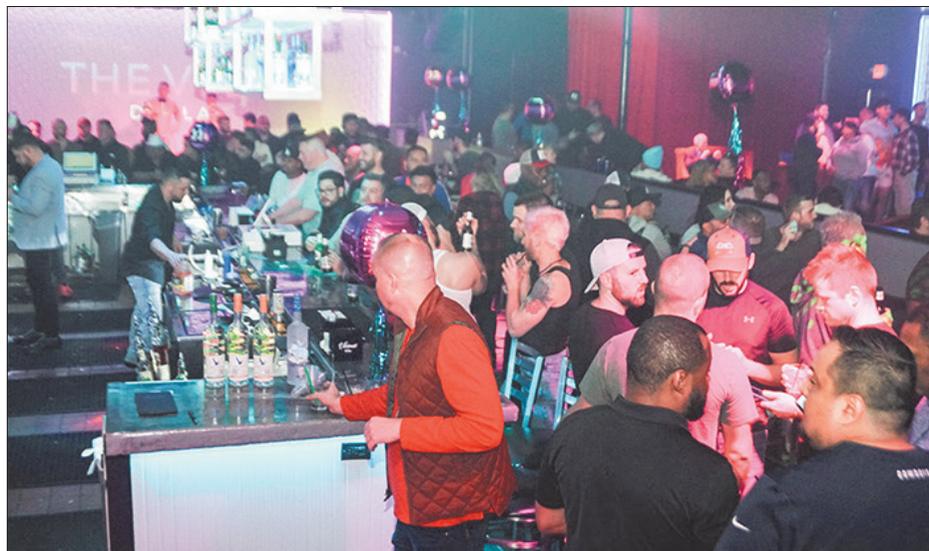
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Solution on Page 18

Across

- 1 Israeli author Oz
- 5 Cameron and Mitchell, to Lily
- 9 Yankovic video with Cho
- 14 Thank a lover without words
- 15 Frasier's response to a client
- 16 Name on jetliners, once
- 17 Blanchett of *Carol*
- 18 Come and go
- 19 Director Condon and others
- 20 Start of a quote by Martina Navratilova
- 23 Go lickety-split
- 24 Pub offering
- 25 Family of Mary, Queen of Scots
- 28 Gets loud in bed
- 32 Relief of 34-Across
- 33 Two queens, and others
- 34 Prez linked with Joshua Speed
- 35 Poodle's bark
- 36 More of the quote
- 38 Opponent of Wade
- 39 Piece-loving org.
- 40 Quit, with "out"
- 41 Govt. guy
- 42 Like a dandy suit

- 44 Pines Party and others
- 46 Uncommon, to Caligula
- 47 Fast one
- 48 End of the quote
- 53 Screen siren Garbo
- 54 Skater Mattis
- 55 Fiddler on the reef
- 57 Carrie portrayer
- 58 Ancient European language
- 59 Jodie Foster's role with the King
- 60 Boobs or butts
- 61 Bambi, e.g.
- 62 *Gay Priest* author Malcolm

Down

- 1 Where to see *Killing Eve*
- 2 Ditch in some Flynn flicks
- 3 What a boy scout recites
- 4 Give a cocky look to
- 5 Emulate Gus van Sant
- 6 In harmony
- 7 Cain of *Lois and Clark*
- 8 Top Four matchup
- 9 Most like some TV tele-characters
- 10 Mishima and Ang Lee
- 11 *Lesbians ignite!* e.g.
- 12 *To ___ a Mockingbird*
- 13 '69 and others

- 21 It gets laid in the streets
- 22 Dick's running mate
- 25 Hard to find
- 26 Earth, in sci-fi
- 27 Orientation discrimination, e.g.
- 28 Checked out the joint
- 29 Fruit cover
- 30 Sub, to Rohm
- 31 Andrew Van de Camp's peers
- 33 Buttigieg of transportation
- 36 Where heads may be bumped
- 37 Winfrey of *The Color Purple*
- 41 With this you're no street walker
- 43 Taoism founder
- 44 Scarecrow portrayer Ray
- 45 Young chap
- 47 Philip Johnson built a glass one
- 48 *Charlie's Angels* role
- 49 Piggied out (on)
- 50 Tested, to Marc Jacobs
- 51 River of da Vinci's land
- 52 Lots of
- 53 Brownies' org.
- 56 Tatum O'Neal's *The ___ News Bears*

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