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By Rich Lopez, page 8

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Bites from our blog

WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com



Debbie Gibson (Photo by Nick Spanos)



Construction site work begins at Resource Center's Oak Lawn Place Apartments project (Photo courtesy of Resource Center)

Debbie Gibson to headline MetroBall 16
'80s pop superstar Debbie Gibson is re-turning to Dallas as headliner for MetroBall 16, officials with the Greg Dollgener Memorial AIDS announced this week. MetroBall is GDMAF's largest fundraising event each year, and this year the event once again kicks off Dallas Pride weekend, taking place Friday night, June 2, at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Joining Gibson in the MetroBall 16 entertainment lineup are Billboard magazine's 1990s

"dance artist of the decade" Kristine W and local favorite Jada Pinkett Fox as emcee. Pre-sale tickets for MetroBall 16 are available online now at GDMAF.org/MetroBall.
— Tammye Nash

Site work begins at Resource Center's Oak Lawn Place housing project
Resource Center officials this week said that construction site work has already begun on the center's planned LGBTQIA-affirming

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Obituary



Tanya "BJ Laray" Halle

Tanya Halle, known to her fans as dancing DJ BJ Laray, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 21, in Houston following a lengthy

battle with metastatic breast cancer.

Although small of stature, "BJ" was known for her huge smile, her huge spirit and her

huge talent on the dance floor. Her energetic style earned her nicknames such as "the dancing dynamo" and "Happy Feet." She was a fan favorite in shows around the Metroplex, around the state and around the country as she traveled with a troupe of dancing women often led by the first-ever National Lady of the Year Connie McLain. BJ won the National Lady of the Year title in 1992, alongside another DFW dancer, 1992 National Butch Lady of the Year Jazzi Bleu, who this week memorialized her friend on social media: "You could out dance any drag queen in that era but remained humble. You earned their respect, and everyone that met you loved your whole being, your positive vibes, always smiling even on dark days. The dancing DJ never missed a beat on the dance floor or while playing our music."

affordable housing project, Oak Lawn Place Apartments. The apartments are set to open at the end of 2024. Watch for announcements on groundbreaking parties and other events coming soon. Meanwhile, more than half a dozen people told stories to the camera on Monday, Feb. 13. The hours of recording will be used for several projects, but first will be a five-minute film about the center's history that will debut at Toast to Life on April 1. This year, Toast to Life

celebrates Resource Center's 40th anniversary. — David Taffet

LGBTQ Coming Out hotline launches this week

The LGBT National Help Center officially launched its newest program, the LGBT National Coming Out Support Hotline, Tuesday, Feb. 21, focusing specifically on the concerns of those struggling with coming out issues — regardless of age or how each person defines that process. The dedicated toll-free phone number, staffed

■ Adoptable / BRANDY



Meet **Brandy**, a 56-pound lump of love a pittie mix who has been patiently waiting for a forever family to adopt her at the SPCA of Texas. Brandy is a little snuggler and loves getting lots of attention — a few tasty treats would be greatly appreciated, too. Get her

out in a play yard and you'll find she has plenty of energy to keep up and play with her people friends and other dogs. She does well with kids, too, so bring the whole family down to the shelter to meet her. Brandy would love to have a big, fenced-in yard, but a low traffic apartment could work also.

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 and visit SPCA.org/DogAdopt to inquire about a dog or SPCA.org/CatAdopt to inquire about a cat

source has told Dallas Voice both the victim and the suspect were dancers at the bar, but police have not confirmed that information. Police said that the incident started as an argument between the two men, then escalated into a fight. The victim then ran into the suspect with his vehicle, and the suspect began shooting, striking the victim multiple times. Police said the case will be referred to the Dallas County grand jury. They did not identify either man. — Tammye Nash



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

A target on transgender backs

You don't have to 'get' trans folks to understand they are human

I just read an article about the murder of Brianna Ghey, a transgender teenager found stabbed to death in a park in England. As NBC reports, Ghey had "visible stab wounds," and, just in case you didn't think this story could get any worse, "Police said they have arrested two teenagers, both 15 years old, on suspicion of the murder."

My god. These are children. All of them.

Perhaps many in the U.S. have become numb to stories about kids killing kids (our legislators certainly have), but this is truly horrific.

I don't have any further details about the suspects. I don't know if they did it, and I don't know why they did it if they are, indeed, guilty.

I do know that, scrolling through my newsfeed, just about every article related to transgender people was "Texas governor backs transgender ban for college sports," and "South Dakota governor signs bill prohibiting gender-affirming treatment for transgender minors," and "Ban on health care for transgender youth passed by Utah Legislature," and "Arizona rep. proposes anti-transgender 'women's bill of rights.'"

It goes on and on. State legislatures



D'Anne Witkowski
Creep of the Week

across the country are fixated on harming transgender people. Every single one of these measures, as well as the anti-trans

ber who demands books about transgender people be yanked from school libraries, every media talking head who uses their platform to dehumanize trans people — they all contribute to a culture of violence where transgender people are unsafe.

Which is, of course, the point. What was it that Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said about "self-deportation"? That if we make the lives of immigrants horrible enough they'll just leave on their own?

That's what is being advocated for trans people:

self-erasure. And anti-trans bigots don't care if that erasure manifests itself as staying in the closet or if it ends in death by suicide or murder.

And as Gillian Branstetter, a communications strategist at the American Civil Liberties Union, points out on Twitter, in places that lack self-ID laws — meaning trans-

gender people cannot legally change their IDs, including their names — transgender people are further marginalized when newspapers print their "real" names and use the wrong pronouns. Families can essentially do the same if they did not accept or support their dead relative's identity.

"Trans people like Brianna are fighting to tell the truth when the whole world wants us to tell a lie," Branstetter posted to Twitter. "We are routinely censored and penalized for that truth. And too often our death is seen as an opportunity — by police, the media, and even our own families — to erase that truth."

Look, maybe even you, dear reader, are someone who doesn't "get" trans

people. Maybe your gender identity is so entrenched that you can't fathom being trans or non-binary. Fine.

But the thing is, you don't have to understand someone to treat them humanely and allow them to live in dignity. You know what being human feels like, and, if you're a member of the LGB community, you know what it feels like to be dehumanized for who you are. So do trans folks.

You'd think that even cisgender heterosexual people would get that most basic principle: Treat others how you would like to be treated. Very basic stuff.

But instead, it seems like people are allowing themselves to believe that public schools are somehow gender transition factories with teachers intent on creating a fully trans student body so that ... What?

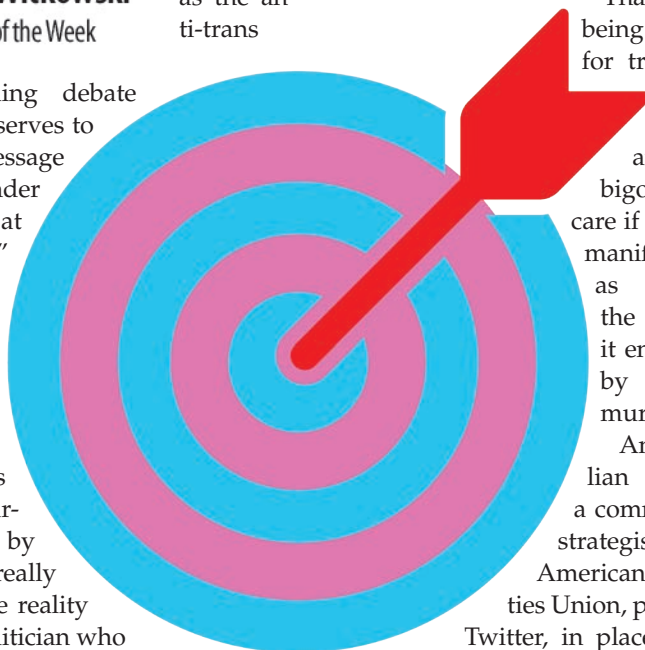
I don't know what the end goal is in this wild theory, actually. To destroy the very idea of gender, maybe? There's no logic to follow, so that's my best guess.

In an op-ed in USA Today, Vanessa and Michael Anspach, parents of a transgender child in Arizona, write about the pending anti-trans legislation in Arizona, "It's another bill that, on its face, is aimed at harming our trans kids by instilling fear in others that schools are somehow 'transitioning' their kids behind their backs. It also aims to 'protect' adults in schools who care more about their politics than about treating others with dignity and basic human decency."

Yep. And this is true for all of this pending legislation. It's all bullshit. It's the result of unserious people being elected to do a serious job for which they are unqualified and in which they are uninterested.

They just want to use their power to hurt the people they don't like. And transgender kids are getting hit hardest of all.

D'Anne Witkowski is a writer living in Michigan with her wife and son. She has been writing about LGBTQ+ politics for nearly two decades. Follow her on Twitter @MamaDWitkowski.



rhetoric fueling debate on the issue, serves to spread the message that transgender people are, at best, "icky" and, at worst, subhuman and dangerous.

Reading about Brianna Ghey's murder surrounded by these stories really crystalizes the reality that every politician who introduces anti-trans bills, every religious leader who portrays trans people as evil, every school board mem-

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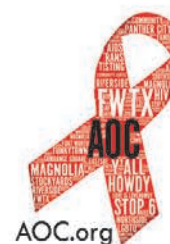
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

UBE's Vogue Academy puts the power in the pose

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Strike a pose; there's nothing to it. At least, that's the intention every Friday night at United Black Ellument's Vogue Academy. The weekly class held at Resource Center teaches the fundamentals of voguing, but it has also become a place for community — proving the power of dance and expression.

United Black Ellument is a program at the Center geared toward empowering young, Black, same-gender-loving men. Director Jalenzski Brown oversees the happenings for UBE, including the academy.

"There would be no academy without Jalenzski," said Cedrick Johnson, who goes by Jrock.

In turn, there wouldn't be the academy without Jrock. He serves as the founder of today's iteration of Vogue Academy and volunteers with Resource Center to teach his weekly students. He also founded the ballroom kiki scene that stems from the academy.

Brown and Johnson host the classes, but their impact goes well beyond the RC doors.

"The most important part of all this is



having fun and serving that self-expression," JRock said. "When we started to formalize it, it grew into this big thing."

A quick history

The ballroom scene — or ball culture — is a queer subculture started in New

York City by Black and Latino communities. The scene was created as an alternative to the drag pageants happening in the 1970s. Today, drag queen Crystal LaBeija is often credited with founding ballroom culture some 50 years ago.

"The House of LaBeija was created as an opposition to the racism that was happening in drag pageants at that time," said Jrock, whose full ballroom name is Jrock Juicy Couture Ebony.

Houses are found families that compete in balls but also serve as a support system for their members. Houses are led by "mothers" and "fathers."

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Academy origins

"UBE was hosting 'Get Your Life' ballroom practice back in 2014," Brown said. "It started as a monthly thing until JRock came in and reimagined it entirely."

Back then, the ballroom kids would

have a time and place to come out and practice. JRock described it as a time of fellowship and a way for the participants to find their tribe.

But Jrock saw a bigger potential.

"Once I came along, I declared that I was going to have a ball," he said. "We were gonna have a mainstream ballroom called Girls Just Wanna Have Fun. I got there in May 2016, and we were gonna have the ball in June. So we had four weeks to get ready for it."

The ball came and went, but the students kept coming back for more.

At that time, UBE was based in Deep Ellum.

"We had the space for it, and since they were coming in weekly, we called it Vogue Academy and started structuring it since it was becoming a weekly thing," JRock said. "The other founder of the academy is Boss Lady Jakai Agacii."

Deep in vogue

Then UBE left Deep Ellum to move into Resource Center's current building on Cedar Springs Road. Brown and Johnson were concerned that the change would affect the academy and the students who were comfortable going to the original space. It didn't.

"More kids kept coming out to the scene, and they kept hearing about it," Jrock said.

Today, the academy breaks down the elements of vogue. This is the place to go to "mess up and look silly" before attempting an appearance at the balls with no training. No one wants to look messy at a ball.

At the academy, students learn hands, catwalk, spins, schwams ("not shablams") and dips ("not deathdrops").

"When we put it all together, we let it flow with club house music and commenting," Jrock explained. "We open up the floor for freestyling."

Some have come with two left feet, and in three to six months, they are snatching trophies, he added.

Vogue Academy though is not just for UBE members. Friday nights are open to anyone wanting to learn how to let their

Basic ballroom glossary

Ballroom culture has its own language which has permeated its way into mainstream culture. Shows like *Pose*, *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *Legendary* have brought those terms into the light. So what do they mean? Here's a primer of a few basic ballroom terms.

- **Ballroom:** Emerging from the Harlem Renaissance, this is the umbrella term for the culture and scene, whereas, balls are the serious formal competitions among the houses.

- **007:** A free agent in ballroom who is not part of a house.

- **Kiki:** A competition with less serious

- **Walk:** To enter a ballroom category

body go with the flow.

"We never shut down the academy. It's open to everyone," Brown said. "All kinds of people come in on Friday night, and we're creating these bonds."

Love is the message

What starts in the Vogue Academy certainly doesn't stay there. As its scene grows, so does the scene outside Friday nights.

But what Brown sees is more than the vogue moves and music; he sees a community of people coming together through love and culture.

"It's this network of people not only for UBE and RC, but for people in the

balls. It shows that the work of UBE has extended," he added.

Brown and Jrock note that the scene really took off in 2019. They were hosting three to four mini-kiki balls and mini balls a year, with people coming from all over to compete. By the end of 2019, they teamed up with DJ Rudeboy and Marty's Live for a Wednesday



All photos courtesy of Resource Center and United Black Ellument



scene. When we formalized Vogue Academy, more resources were poured into it. And we started the Gulf Coast Kiki Coalition which now has almost 900 members."

Plus, UBE still has to do its thing.

Brown explained, "It may look like we're having fun all the time, but we are a movement that is here to enable and empower young Black men. The fun brings people out, but they come with their stories and need help, so we get to do that too."

"But it's really beautiful to see how the scene has grown and people forming their own organizations and doing the

night gig.

"By Christmas, we had Wednesdays for kiki vogue nights, with all these categories that allowed our scene to express themselves," Jrock said.

Then the coronavirus hit hard, but Vogue Academy still kept it going in its own way: "We learned how to do ballroom in a pandemic," Jrock declared.

Zoom and virtual balls kept the spirit and love alive.



Catwalk of fame

Today, Vogue Academy and the Wednesday night scene at Marty's keep Dallas' ballroom culture on the map. Some have graduated, if you will, and have taken their talents beyond. House of Ebony's XaPariis, a VA alum, competed on HBO's *Legendary* with House of Balmain's Cali Dequan, also from Dallas. Jrock mentioned that many performers have gone on to snatch titles and trophies in other big ballroom cities such as Atlanta and New York.

"Our networking spreads way beyond Texas now," Jrock said. "It's kind of underground but all over the world, and our balls have up to 500 people. We've had a kiki ball at the Dallas Museum of Art, so even institutions outside the scene are finding us."

Both Brown and Johnson have deep pride in not only the scene and its legacy but UBE's part in all of it.

"All this happened right here at UBE," Brown said. "These kids are serious and continue dancing when we all leave the Resource Center. We're proud of this scene but also proud that they find family in this ballroom culture."

Visit UBEDallas.org for more about Vogue Academy. Watch videos of the local scene and more at Jrock's *The TensOrChops Television Network* on YouTube.

Dallas prepares for a quiet city council election

ON THE BALLOT

The new city council will look a lot like the old city council, and the mayor will run unopposed

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Election Day for the new Dallas city council and mayor is Saturday, May 6. Early voting runs Monday, April 24 through Tuesday, May 2. And the new Dallas City Council looks as though it will be very similar to the current city council.

Mayor Eric Johnson, who was elected to his first of a possible two four-year terms in 2019, is seeking reelection. While the office was hotly contested with about 10 viable candidates last time Johnson will be running unopposed this year. Former Dallas ISD superintendent Michael Hinojosa considered running, but withdrew from the race in January.

The last time the office of Dallas mayor was unopposed was in 1967, when same-name, different-spelling Mayor Erik Jonsson was seeking his second term.

"It is the greatest honor of my life to serve as the mayor of my hometown," Johnson said in a statement. "We have achieved significant, measurable results for the residents of Dallas over the past four years, and I look forward to continuing this incredible progress in my second term."

Chief among his accomplishments is a decrease in violent crimes. Dallas is the only major city in the U.S. to have scored a decrease in crime since the pandemic.

Two of the 14 council members — Casey Thomas and Adam McGough — are in their fourth terms and can't run again this year.

Both of the gay men currently on the council, who have both filed to run for another term in office, have been recognized with leadership positions during their tenures: Omar Narvaez serves as



Omar Narvaez, above, Chad West, top right and Annise Parker

deputy mayor pro tem; Chad West was mayor pro tem last year.

Both have drawn opponents in this election who are known in their districts.

Former City Councilwoman Monica Alonso, whom Narvaez originally defeated and who has run against him in each of his subsequent elections, has filed to run against him again this year, too. He has two additional opponents as well: first-time candidate Sidney Robles Martinez and Tony Carrillo, who ran for city council in the three previous elections.

In District 1, Mariana Griggs, former wife of former City Councilman Scott Griggs, has filed to run against West. A third candidate — Albert Mata — is also running.

West is popular in his district, but so was Scott Griggs. The question in that race is whether Mariana Griggs has time in the short election season to attract enough support to force a run-off.

Fort Worth is adding two seats to its city council because of population growth. The Census Bureau estimated the city had 935,000 residents in 2021, making that city about the size Dallas was in 1979.

Since Joel Burns left the council in 2014, Fort Worth has had no LGBTQ representation. That will continue at least one more election cycle.

Houston's first out council member was Annise Parker who was elected in 1997, four years after Dallas began routinely electing LGBTQ council members and went on to become the city's mayor. She's now president and CEO of the LGBT Victory Fund.

When it comes to LGBTQ representation on the council this year, "We're a little antsy in Houston," Parker said this week.

Gay City Councilman Robert Gallegos, who is term limited out of office, is running for mayor of Houston. But he's behind in fundraising; four other candidates have more than \$1 million in the bank. Victory Fund hasn't endorsed in that race yet, but Parker said there's time, because Houston's local elections aren't until November.

"He has to step it up," Parker said of Gallegos.

She said two newcomers are running for the council — Mario Castillo and



Nick Hellyar.

Unlike Dallas races where an incumbent who is term-limited can sit out a race and then run again, in Houston candidates are then banned for life from running for the same position.

Two other gay incumbents are running for city council seats in Texas this spring. Jonathan Estrada is running for a second term in Pasadena and Jalen McKee-Rodriguez is up for reelection in San Antonio.

Estrada, Parker said, "scratched out a win last time." He has two challengers this race, but Parker said he's done a

Laser focused on HIV

IN AUSTIN

Groups from across the state will converge on Austin to lobby lawmakers

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Rep. Vinton Jones — the first member of the state House of Representatives who is out about his HIV-positive status — is already making a difference in the Texas Legislature, advocate Januari Fox, the policy, advocacy and community engagement director for Prism Health North Texas, said this week. “Vinton,” she added, “brings something different



State Rep. Vinton Jones is the first openly HIV-positive person elected to the Texas House

to the table.”

Jones has filed legislation on HIV/AIDS issues, and Prism Health North Texas is sending a bus to the Capitol on March 27 to lobby for the bills he’s filed. Fox said participants will be most focused on HB 2235, which would make an HIV test part of a standard STD screening in Texas.

Currently, you have to ask your doctor to add an HIV test, or your doctor has to ask if you’d like to include it, Fox said. To ask for an HIV test, you have to know it’s not automatically administered and be comfortable enough with your doctor to ask for the test.

Doctors, on the other hand, generally don’t routinely include an HIV test for all patients but instead make assumptions about who needs the test.

Fox said that leads to many missed

opportunities to catch HIV early.

“We’ve got all the tools,” she said. “We just need to start using them and get past the stigma.”

This bill isn’t as controversial as other legislation, so, Fox said, she’s hoping Advocacy Day will help push the bill to get a hearing in committee and maybe get it to the House floor. But she acknowledged bills often take multiple sessions before they become law.

Jones was assigned to the Public Health Committee, so that increases the chance of a hearing on the bill.

Another bill Jones is planning to file is a decriminalization bill.

“HIV is in criminal statute now for transmission,” Fox said. “It’s considered assault.”

Last session, one bill would have in-

HIV, Next Page

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HIV, From Previous Page

creased the penalties for transmitting HIV by upgrading it to aggravated assault, making it a felony. That bill died in committee.

Criminalization is something we hear about when someone with HIV spits at a medical worker. But, Fox said, "That doesn't match up with the science. It's not how HIV is transmitted."

And, she added, "HIV is not a death sentence. It's a treatable, manageable, chronic disease."

Jones said she is trying get HIV removed from the criminal code altogether.

Then there are budget items. During the pandemic, the ADAP program, which funds HIV medications for those who don't have insurance and can't afford the medication, had a \$36 million deficit. Fox said it was a combination of money getting shifted around to deal with COVID as well as an ordering glitch.

Another issue is the recent approval of Cabenuva, a once-every-other-month injectable treatment for HIV. Fox called that medication groundbreaking. An injectable helps anyone who has trouble staying compliant with daily medication, those who don't want the stigma of having bottles of medicine around their house, the homeless who have no place to store medications and others, Fox said.

But Cabenuva is expensive, and HIV advocates are looking for funding from the state.

They're also looking for a change in rules. Currently those participating in the ADAP program have to be re-certified as eligible every six months. The proposed rule would change that to once a year. The six-month renewal is a barrier to treatment for many because of transportation, child care, taking time off work and more.

Fox said Prism Health North Texas and other large HIV agencies across the state have people lobbying in the Capitol every week the Legislature is in session. They provide legislators with statistics and proposals so they have the facts about HIV.

Now, they have the additional benefit of having a colleague who is HIV-positive and who talks about it openly.

But lobbying day will bring people from around the state to Austin to talk



Januari Fox

to legislators about their own personal experiences.

Fox explained the schedule: Two virtual trainings will be held on March 9 and March 23, including a legislation 101 session and information on specific issues.

"We'll stay laser-focused on HIV," Fox assured.

On Monday, March 27, a bus will leave Dallas early from a central location where participants can park for the day. All costs will be covered.

Once in Austin, groups from around the state will meet at First United Methodist Church, a block from the Capitol, where breakfast will be served. Jones will give a rallying speech, and T-shirts will be distributed.

"We want to get over to the Capitol by 11 a.m. for a proclamation," Fox said. She noted that when the LGBT Chambers of Commerce recently went to the Capitol, the proclamation welcoming them didn't pass. She hopes for a smoother day than the Chamber members had.

Lunch and advocacy will follow. Everyone will be assigned to groups that will lobby together. No first-timers will lobby alone or even be expected to speak. Appointments will already be made for each group.

Fox said they'll wrap up by 5 p.m.

"If you want to come for a first time and just watch the process, there's no pressure," she said. "We want to capture folks interested in these issues and develop them as advocates."

What she's seen happen is a newcomer will watch during the first office visit and then later in the afternoon become comfortable enough to tell their own story in another office.

HIV advocacy days have happened in the Texas Capitol since 2011. In 2021, advocacy day was virtual, so this is the first time lobbying is back in person, meeting legislators face-to-face, since the pandemic.

All that glitters

MUSIC ON STAGE



Jake Wesley Rogers (Photo by Alex Stoddard)

Jake Wesley Rogers moves into spotlight

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

The queer stars have been in alignment for singer Jake Wesley Rogers. Now on his fourth EP release, *LOVE*, which came out in October and with the help of a fellow queer musician, the young pop artist has graduated to headliner on his first tour which kicks off Friday, Feb. 24, in Tampa. *The Peace Love and Pluto Tour* comes to Dallas to the House of Blues on March 3 in the Cambridge Room.

With his glam style and musicality, Rogers has gotten the obvious comparisons to another flamboyant music icon. But while Rogers stands on such shoulders, he's carving his own path on his own terms. He's also part of a new queer wave in music that's brought us Lil Nas X, Orville Peck, Kim Petras and Allison Ponthier, just to name a few.

Before his headlining concert with opener Stacey Ryan, and even before the tour started, Rogers spoke to Dallas Voice about his message, his music and how books are just the absolute best.

Dallas Voice: As of press time, you aren't on tour yet, but how are you feeling about leading up to *Peace Love and Pluto*? Jake Wesley Rogers: There's a lot of creative work, and I've just been processing things, but it'll hit me. I'm a very reflective person, so I try to step back from my experiences and try to witness it. Some things can't be processed, and you just have to get through it.

You've been in the business for a minute, but a headline tour is certainly a milestone. When you realize that this is your dream, it has been exciting. It's just really fun, and I'm going to roll with it and accept it. It's this beautiful mix of excitement and terror and hope. I'm ready to play these songs and find the people who want to hear them.

Being a reflective person, what does your music have to say? I've been in a different place in all the music I put out in the past year. So I think all the songwriting comes from a deeper and truer place. So I keep digging, because I feel like I need something bigger and to see



Queer Aussie Betty Who heads to Dallas with opener Shea Coulee.jpg

Sounds of Pride

This is a big week for concerts with a whole lot of Pride. Pop, drag and classical sounds can be part of your gay agenda for the week. Along with Jake Wesley Rogers' headlining show next Friday, March 3, these three shows add to a big queer week of music in Dallas all starting on the same day!

— Rich Lopez

March 2: Betty Who, Shea Coulee

Queer Australian pop singer Betty Who headlines her *The Big Tour* in support of her latest album. For the gay cherry on top, *Drag Race* royalty Shea Coulee steps in as Who's opening act. Doors at 7 p.m. at the Echo Lounge and Music Hall. TicketMaster.com.

March 2: Adore Delano

Hard to believe that Adore Delano is out promoting her fourth album. The former *Drag Race* and *American Idol* contestant brings her *Party Your World Tour* to Dallas presented by LGBTQ promoters Obsessed. 7 p.m. at The Kessler in Oak Cliff. TheKessler.org.

March 2-5: A Symphony Cantata featuring Nicholas Phan

Grammy-nominated tenor and out singer Phan will join with sopranos Susanna Philips and Sari Gruber for this Dallas Symphony Orchestra concert. Paul McCreesh conducts the performance that will feature works by Mendelssohn and Parry. The concert will also feature the Dallas Symphony Chorus and the Lay Family Organ. DallasSymphony.org.

what's under that. That's where I'm at now anyway.

Do you have plans for a full album release? I'm actually finishing my first album. There's been a lot of stuff I'm afraid to sway for a while and a lot of stuff people haven't heard, so it's good timing for that. All of it stems from my story connecting to a bigger story.

Books are kind of a big deal for you.

GLITTERS, Page 20

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Image: A Wreath of Flowers Surrounding a Cartouche with the Holy Family (detail), 1660. Jan van Kessel. Oil on canvas. 56 7/8 x 44 1/8 in. © The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp.

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Protecting parental rights

FAMILY MATTERS

Non-bio mom vs. sperm donor case is a 'call to action'

An Oklahoma judge has ruled that a married, nonbiological mom has no parental rights to the child she and her wife created and were raising together, but the couple's sperm donor does. The case shows both why LGBTQ families need to take extra steps to protect themselves, and why there is a critical need for reform of parentage law across the country.



Dana Rudolph
Contributing Columnist

In December 2021, Wilson filed for divorce, claiming there were no children "of" the marriage but that Vaughn is the father

to the one child born during the marriage. At the same time, she obtained a Victim Protection Order against Williams, alleging domestic abuse and banning Williams from contact with Wilson or their son for five years.

Regardless of the allegations there — which Williams has denied but that are not available to the public — that is a separate matter from whether Williams is a legal parent.

Vaughn also filed a motion in 2022 to establish his parental rights, and, on Feb. 13, 2023, Oklahoma County District Court Judge Lynne McGuire ruled in his favor, denying that Williams is the child's parent.

The ruling explained that "The Uniform Parentage Act that Oklahoma adopted was enacted in 2006 and does not take into account same-sex marriage, and there is no presumption that the wife of the mother is automatically the presumed parent of a child born during the marriage."

Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at LGBTQ legal organization GLAD, told me, "This case highlights the vulnerabilities LGBTQ+ families and their children still live with. Like all family law matters, this story is complex, but the court's conclusions are deeply concerning on several fronts."

The case hinges on whether same-sex married couples have the right to the presumption of parentage, the legal principle long applied to heterosexual



Polly Crozier

Kris Williams and Rebekah Wilson married in 2019 and had a son later that year with the help of Harlan Vaughn, a gay man who agreed to be their sperm donor, court documents say. Wilson carried the child, and both women's names were placed on his birth certificate. The child was given Williams' last name, and the two women jointly parented him for two years.

Wilson and Williams wanted their child to know his donor, however, as they had heard from other donor-conceived people that this was important to them. They, therefore, let Vaughn meet the child and spend time with him.



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RIGHTS

From Page 16

al couples that any child born within a marriage is presumed to be the child of both spouses.

Crozier observed that McGuire “disregarded the marital presumption of parentage that should have applied in this situation, finding that the presumption does not apply to LGBTQ spouses. The judge’s refusal to apply Oklahoma’s parentage statutes to this child because the decades-old law uses gendered language runs contrary to constitutional principles.”

These principles, she explained, were articulated in the U.S. Supreme Court rulings *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which established nationwide marriage equality, and *Pavan v. Smith*, which said both parents in a same-sex couple have the right to be on their children’s birth certificates.

“Those decisions affirmed that all married people should be treated equally and have equal access to the rights and responsibilities of marriage, including the marital presumption of parentage,” Crozier said.

Despite those rulings, LGBTQ legal advocates have long advised that because not all states may honor that marital presumption for same-sex couples, even married nonbiological/nongestational parents who are on their children’s birth certificates — an ability based on the marital presumption — should also get a co-parent/second-parent adoption, court order of parentage or the equivalent.

Unlike birth certificates, these other actions legally establish — and don’t just record — a relationship between the child and the parent and are guaranteed “full faith and credit” in all states.

Williams did not get a co-parent adoption, however. Because she could have pursued one but chose not to, McGuire said in the ruling, that counted against her claim.

Williams’ attorney, Robyn Hopkins, has told the media that they will appeal the decision.

“Beyond the heartbreaking implications for this child, whose relationship with one of their parents has now been legally severed, this case should be a call to action,” Crozier said. “States must ensure their parentage laws are updated and inclusive of LGBTQ families and their children, and there’s a model for doing so — the Uniform Parentage Act



District Court Judge
Lynne McGuire

of 2017.” Oklahoma’s parentage laws, like those in 24 other states, are based on the Uniform Parent-

age Act, model

parentage legislation developed by the Uniform Law Commission, a non-partisan body of state lawmakers, judges, scholars, and lawyers. The UPA was first developed in 1973, then updated in 2002 to expand ways of determining legal parentage for children born through assisted reproduction and again in 2017 to ensure that state parentage laws remain constitutional by providing equality and paths to parentage for LGBTQ families, among other changes.

Seven states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington) have adopted the 2017 UPA or substantially similar legislation. Hawaii, Kansas and Massachusetts have introduced bills this session to do so. New Hampshire and New York have also adopted some similar provisions.

Oklahoma’s parentage laws, however, and those of 10 other states — including Texas — are still based on the 2002 UPA; many other states are further behind.

Crozier stressed, “This case is also a painful reminder that LGBTQ+ families still need to make sure that they do everything they can to protect their children, including completing co-parent adoptions.”

She recommended that LGBTQ parents consult the “What LGBTQ+ Families Need to Know” guide (glad.org/post/faq-protect-your-family) created by GLAD, NCLR, COLAGE and Family Equality “to help families understand what they can do now to protect their children and their families, while we continue to advocate for updated parentage laws across the country.” ■

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 1000+ LGBTQ family books and more.



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good job and should win.

McKee-Rodriguez was the first out Black man elected to office in Texas. Parker said he's in his early 20s and has done a good job. But he has six opponents, so anything could happen there.

"We want to see more LGBT folks stepping up to run," Parker said, adding that she's delighted to see McKee-Rodriguez and Estrada, also in his 20s, running as part of a new generation stepping up for careers in politics.

Victory Fund recently ran a training in Plano for people considering a run, and, while no new LGBTQ candidates are running for council in Dallas this year, Parker said, several were there eyeing upcoming vacancies.

Victory Fund is seeing an increase this year in LGBTQ candidates running for school boards, Parker said, as a reaction to book bans, "don't say gay" laws and other legislation under consideration in Florida, Texas and other states.

Parker's advice to anyone running for office is this: "Political office is not a destination. It's a tool. Don't run for city

council unless you care about potholes. Be passionate about it."

She said she's worked with city council members who really wanted to be in the Legislature, and they didn't make good city council members because they didn't care about garbage collection or other local issues that city councils deal with.

"These are big expensive races," Parker continued. "In a citywide office in Houston, you represent more people than the governors of 15 states."

Parker said this is the year to watch mayoral and local elections everywhere. "It's a big deal we have a Black lesbian running Chicago," she said about Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who is up for reelection on Tuesday, Feb. 28.

"Jane Castor," Parker said, "should win without a problem. She's doing a great job as mayor of Tampa." That election will be held on March 7.

Parker said Victory Fund has also endorsed Leslie Herod for mayor of Denver. She'd become the first woman elected to that position. That election is on April 4. ■



Literature is everything to me. I think I was an author detailed by circumstance — ha-ha. I stole that from Joni Mitchell. My truly happiest place is disappearing into the world of an author or a book.

Technically you are an author — of songs.

But what do you think it is that the written word speaks to you so much? It's kinda been my saving grace to discover Oscar Wilde and Maya Angelou and Mary Oliver. Books connect me to a bigger art form, I think. Songs are basically a tweet, but books are books. I certainly view them as most sacred.

Is there a book that, as a musician, you recommend? *Just Kids* by Patti Smith is like a bible for me as an artist. She documents her journey into discovering what worked for her and the kismet when honoring her own path. Things mysteriously happen when you do so. It's about what it means to be an artist and how hard it is. I think it'll change anyone's life to read that.

Toni Morrison once said, "The function of freedom is to free someone else." I think books are how you free people.

Back to music, you're blowing up at a time when many queer voices have

been loud and proud in pop music. Have you thought at all about your place in this new queer wave of music in recent years? This is all a new concept which happened very fast. I wasn't asking to be a part of all this, but it happened when it did, and these things merged sometimes. It's incredible that I get to do this, in this time, with my story. There were so many who didn't get to.

You seem to be in the queer gods' favor.

Another gay singer — Justin Tranter (Semi Precious Weapons) — signed you to his label. You almost opened for Ben Platt. You get the comparisons to Elton John. Oh, and your song "Hindsight" was on the Bros soundtrack.

The lessons I'm learning from all this are almost too many. There have been amazing moments that have challenged me. I think with all that, what I'm learning right now is that I'm here to teach and sell my story and keep my eyes calibrated toward my purpose. I think I now know more than ever that I'm here to spread my message and love — and be fabulous.

For tickets, visit Ticketmaster.com. Doors at 7 p.m.

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PLAN YOUR WEEK - The Gay Agenda... Our LGBTQ community calendar!



Iconic drag performer Tasha Kohl hosts **ICON Birthday Bash** Sunday, Feb. 26, in The Rose Room. The show features Cassie Nova, Dina Jacobs, Chevelle Brooks and Bubblicious. Tickets range from \$25-\$35 and are available at the door. Doors open at 5 p.m., and the show starts at 6 p.m.

- **Red for community events**
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■ Every Wednesday: THRIVE

Resource Center's THRIVE Wednesday Support Group for LGBTQ adults 50 and older meets from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. at Resource Center Community Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road 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. 24: Dallas LGBTQ Global Symposium

World Affairs Council of Dallas and Fort Worth presents the Dallas LGBTQ Global Symposium on equality and human rights from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at Crum Auditorium, Southern Methodist University.

■ Feb. 24: '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. 24: Another Badu Birthday Bash

Erykah Badu's Another Badu Birthday Bash at 8:30 p.m. at The Factory in Deep Ellum, 2713 Canton St. Tickets at axs.com.

■ Feb. 24-26: Modern Masterpieces

Texas Ballet Theater presents pieces by Bela Bartok, Gustav Mahler and Philip Glass at the Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. ATTPAC.org.

■ Feb. 25: 'Eat Your Art Out'

Arlington Museum of Art's biggest and most delicious fundraiser of the year helps the museum present world class exhibitions from 7-9 p.m. at Arlington Museum of Art, 201 W. Main St., Arlington. Info and tickets at ArlingtonMuseum.org.

■ Feb. 25: Disco vs. Retro

Panoptikon hosts Disco vs. Retro: Best of '70s disco and '80s Retro New Wavem, at 9 p.m. at Sons of Hermann Hall, 3414 Elm St. Featuring Lord Byron on deck, Evil M at the door and DVR go-go with Melissa Meaow. For 21 and up; \$10 admission.

■ Feb. 26: ICON Birthday Bash

Iconic drag performer Tash Kohl hosts ICON Birthday Bash at 6 p.m. at The Rose Room inside S4, 3911 Cedar Springs. Show features Cassie Nova, Dina Jacobs, Chevelle Brooks and Bubblicious. Tickets are \$25-\$35.

■ Feb. 26: Classic Chassis

Classic Chassis Car Club lunch, social and The Shop tour. Drive your classic to spend some time outdoors socializing. Then head upstairs for lunch at the Derby restaurant before a tour of the facility. Derby/The Shop, 9100 John Carpenter Freeway.

■ Through Feb. 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.

■ Through Feb. 26: MBS Productions: 'Confessions of the Slave Nat Turner'

The play chronicles the trial and sentencing of Nat Turner, the slave responsible for the first rebellion in 1831 against white slaveholders. Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road. MBSProductions.info.

MARCH

■ March 2: Betty Who, Shea Coulee

The queer Australian pop star serves as headliner in support of her newest album *Big!* Drag Race royalty Shea Coulee opens. 7 p.m. at the Echo Lounge and Music Hall. LiveNation.com.

■ March 2: Adore Delano

The former *Drag Race* and *American Idol* contestant brings her Party Your World tour to Dallas presented by LGBTQ promoters Obsessed. 7 p.m. at The Kessler in Oak Cliff. TheKessler.org.

■ March 2-4: 'On Your Feet!'

Broadway at the Center presents the story of Gloria Estefan. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. ATTPAC.org.

■ March 3-4: 'Wood/Shop'

Bruce Wood Dance presents new works by company dancers at 7 p.m. at the Bruce Wood Dance Studio. Tickets at EventBrite.com.

■ March 2-12: 'Silver Foxes'

Uptown Players presents a premiere by Golden Girls writers James Berg and Stan Zimmerman about three older queer men who save their best friend from his facility. Presented on the Theatre Three stage. UptownPlayers.org.

■ March 4-12: 'Beautiful'

The Carole King musical at Casa Mañana, 3101 W. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth. CasaManana.org.

■ March 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.

■ Through March 5: Kitchen Dog Theater: 'Man Cave'

This regional premiere is a political thriller by queer playwright John J. Caswell Jr. that centers

Adore Delano brings her Party Your World to The Kessler in Oak Cliff Thursday, March 2.

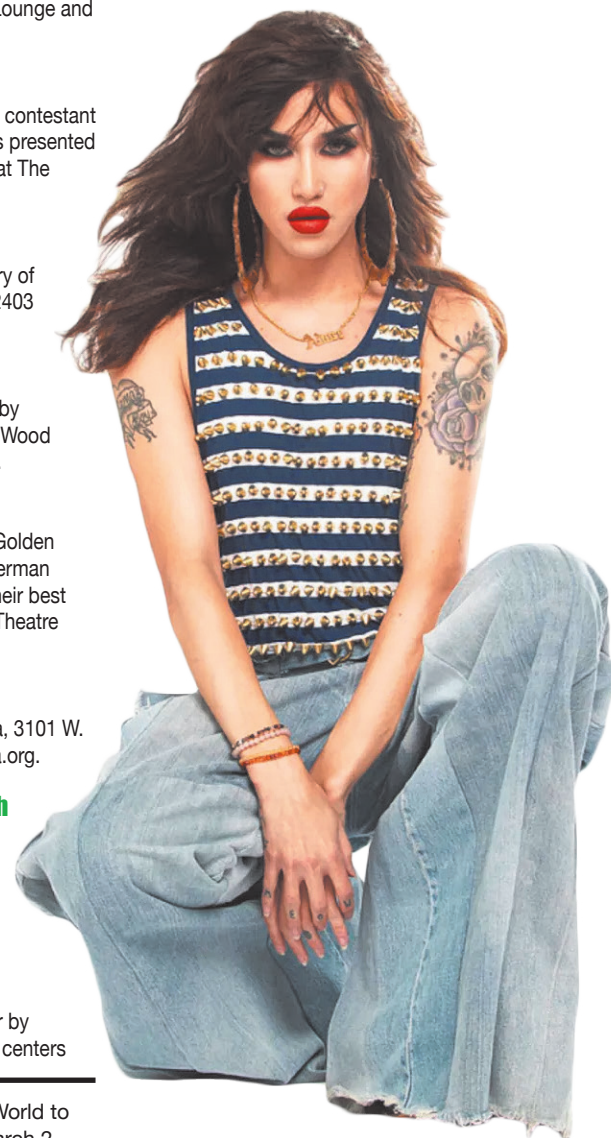
on four women who take over a Republican politician's man cave and turn it into a sanctuary. Trinity River Arts Center, 2600 N. Stemmons Fwy. KitchenDogTheater.org.

■ March 7: Classic Chassis

Classic Chassis Car Club meets 6-8 p.m. at Ojeda's, 4617 Maple Ave.

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

Look for extended listings online at DallasVoice.com



Cassie Nova

ASK A DRAG QUEEN

From peeing outside to weighted blankets — what’s on Cassie’s mind this week

Hey y’all. I have no idea what to write about this week ... I am just sitting here waiting for inspiration. I am so sick of all of the usual topics: Politics, weather, the Super Bowl — meh. I usually write about whatever is going on in my life, but it’s been pretty boring lately. I do have family dealing with some major health issues, but I’m not ready to tackle that subject.

I feel like I am on the cusp of something major happening soon, so I should enjoy the boring days to the fullest.

By the way, my idea of a boring day is kind of awesome. If I can go the full day and never have to put on pants or leave the house, I consider that a win. It gives me nothing good to write about, but I take my recharging seriously.

Here is a random fact about me: I pee outside about half of the time when I am at home. My husband thinks it’s weird, but I don’t care. My backyard is pretty secluded so if I take the dogs potty, I go too. We pee as a family.

Not to mention that I havta pee so freaking much! I bought one of those huge jugs to drink water out of that has the hours of the day on the side. It is supposed to help you keep track of how much water you drink in a day. The goal is to drink the entire thing throughout the day, so you get your full 15 cups of water (15.5 cups are the recommended intake for a man).

Now, I wanna be healthy and stay hydrated, but that is too much water for me! I have to pee every 30 to 45 minutes trying to drink that much water. Then on show nights — well, do you know how hard it is to go pee once you are in drag and fully padded? It ain’t easy. Not to mention how crazy your flow can be after tucking! Some days I pull it out, and it shoots into two or three separate streams, looking like a scene from Ghostbusters. Maybe my tuckers are too tight

Next subject: I have made my bed too comfortable. I hear it calling to me during the day, and I fantasize about it when I am at work. Sometimes, when some rando is talking to me at the club, I zone out and go to my happy place —



my bed.

Picture it: a California King-size bed, dark-painted walls that make the room feel like a cave, a window AC unit going (mostly for the chill but also for the white noise it creates) and our new king-sized, 45-pound, weighted blanket that I got for Christmas.

It has created the perfect storm of comfort.

I received a 15-20-pound, twin-sized weighted blanket a few years ago for Christmas, and I loved it — except for the fact that when you pulled it up around you, you would hear threads snap, and within a few weeks, all of the little glass beads — or sand or whatever they use to make it weighted — eventually migrate into the other segments, making the blanket wapsided.

I was constantly trying to get Jamie to try the weighted blanket, but he runs hot and feared it would be uncomfortable and overheat him. He is constantly regulating his body temperature during the night by uncovering his feet and recovering them.

I asked for a king-sized weighted blanket for Christmas and Jamie, being the wonderful husband that he is, got us the nicest one he could find. It came with a lovely cover and was 35 pounds. He actually loved it, except that it wasn’t big enough. It covered a king size bed — but

just barely. It didn’t hang over the edges by very much, and that bothered the both of us.

So, he went searching and found the biggest one that he could find. It was 45 pounds and hung over the sides by a good six inches.

Jamie tosses around so much in his sleep that the dogs get annoyed with him and eventually migrate to be up against me — a true doggie pile. Since we got the new heavy-ass blanket, though, he barely moves. He seems to be sleeping better. I know I do. It’s like the blanket holds you down and hugs you the entire night.

Plus, our little Chihuahua, Toby, who has to sleep under the covers or else no one sleeps, is getting a workout. You should see him wiggle and fight to get into his spot. And Toby needs all the exercise he can get! His little no-neck-havin’ ass — he looks like that guy Ed from *90 Day Fiancé*.

I am hoping that Jamie continues to love it when we get into the summer months. Whatever they use inside the blanket keeps it from retaining too much heat, so I am hopeful. Not to mention that our bedroom can feel like a walk-in freezer at times, so as long as I keep it chilly, we should be fine.

(I had no idea that this would turn into an infomercial for a weighted blanket, but here we are.)

I guess I shoulda called this another installment of Cassie Nova’s Word Vom-it. From peeing to water consumption to my supabedroom — this one got weird. Sorry, not sorry. Y’all know by now how my brain wor — Oh look! Something shinny!

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

this week’s solution

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Solution on Page 22

Across

- 1 Where she blows, for seamen
- 5 Younger daughter of Michelle
- 10 Salty white stuff from the Greeks
- 14 Weaving of Priscilla fame
- 15 *Guilty* for Leopold and Loeb
- 16 Epps of *The Mod Squad*
- 17 Ending with switch
- 18 Perry of fashion design
- 19 Easy partner
- 20 Start of a quote from Randy Rainbow's *Born This Gay*
- 23 Partner of the desperate
- 24 Hawaiian wedding party, perhaps
- 25 Printer's measures
- 26 A cruising sailor may grab it
- 27 Atomic energy org.
- 30 Where to find people in the navy
- 33 More of the quote
- 35 Holly of song
- 36 Come clean, with "up"
- 37 Say whether or not you're coming
- 38 Tongue for immigrants

39 Sci-fi sky journey

- 40 Abercrombie & Fitch binges
- 42 More of the quote
- 45 Cuts back
- 46 Mercury once of Queen
- 50 Horse of another color
- 52 Start of a Shakespearean title
- 53 Not in the pink
- 54 End of the quote
- 57 Suffix with prefer
- 58 Somewhat
- 59 River of Cocteau's country
- 60 Active one
- 61 Wine's partner
- 62 The sounds of music

Down

- 1 Bara of the silents
- 2 One of the Great Lakes
- 3 Opposite of ecstasy
- 4 Part of a tutti-frutti float
- 5 Goes lickety-split
- 6 Pour oil on
- 7 Autoerotic beneficiary
- 8 Like some pussy cats
- 9 Battery partner
- 10 Ballet bend
- 11 Do a nocturnal activity
- 12 Meaty Mexican dish

13 *We ____ Family*

- 21 Good, to Caesar
- 22 Unit in a Shakespearean sonnet
- 26 Sled dog
- 27 NASDAQ rival
- 28 Go from one gay bar to another
- 29 Protection for packages
- 30 De novo
- 31 New Ager John
- 32 Bargain figure at Barneys
- 33 Bronx cheers
- 34 Screwed up
- 36 Sponge
- 39 Number of sides to a gay symbol
- 40 Like a sourpuss
- 41 Order in advance
- 43 More lemony
- 44 In the recent past
- 47 City in the land of Rimbaud
- 48 *The L Word* creator Chaiken
- 49 Cary of *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*
- 50 Scand. nation
- 51 Cry after getting the shaft
- 52 Gomer's *Encore!*
- 55 Glenn Burke stat
- 56 P on fraternity row

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