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Established 1984 | DallasVoice.com | Volume 40 | Issue 14 | FREE | Friday, August 11, 2023

THE
MONEY
ISSUE
Money-saving tips, page 10

Reining in Sven

An interview with Collin Baja,
the actor that brings the reindeer
to life onstage in 'Frozen'

By Rich Lopez, page 19





*Debra
Rutherford
Thompson*

Debra Rutherford Thompson is back dancing in her late husband's arms now. She passed away on July 29th, 2023, in Highland Park, Dallas, Texas due to a stroke most likely caused by the stress of her home being rearranged at the request of a Dallas doctor. The doctor required that her "stuff" be moved out of her room and reorganized. This caused her great anxiety due to Alzheimer's patients using objects as ways to "root" themselves, resulting in a stroke. While it is deeply painful for those left behind, the fact that she passed instead of remaining trapped in a body due to whatever disease she had caused. Debra's resilience in not only surviving an Alzheimer's diagnosis 10 years past what had been expected, but her determination to enjoy life, is a testament to how she had always lived it.

Born on December 11th, 1936 to Bonnie Bailey Rutherford, her life was shaped when at age six she witnessed her father, a Baptist Minister, Reverend Rutherford, shot in front of her on the steps of his church on her birthday. She was adopted by his sister, Betty Rutherford Sigmund, whom she'd been named after. She changed her birth name "Betty" to Debra to avoid confusion. Growing up, she was introduced to their family's Blackfoot "Niisitapi" Native American heritage, represented by an eagle feather passed down tied with the Rutherford family name. Her father, a cowboy who'd married a Native American woman on the reservation in Charleston, South Carolina, she, her siblings and her father were proud of their American Ancestry due to segregation since they could not be considered American.

Similarly, her aunt passed on stories and prayers, including a rose bush that had been passed between each generation in the family since it had left the Blackfoot generations before.

During this time, Debra assisted her mother, Betty Rutherford Sigmund and her little sister, Betty Sigmund, in raising black Labradors. Debra won several awards at the National Dog Fair for the labs she raised.

Arriving in Dallas, Texas, she was the first time Debra owned a house. Her mother-in-law's non-hand-me-down shoes and her mother's boost the girls' confidence. Her mother enrolled her in multiple activities, leading to Debra's modeling career, eventually to her modeling career. She ran a runway for Neiman Marcus. To receive a scholarship, Debra worked to earn income to complete her degree in Business Administration at Southern Methodist University. During that time, she wanted to become a nurse and was quickly told that she could not.

She was a member of the Highland Park girls who had received personal training and owned their own business. Debra practiced with a stick and ball. While juggling pursuing her education and serving as the SMU majorette, she worked to purchase her first home and improve it, creating a profit that enabled her to do so. The process until she eventually owned three homes provided a home for her brother Guy Rutherford and his three children, Guy, Michael and Laura, when he had to leave to care for his wife who struggled with severe mental illness. She moved the house in Highland Park to ensure that her two nephews and niece received the best education possible and used her income to provide the family's financial support. She then purchased a second home for her Aunt Betty whose health required a lengthy leave from being employed as a nurse. Endeavoring to complete her education and provide for three households led Debra to increase her modeling career, buying, improving and flipping more houses.

When Debra graduated, she recognized that to become the person she needed to gain the type of social education offered only to the wealthy, she needed to attend the schools of the era and find a way to see the world. Researching, she discovered becoming an American Airlines Stewardess would allow her to do both. She served as a stewardess, leading her to travel and eventually to relocate to Dallas, still maintaining various properties in Dallas for resale and rentals. As

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healthy again, she helped Debra build upon the nurses training offered to stewardess so that Debra could help her aunt to save women's lives in Chicago and Dallas who had been hurt by botched back-alley abortions and felt they couldn't risk going to a hospital. The two women did this throughout much of Debra's time as a stewardess.

Also during this time, Debra would meet with her close friend, Pat Kerr, a fellow model and then-burgeoning fashion designer, in New York where the two were fond of gaining access to exclusive clubs and restaurants by Debra urgently telling the hosts, "Don't you know who she IS?!?!?" while Pat Kerr dressed in her best clothes and pretended to be haughty as her "assistant" Debra chided the businesses for not immediately recognizing her. The two gorgeous women enjoyed multiple comped meals, drinks and dance clubs as a result.

By the time Debra had been promoted to serving as the hostess overseeing the Dallas Admiral's Club she had become a self-made millionaire from her smart real estate investments. When John Philp Thompson, Sr.'s fleet of planes were all down for repair, causing him to book a commercial flight, he met her at the Admiral's Club. Having come out of a recent divorce, he found her beautiful and charming with a wicked sense of humor. But he had had friends who had insisted that they knew a woman who he just absolutely needed to meet due to relating to how he'd helped his father build 7-Eleven from the ground up. Thinking that he should first meet that lady since he had found it difficult to relate to socialites who'd been born into money without the experience of building up a dream, he decided to accept the invitation to a blind double date only to discover it was Debra! The two got a great deal of amusement from this and eventually married in 1975.

Accustomed to helping her aunt in secret, Debra took John's juggling of his life as CEO of 7-Eleven with his history of secretly assisting human rights leaders in stride. She was proud that she had not shared his stories of meeting with Hispanic students at the University of Texas to tell them when, where and who to protest to fight against the then-unspoken school policy of not allowing brown students to enter graduate schools until after he passed in 2003. She didn't reveal that she had known that John had coordinated with MLK Jr's representative, Reverend Peter Johnson, to help fight segregation, until Rev. Johnson openly talked about decades later. In the same vein, when the couple decided they wanted to adopt a child, they were repeatedly told they were too old or worse, after naming and buying twin beds for a pair of African American twins, were told they "were the wrong race and therefore could not qualify to adopt them". Heartbroken, the couple reached out a friend, Reverend William Wasson, who operated "Our Little Children of the World Orphanages" in Mexico. The priest refused on the grounds that to allow the adoption of a child would make the others feel bad. But then at 7:11am on Mother's Day in 1977 when a little girl was born, Father Wasson took it as a sign that God wanted Debra and John to have the child. When the couple presented their daughter tin Dallas, half their guests left due to not approving of an interracial adoption. This led the couple to not only take a stronger stand against racism and prejudice of any kind, but to Debra also reclaiming her Native American heritage, publicly being proud to claim it alongside the Rutherford Clan.

Debra and John struggled with assisting the girl born with a hearing loss, seizures, migraines and severe asthma through much of her childhood while simultaneously also continuing to stand for their beliefs in basic human rights and civil rights. Having had three other children from a previous marriage battling with asthma, John was passionate about establishing an ER for asthmatic children in Dallas and Debra joined him in advocating for it. The two welcomed a friend dying of AIDS into their home in the 80's and balanced raising a child with health issues with John's career and Debra's continuing real estate investments. They were also the never-caught couple "technically breaking the law" by delivering coats and blankets to the homeless underneath the highway overpasses in the city during freezes from their van which they sped away from police cars attempting to ticket them for doing so. The two took a strong stand in the 1990's against homophobia when John refused to ban the Dallas LGBT community from hosting a LGBT human rights march at the State Fair of Texas and ignored threats to the family pressuring him to do otherwise.

Sadly, burdened with bipolar and residual trauma from what she'd witnessed as a child, Debra became more reclusive but would still have bursts of unpredictable charisma, known for carrying large purses full of candy bars that she'd happily pass out to strangers. During this time, she was known for such antics as showing up dressed like a cat or in later years taking the Christmas lights off of a Christmas tree in a restaurant, wrapping them around herself, jumping on the

piano and tossing the plug at her husband with, "John, plug me in!" then leading the restaurant in Christmas carols.

In later years, as Debra's bipolar came back under control, the couple enjoyed time hiking at their home in Aspen Valley and the culture and flavors at Casa Thompson in Cuernavaca Mexico. After John's passing, Debra explored multiple area churches and chose the Cathedral of Hope for two reasons, she "loved the choir and was grateful for a minister who kept to the topic of The Lord and not trying to tell the congregation how to vote from the pulpit." When friends and family expressed concern over her safety due to the hateful protestors who sometimes hassle congregants that she'd have to walk through, Debra replied in her signature South Carolina drawl, "Oh honey, they'd have to do much more than that to worry me. My father had an integrated church in South Carolina that we faced down protestors outside of each Sunday. If they think they're intimidating, that's a joke, as I've seen so much worse." She'd attend each Sunday with her close friend Joel Flores up until COVID caused the church to cancel later services. During COVID, she insisted on learning to walk again after breaking a hip and had to be begged to agree to riding a wheelchair in the Dallas Women's March, where as a Native American elder she was invited to be wheeled at the front of the 6,000 women march from the Arts District to City Hall.

When she lost the ability to stand and walk by herself due to an intestinal surgery, she still asked to lead as active a life as possible and became known for 'dancing' via Stephen Stefanou's moving her wheelchair across the floor so she could join friends and family in celebrations at her daughter's, Mary Ann's, and son-in-law's, Joshua's, home. Having been a trained tap dancer and ballet dancer as young woman, who'd then mastered swing, samba and salsa with John, she loved movies and plays with musical dance numbers and enjoyed her times at home listening with Alma Nellums to their favorite blues and gospel songs. Strong willed, she even shocked attendees at Mary Ann's and Joshua's home when she jumped out of her wheelchair to dance with Joel Flores for a few brief moments to Singer Lady Diamond's music.

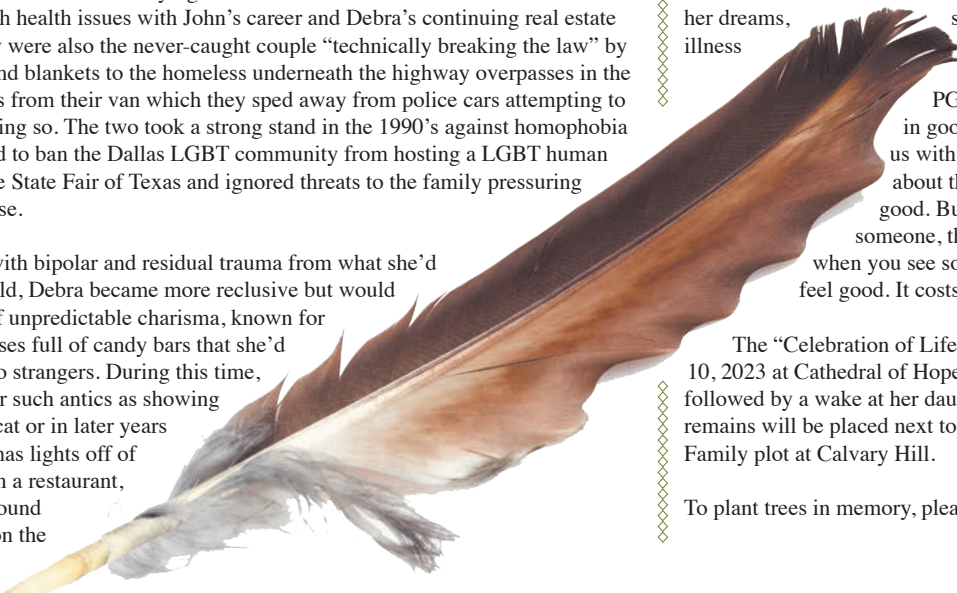
Having been blessed with a strong green thumb, Debra leaves behind numerous rose bushes where she'd spent so much time tending, her brother, Frank Sigmund, numerous nieces and nephews from her 6 siblings that she was having reunions with up through the 90's, her daughter, Mary Ann Thompson-Frenk, and son-in-law, Joshua Raymond Frenk, as well as her grown stepchildren from John's prior marriage, Peggy Thompson Wolfe, Douglas Thompson and John Philp Thompson, Jr, as well as their children, Tyler Wolfe, Parker Wolfe, Clark Thompson, Liza Thompson Sorgenfrei, John Philp Thompson III, Caroline Thompson Richards, Lauren Thompson Bailey, and Crawford Thompson, as well as brother-in-laws, Jere W. Thompson, Sr. and Joe C. Thompson Sr.

She also leaves behind a legacy among friends who loved the woman so found of joking, "A good man is hard to find, you always seem to get the other kind....", then wink, "...but honey, you're different...you're a good one!" Our family wishes to extend a special thanks to all those who made the effort to spend time with her in her last years as we believe it was due to her enjoying an active social life that her will to continue enjoying life was made possible. A special note of gratitude therefore goes to Alma Nellums, Billy Bob Harris, Joan Wynne, and ESPECIALLY to Marcela Gerber, Ron Davis, Vince Pradia, Alan Keith, Joe Pacetti and Joel Flores for making her a priority in your lives.

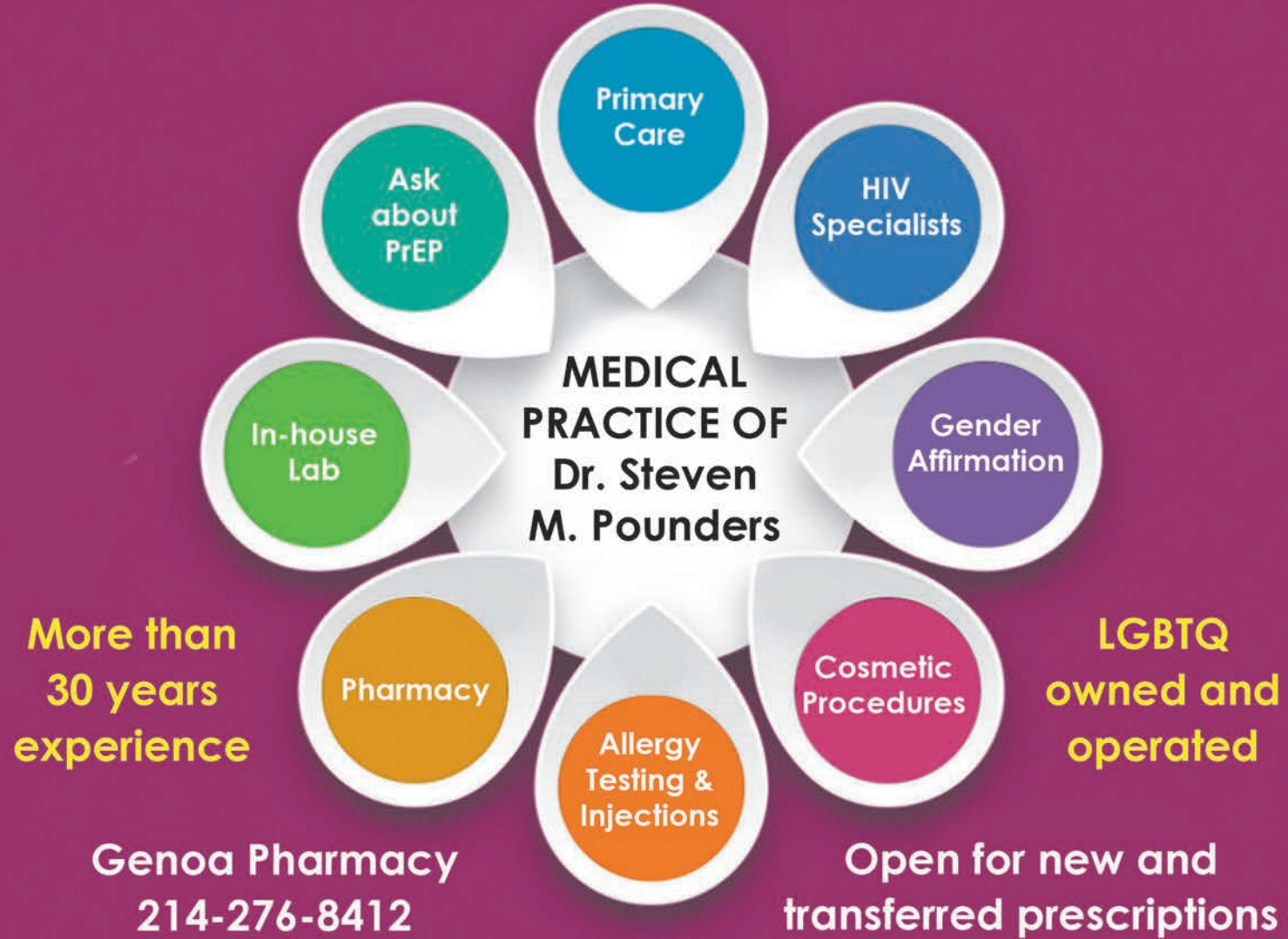
Debra was fond of saying, "The Good Lord never gives us more than we can handle, but sometimes I wish He didn't believe in me so much!" She was a woman who built her dreams, struggled past immense adversities of prejudice, mental illness and finances to create a life she was proud of and was a known source of laughter with her signature, not always PG, wit. A staple at Bistro 31 and Celebration, she believed in good food shared in good times with loved ones. She leaves us with this last piece of advice, "Everyone has something good about them. If someone's just awful, perhaps their hair looks good. But the truth is if you can't find something nice to say about someone, then the problem might be with you. Work on that. And when you see something good about another person, tell them. Make them feel good. It costs nothing to brighten someone's day."

The "Celebration of Life" was conducted by Dr. Neal Thomas on Thursday, August 10, 2023 at Cathedral of Hope located at 5910 Cedar Springs Rd, Dallas, Texas 75235 followed by a wake at her daughter's and son-in-law's home. On August 14, her cremated remains will be placed next to her husband, John Philp Thompson, Sr. in the Thompson Family plot at Calvary Hill.

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August 11, 2023 | Volume 40 | Issue 14

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WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com



Shantaé Morgan

Shantaé's Cabaret drag fundraiser announced

Dallas Hope Charities this week announced that its second annual drag show Shantaé's Cabaret, to be presented by The Teddy Bear Party, will be held at 6 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 27, at Sue Ellen's.

DHC's mission is to provide food, shelter and services for the LGBTQIA community. The center also operates the Dallas Hope Center, transitional living center for queer young adults. DHC hosts the educational series Hopeful Discussions and runs the Collective Hope Coalition, a resource of basic needs for the community.

In a statement about the event, officials with DHC noted that the event takes place just four days before Texas legislation targeting drag performances goes into effect.

"This year ... the art of drag has become the target of conservative-backed legislation here in Texas banning the art form. Senate Bill 12 was approved on June 18, during Pride Month no less, and will go into effect on Sept. 1. For centuries, drag has served as a powerful form of self-expression, artistic creativity, and community building. Additionally, drag shows have historically been a safe haven for the LGBTQIA+ community, offering a space where individuals

can authentically express their true selves and find support and acceptance."

Roscoe Compton-Kelly, aka drag performer Shantaé Morgan and a member of the DHC board, said, "I perform for the sheer joy of self-expression and artistic liberation. Drag is not just an art form; it is a powerful statement of our authenticity and an unapologetic celebration of who we are. Through the magic of drag, we touch hearts, inspire minds, and build bridges of understanding within our LGBTQIA+ community and beyond.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for the show. Tickets are available online at GiveLively.org.

— Rich Lopez

Red Cross implements new blood donation regulations

The American Red Cross this week implemented a new policy, approved last May by the Food and Drug Administration, governing who can and cannot donate blood. The new rules lifts the decades-old ban on donations by all gay men and now determines eligibility based on behavior rather than orientation.

Now, gay men in monogamous relationships with other men and those who have not recently engaged in anal sex.

In January of this year, the FDA proposed basing eligibility on sexual acts rather than on gender or sexual orientation. After allowing time for public comments, the agency adopted the proposed new policy in May.

A blanket policy refusing donations from anyone reporting having had sex with an HIV-positive person remains in place, even though it has been proven that individuals with undetectable viral loads cannot transmit the virus. Also rejected are donations from anyone regardless of sex who acknowledges having had a new sexual partner, having had more than one partner or having had anal sex within the previous three months.

— Tammye Nash

Black Tie Dinner to participate in Unleashed LGBTQ



Brad Pritchett

Black Tie Dinner announced Aug. 4 that the organization has been invited to participate in a panel discussion at Unleashed LGBTQ, the three-day conference being held in Dallas this September. BTD board members both current and legacy, along with a representative from one of its beneficiaries, will be part of the panel “Black Tie Dinner: Education, Empowerment, Entertainment — Four Decades of Impact.”

According to a statement from BTD officials, “We will discuss our origin story, where we are now, the impact we have had in the North Texas community over the last 40-plus years, and where we see ourselves going.” Brad Pritchett, former Black Tie Dinner co-chair and current chief experience officer for the Dallas Museum of Arts, will moderate the discussion set for 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 24 at 2 p.m.

To learn more about Unleashed LGBTQ, visit UnleashedLGBTQ.com.

— Rich Lopez

Legacy Cares announces Angels Variety Show

Area nonprofit Legacy Cares has announced that its next special event, Legacy’s Angels Variety Show, will feature a lineup of local performers at the Rose Room on Saturday, Aug. 26 at 7 p.m. Proceeds from the event will benefit the organization’s initiatives.

Cassie Nova will host the event, which will also feature Jada Pinkett Fox, Mary Con, Gloria Devine, Stefan Newman, Barbie Davenport Dupree, Lucia Hardaway, Micah Isaiah and Quinton Jones. Legacy’s Angels Variety Show is presented by Purple Foundation, NexBank, Anthony Bobrow Trust and Piacenti Law.

Tickets are available at EventBrite.com.

— Rich Lopez

■ Adoptable / ZEKE

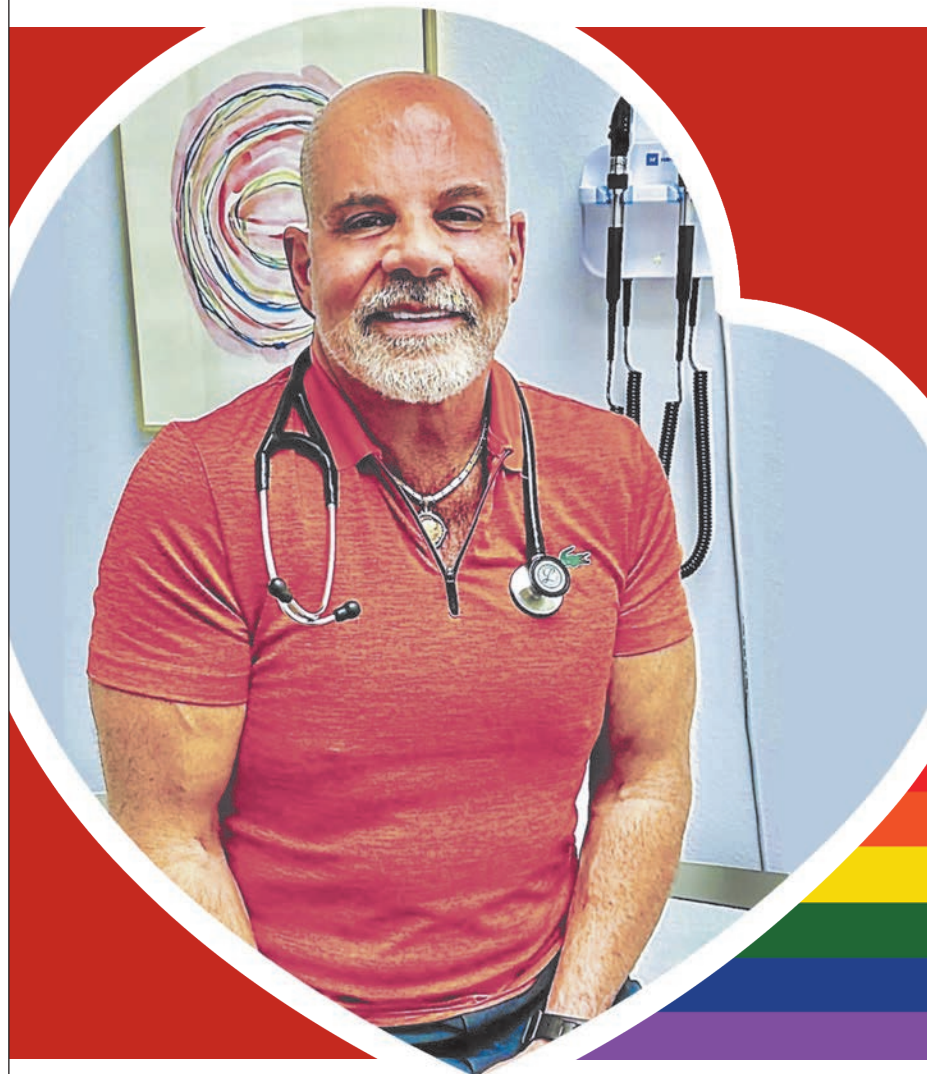


Zeke is a 7-year-old pit-bulldog mix looking for a forever loving home. He’s a bigger guy, weighing in at 72 pounds, and

he has a black coat with a little bit of white on his underside and snout. Zeke is as lovable as can be, and he is a first-rate bum-wiggler with the happiest prance imaginable when you get him out into the play yard. Then he likes to chill out on the couch next to you to catch the latest TV shows. Zeke gets along well with other dogs and seems to be a good fit for kids, too, so bring the whole family down to the shelter to meet him. Zeke came to the SPCA of Texas as a stray from Ellis County and would much rather not be out on his own again. Just like all pets at the SPCA of Texas, Zeke has been neutered, microchipped and has had all age-appropriate vaccines. Find his profile online at SPCA.org/Adoptable/Zeke/ to make an appointment to meet him.

Throughout August, in recognition of “Clear the Shelters,” all adult dog and cat adoptions are only \$25 at the SPCA Dallas Animal Care Center, 2400 Lone Star Drive, and the Ellis County Animal Care Center, 2570 FM Road 878 in Waxahachie. But there’s one exception: When a senior adopts a senior pet, age seven or older — like Zeke — the adoption fee is waived.

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Outrage du jour

Conservatives focus on ridiculous 'culture war' issues while the world is burning

Recently I saw the latest in a long string of articles that begin with: "Conservatives are outraged about ..." (fill in the blank). In this case, it was "Conservatives are outraged at Doc Martens for creating a boot that depicts a trans person." Trans Doc Martens are just the latest affront to the poor, beleaguered conservative movement that seems to be under assault on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, has anyone noticed that it's been really hot lately? And not just here in DFW. In Arizona, it's so hot that cactus plants are dying off. The entire planet recently reeled off the four hottest days since records have been kept!

But please, go on about how an LGBTQ-friendly boot maker is ruining your life while the planet speeds towards not being able to support life!

Conservatives are outraged by Mickey Mouse — well, at least conservative Florida governor and U.S. presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis is outraged by Mickey. DeSantis seems to be fighting a quixotic battle against Disney because they had the gall to criticize the right-wing governor's pet legislation, known as the "Don't Say Gay" law, that aims to erase queer identities in primary education.

But other than that, Florida is a visitable Shangri-la — as long as you ignore the recent stories about leprosy becoming endemic there.

Meanwhile, Texas has been ranked as the No. 1 worst state to live and work in in terms of reproductive rights, healthcare (especially if you're queer), voting rights, worker protections, inclusiveness and crime.

And have you noticed that everything seems to be more expensive lately? Inflation has been a problem for a while now. Just this morning, I came across a discussion about how homeowners insurance rates are up around 40 percent!

But conservatives are outraged by ...



Leslie McMurray
Accidental Activist

Barbie. Yes, that movie about an iconic American toy has really got them going. Conservative pundits were gleefully predicting it would flop while going to see the movie, just so they could get mad and complain about it. It has now brought in more than \$1 billion in worldwide box office sales.

Meanwhile, eight of the nine states with the highest poverty rates have Republican governors.

If you think immigration is a problem now, well, it's just getting started. As climate change continues to gather momentum, mass migrations will occur from places that have become unlivable to places like the U.S. and Spain and other European countries. So what's the plan? No outrage? No sense of urgency to deal with this inevitable human catastrophe?

Nope. Conservatives are instead outraged by Chick-fil-A! I must admit, I didn't have that one on my "right-wing outrage bingo card." What did this chicken chain do to spark such disdain? They hired a vice president of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), prompting right-wingers to hurl their most potent insult — "Woke" — at them.

But what is "Woke" anyway? According to an official in the DeSantis administration, it is "the belief that there are systemic injustices in American society and the need to address them." That sounds like a GOOD thing. Yet DeSantis himself often declares that "Florida is where Woke goes to die."



Woke? That's all you got? That's your "plan?" A recent NBC News poll shows 59 percent of adults in America agree that American society is racist. Isn't that a major problem?

The World Health Organization lists antibiotic resistance as one of the biggest threats to global health, food security and development. But conservatives are outraged by Hasbro's "Potato Head" toy. In dropping the prefix "Mr." and creating a toy without a pre-assigned gender, Hasbro has sent conservatives into a tizzy!

Look, if you haven't figured it out yet, the right-wing's "culture wars" are a distraction, the equivalent of a house being on fire but the concern being that the TV was left on.

We have a candidate for president who leads his party's polls by a substantial margin and who is under three criminal indictments with 78 felony counts, and yet we are concerned about Chick-Fil-A and Mx Potato head? Really?

Conservatives are outraged about drag queens — now? We suddenly need laws NOW to ban drag performances? Why? What has happened to cause this sudden concern? Has a child been harmed?

Yes, children have been harmed. But not by drag performances. There was a story today about an assistant band director in Texas sentenced to 30 years in prison for taking inappropriate pictures of students.

NOT a drag queen, a band director.

And why the sudden concern about healthcare for trans youth? Why are

right-wing lawmakers spending so much time and energy trying to regulate what can and can't be done by doctors, even though every meaningful medical association disagrees with these gender-affirming care bans?

Why? It's a distraction.

These youth are sacrificial lambs tossed to Republican primary voters. It has nothing to do with "protecting children."

If you want to start protecting children, maybe look at what is harming them. The No. 1 cause death for children 13-19 is firearms. But by all means, go ahead and rail about gender-affirming care — which, by the way, should include those Viagra and Testosterone treatments that we hear commercials for all the time. Isn't THAT gender affirming care too?

It's high time we started calling politicians out! It's time to demand they stop with the distractions! We have some very real problems with enormous consequences, and the time to confront them is long past due.

But conservatives are outraged about fake election fraud, Keurig, the NFL, Pride Nights, Target, Starbucks, green M&Ms, etc. It's time to look at the whole chessboard — before we are checkmated for good. ■

Leslie McMurray is transgender education and advocacy associate at Resource Center in Dallas. She is also a regular columnist for Dallas Voice. Read more of her blogs at leslie-michelle44.wordpress.com.

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Keep the change

MONEY MATTERS

How The Frugal Gay saves money with 10 simple hacks

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Tom Brickman found his purpose when he became a landlord while in college. Since then he's flipped and rented homes, began reselling on eBay and, ultimately, became an influencer (a term he may disagree with) as The Frugal Gay.

On his socials, he shares his experiences in how he's turned his passion into a million-dollar idea that was birthed while he was working at a movie theater. But while he shares a lot of information on his housing adventures, challenges and purchases, he hasn't forgotten his handle and, really, his brand.

On occasion, Brickman will share coupons and store deals he comes across, because, for him, frugality is the key to his success. And he wants others to have that chance to succeed.

"To me, frugal doesn't mean cheap," Brickman told Dallas Voice back in June. "I live well below my means. Being frugal is being thrifty or finding value where others don't find value."

For the Money Issue, we asked The Frugal Gay just how we can all be a bit more conscious about saving money — or maybe just not always spending as much. And The Frugal Gay offered up a few tips that range from daycation deals to retail options and real estate, saying, "Here are some of my favorite frugal hacks that help me save some coin." (Ed. note: We've added some notes)

Cut it out (or use the app)

"Those Walgreens sales bundled with coupons have made it so I never pay more \$2 for Tide. This can be a trap, causing you to buy things you don't really need. But if you stick to the list, it pays off."

You can often find coupons in stores'



Tom Brickman, The Frugal Gay, offers tips on getting the most for your money

apps as well as finding them the old-fashioned way in the paper or in snail mail.

Reading is fundamental — and free

"The library is still a fun and free afternoon for me. Don't just give that cash to Amazon; check out the library first."

Libraries offer much more than books — and we don't mean just music and movies. The library can be a source for free wi-fi and finding wi-fi hotspots as well as finding online resources available for patrons, from e-books to language learning and more.

Oak Lawn Library has a healthy selection of LGBTQ titles.

It's the small things

"I take advantage of credit card perks. Amex gave me six free months of Unlimited Sip Club at Panera. A free drink a day helps keep my hydration up after the gym and helps keep my cash in my pocket."

No kidding. Panera's Unlimited Sip Club is \$12 a month or \$120 annually.

Take a daycation

"Take advantage of Discount Days. The Dallas Zoo, The Dallas Museum of Art and many others offer free or deeply discounted days. I mark them on the calendar and try to take advantage."

This does require some research but nothing too challenging; most can be found through an easy online search. Also, follow these types of places on socials for any mention of discount days.

Ain't too proud

"Scratch and dent items typically come with the same warranty, but you get 20-40 percent off the price. This happens at a few different retailers, like Lowes and Ikea."

Plus, they can look just as good as new. Some retailers like Best Buy post these deals online, and many feature outlet bargains, too.

Health is wealth

"I force myself to use the gym. This \$20 a month keeps my health care cost low. Those early mornings at the gym pay dividends in the future."

Just rerack your weights and don't carry a loudspeaker with your music blaring.

Gift cards aren't just for giving

"Restaurants need to drive traffic on slow days. They do this by offering discounts on certain days or discounts on gift cards. It's worth checking out and taking advantage of these days."

Mondays are a popular day for deals. And don't count out happy hours. Those aren't just about drinks as many restaurants offer discounted prices on appetizers and plates that can be just as satisfying as a full dinner.

Clothes out

"I shop for clothes during the off season. My favorite time to stock up on winter attire is July. No one wants it then, so it's dirt cheap. I skip the normal mall and head to Traders Village, Dirt Cheap or Ollie's."

And Brickman is always looking fresh in his fashions.

To add to that

"Buying off season also works for real estate. Way less competition typically happens in October, November and December. I typically try to hunt during those months."

The guy has more than 20 doors to his name, so . . .

A change of habit

"I surround myself with like-minded individuals. I listen to podcasts like *Queer Money Podcast*. I talk about money openly and frequently. This isn't a hack, but a lifestyle change." ■

Follow Brickman on his socials and site by visiting Linktr.ee/TheFrugalGay11.

Lambda Legal celebrates 50 years

LEGAL MATTERS

The Landmark Dinner marks a half century of fighting for LGBTQ equality

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Lambda Legal celebrates its 50th anniversary of fighting for LGBTQ equality with the Landmark Dinner at the JW Marriott Arts District Hotel on Saturday, Aug. 19. “Our story begins with a band of volunteer lawyers who believed they could break new ground for LGBTQ+ people through the American justice system,” Lambda Legal explains on its website. “They had \$25 in the bank and a new name — Lambda Legal — that co-founder Bill Thom taped to his apartment mailbox using a Band-aid.”

Dallas-based Southwest Regional Director Shelly Skeen explained this week that the organization became its own first client. When judges in New York blocked the organization from filing as a nonprofit corporation, it represented itself in its first case. Finding Lambda Legal was “neither benevolent nor charitable,” the founders appealed the lower court’s ruling and won before beginning to represent other members of the LGBTQ community.

Lambda Legal handles impact litigation. That is, it takes cases whose outcomes have broad implications, such as the *Obergefell* marriage equality case.

But that doesn’t mean it’s not interested in personal cases. According to Skeen, Lambda Legal’s help desk receives about 7,500 calls a year to answer questions and suggest referrals.

The organization has been working in what seems to be overdrive this year, Skeen said, and is hiring staff and attorneys to expand its footprint in the region.

“Texas is a testing ground for bad legislation,” Skeen explained. “We’re filing lawsuits right and left to stop all this bad



Shelly Skeen



Callie Butcher



Morgan Davis

legislation.”

Challenging healthcare bans, Lambda Legal has filed lawsuits in Montana, Idaho, Missouri, Tennessee and Oklahoma in addition to three suits in Texas.

Lambda Legal is best known for what it’s gained for the community in terms of equality and rights for people with HIV.

For example, in a 1983 case, Lambda Legal sued to keep an HIV clinic from being evicted by neighbors who thought the clinic would lower property values. Lambda Legal won that case, and the organization has been winning HIV cases ever since, most notably in the military. Because of Lambda’s recent work, a client, who is HIV-positive but has undetectable virus levels, was able to be commissioned as a military officer just this month.

In another case, over whether people who are HIV-positive and undetectable can enlist, is pending. “And we just sued Nashville, which rescinded a job offer to a police officer when they found out he was HIV-positive,” Skeen said.

In the area of LGBTQ equality, the earliest win happened in 1974 in *Gay Students Organization v. Bonner*. The governor of New Hampshire threatened to defund the entire University of New Hampshire if the gay students’ association continued to hold events on campus. Lambda Legal sued and won, and the gay students group secured the right to be treated like any other campus organization.

Although Lambda Legal lost *Bowers v. Hardwick* in 1986, a case involving a man arrested at home for engaging in sexual activity that violated Georgia’s sodomy law, the organization helped develop a successful strategy to dismantle sodomy laws across the country, resulting in the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* case that found the few sodomy laws remaining in the country unconstitutional.

That case paved the way for the *Windsor* case, which declared the so-called Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional, and *Obergefell*, which secured marriage equality in 50 states.

Arguably, the biggest threat to the community today are laws that criminalize doctors and parents who provide medically-indicated treatment to their transgender children. And Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” law is being duplicated in other states.

States that once allowed birth certificates to be updated have passed laws to stop that; Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit

in Oklahoma to stop such a law. And the organization has filed a second lawsuit against the state for its newly-enacted bathroom ban. And Oklahoma’s health-care ban won’t go into effect until it gets a court hearing.

“Lambda Legal is in the fray to stop discriminatory conduct and bad new laws from going into effect,” Skeen said. “We’re challenging anti-LGBTQ legislation, and we’re winning.”

And, she said, for the most part, the outcomes have been successful.

Landmark Dinner

Skeen said the Landmark Dinner is just the beginning of its year-long 50th anniversary celebration. The evening begins with cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Callie Butcher, a trans lawyer and president of the Dallas LGBT Bar Association, will speak about this also being the 20th anniversary of Lambda Legal’s southwest office in Dallas.

Butcher is running for Colin Allred’s seat in Congress as is another Landmark Dinner speaker, state Rep. Julie Johnson who will speak on stopping bad legislation in Austin and introducing positive legislation.

Morgan Davis is a transgender CPS investigator who resigned rather than intimidate parents of trans kids who are providing their children with recommended health care. Amber and Adam Briggie, two of those parents, will also speak.

Dallas attorney Lauren Mutti, who practices employment law, will speak about how current legislation affects employers and LGBTQ employees, and Lambda Legal’s CEO will also briefly address the crowd.

Skeen said despite serious topics, the evening will also offer some humor, with Sister Helen Holy and Drag Queen Story Time by Xa’Pariis.

She said to look for an event in October to mark 50 years of Lambda Legal’s advocacy for the LGBTQ and HIV communities. And a year from September, she promised a museum exhibit on the history of the organization’s work. ■

BBBS take over Naked Stage for a night

FOR THE YOUTH

Stop by Union Coffee on Aug 19 for more information on Big Brothers Big Sisters

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Union Coffee describes Naked Stage as a “home where we tell our stories.” Big Brothers Big Sisters Chief Program Officer Michael O’Teter said “Bigs” and “Littles” from his organization will take over the Naked Stage on Aug. 19 at 7:30 p.m. to tell their stories. And he hopes to interest not only new youth looking for a big brother, big sister or

big couple, but new volunteers, too.

If you’ve ever thought about being a big brother or big sister, O’Teter urged, come hear the stories and speak to adults and youth, mentors, mentees and parents who’ve been involved in the program, he said.

“This gives us a chance to engage with people in Oak Lawn,” he added.

His organization, O’Teter stressed, has welcomed LGBTQ “bigs” for years. BBBS becoming a Black Tie Dinner beneficiary six years ago just deepened that outreach.

BBBS interviews volunteer “bigs” and potential “littles” extensively to make a successful match between them. He highlights Roger Jahnel and his big couple, James and Dennis Bradanese, who were profiled in an August 2017 Dallas Voice article and who plan to attend the event at Union Coffee along

with Roger’s mom.

O’Teter points them out as the perfect Big Couple match.

Since that Dallas Voice profile, Roger has graduated college, and this week he began law school at SMU. But even though he’s technically aged out of the program, he and James and Dennis Bradanese are still in each other’s lives — because they’ve become family.

Roger said he’ll be talking about his relationship with Dennis and James, which began when he was seven years old, at the event.

“We laughed and talked and played video games,” Roger said about his first meeting with his Bigs, remembering it as if it were yesterday. “What they did for me shaped the person I am today.”

Roger’s father passed away when he was just five, and “My mom wanted me to have positive male role models,”

he said. “They’ve been there for me through so many things. They taught me to ride a bike. We went horseback riding, ice skating for the first time.”

That first time ice skating eventually turned into five or six years playing hockey. And the couple helped Roger build pinewood derby cars for racing, something Boy Scouts do with their dads.

He recalled one time when Dennis and James had theater tickets and were in the car on their way to Fort Worth. Roger’s mom called and said it was Donuts for Dads night at school and ... “My mom called and they turned around,” Roger said.

Not every BBBS match develops into something as deep and close as the relationship between the Bradanses and the Jahnels. “Big Brothers Big Sisters is a commitment for a year, but Den-

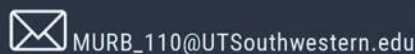


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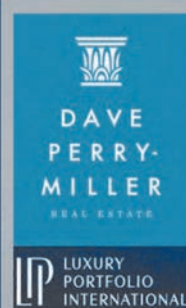
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Roger Jahnel, center, with his big couple, James and Dennis Bradanese

nis and James are a part of my family now," Roger said. "They're a part of my life."

While BBBS doesn't replace a parental figure, it provides youth with "someone to rely on, someone else in your corner."

He said he knew he could always call them if there was something he didn't want to discuss with his mom.

O'Teter said the interview process for parents, mentors and mentees includes questions about sexual orientation, religion and other personal information — info used to make the best match, not to eliminate people from the program. LGBTQ mentors aren't necessarily matched with LGBTQ kids; many of the youth are young and not out, but in the last year, "70 percent of youth in our programs who are out came out through the program," O'Teter said.

When a parent doesn't support their LGBTQ child having an LGBTQ big, O'Teter said, they try to match the youth with an ally. He said he's seen some wonderful bigs help the parent accept their child's orientation or gen-

der identity.

O'Teter said the organization is child focused, meeting the child "where they're at," he said.

BBBS serves a lot more high school age youth than it did 10 years ago, when the average age was 10.

"We're seeing more kids who are already out," he said. "That's accelerated our need to find more LGBTQ volunteers," adding that over the last year his office has made more than 250 matches where the mentor or mentee, if not both, are LGBTQ.

O'Teter said he's glad we're beyond the challenges presented by COVID, but BBBS did learn some important lessons from the pandemic: "Now, a vast majority of interviews are virtual."

He said he hopes people who've thought about becoming a big brother, big sister or big couple will come out to Union Coffee and chat with others who've benefitted from the program. He also suggested going to BBBSTx.org/lgbtq to learn more about the organization and start the application process. ■

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Challenging SB 12

IN THE COURTS

NT LGBT Chamber is a plaintiff in one of 2 lawsuits targeting the Texas 'drag ban law'

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Officials with the North Texas LGBT Chamber of Commerce have announced that the organization is one of several plaintiffs in a legal challenge to Senate Bill 12 filed Friday, Aug. 4, by the Texas Civil Rights Project. Other plaintiffs in the TCRP suit include other Texas LGBT Chambers, VORTEX Repertory Company, and individual performers.

SB 12 is the law passed during the Texas Legislature's regular session that ended in May commonly known as the drag ban. It is set to take effect on Sept. 1 and could have significant impact on Pride in Dallas' plans for its second annual Pride Parade on Sept. 17 as well as other upcoming LGBTQ events and celebrations, including Tarrant County Pride's Parade and Water Gardens Festival and picnic in Trinity Park, set for Oct. 7-8, and the annual Halloween Block Party on Cedar Springs Road set for Oct. 28.

Chamber President and CEO Tony Vedda said in a press release announcing the lawsuit that "SB 12, as it is, is an ineffective and ambiguous law that places unnecessary burdens on our members and their customers, limiting the rights of Texans, including small businesses and nonprofits. Rather than primarily focusing on broadening the economic inclusion of the LGBTQ community, this legislation forces us to educate our members about SB 12's restrictive nature.

"I firmly believe that SB 12 infringes upon all Texans' basic First Amendment rights," Vedda said. "We fervently believe that drag is not a criminal act, and it is essential to overturn this law to safeguard the right of all Texans to ex-



"Drag is not a criminal act," said North Texas LGBT Chamber CEO Tony Vedda in explaining why the chamber has joined a legal challenge to SB 12.

press themselves freely."

The chamber's announcement said SB12 "directly targets LGBTQ Texans" but that it also "infringes upon the civil liberties and freedom of expression for all individuals in Texas, stifling their ability to participate in performances. ... Furthermore, its vague language opens the door to the punishment and criminalization of various forms of entertainment, including theater productions, cheerleading events, concerts and any artistic expression that may be deemed sexually oriented."

The "misguided law" would "significantly impact multiple industries, performers, and businesses, hindering their revenue generation," the press release continued. "Businesses that support these performances in the presence of minors may face severe fines that burden their ability to operate and succeed. Moreover, the law paves the way for discrimination by business services, such as denying insurance coverage to venue owners.

Saying that the "free expression of

the LGBTQ community has always been targeted by those in power," Dustin Rynders, criminal injustice program director at the Texas Civil Rights Project, declared, "SB12 is no different from old discriminatory laws that used to criminalize women who wore pants. But despite what some Texas politicians believe, we know that drag is not a crime."

According to the press release, the North Texas LGBT Chamber is "committed to fighting against this law because the state government should not have the authority

to strip its citizens of their fundamental rights. Everyone deserves to live in a Texas that embraces authenticity and allows people to truly be themselves.

"Our members and our community deserve the freedom to run their businesses without fear of unwarranted repercussions caused by baseless legislation," the statement continued. "The right for individuals to live, work and perform authentically is a fundamental right that must be protected for all Texans. We believe everyone should feel safe in their communities and places of business. Unfortunately, this law only serves to embolden harassment and hate."

The TCRP/North Texas Chamber lawsuit was the second filed last week challenging SB 12: The ACLU of Texas filed suit Wednesday, Aug. 2, on behalf of the Woodlands Pride, Abilene Pride Alliance, Extragrams LLC, 360 Queen Entertainment LLC and Brigitte Bandit.

In a press release announcing that lawsuit, the ACLU charges that SB 12 "violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments and threatens the liveli-

hood and free expression of many Texans, including drag performers. ... The law is written in a way that could censor a large number of constitutionally protected performances, from touring Broadway plays and professional cheerleading routines to karaoke nights and drag shows, anywhere that anyone under the age of 18 may be present."

ACLU of Texas attorney Brian Klosterboer said, "The Texas Drag Ban is stunningly broad in scope and will chill entire genres of free expression in our state. This law flies in the face of the First Amendment. No performer should ever be thrown in jail because the government disfavors their speech, and we are asking the court to block this affront to every Texan's constitutional rights."

Drag queen Brigitte Bandit, one of the plaintiffs in the ACLU challenge, said, "Our community will not be used as a scapegoat or a distraction by politicians who do not know who we are or what we do. State leaders should focus on legitimate issues, not political stunts."

Equality Texas CEO Ricardo Martinez said that through SB 12, "anti-LGBTQIA extremists have demonstrated their determination to dictate their morality. ...

When I last checked, Texas was a free state, and we all had the right to determine our own values and make our own decisions, so long as we weren't harming others. This fear-mongering about the art of drag is meant to deprive us of our humanity and encourages vigilantism. ... It is no surprise that Texas has reported the highest number of violent threats to drag performers, venues, and attendees in the country."

And Andrea Segovia, senior field and policy advisor with Transgender Education Network of Texas, warned that SB 12 is designed to "chip away at our freedoms and eventually erase queer and trans existence from the public sphere." But, she stressed, "Our community and our art will not be silenced or erased. Our community has fought too long to exist to let a drag ban stop us from challenging gender norms, celebrating our identities and preserving queer culture." ■

Driving the dream

DRIVE



In the real world, the 1950s-early '60s Corvette is an icon

A breakdown of the dreamy vehicles co-starring in the new 'Barbie' movie

CASEY WILLIAMS | Auto Reviewer
AutoCasey@aol.com

My daughter spent last week with her grandparents, but when she came home there was only one thing on her mind: Seeing the Barbie movie with her dads. I'd heard set designers basically ran the world out of pink paint, and I had to see it for myself. Beyond that, Ryan Gosling is a handsome guy no matter the movie, and I'm a fan of Margot Robbie and Will Ferrell, too.

So the daughter got no arguments here; I slipped on my sparkly heels and stomped to it.

I enjoyed the movie, but it was the General Motors dream cars that it was stocked full of and that will soon be reality (mostly) that really caught my eye! Here's a look at the cars of *Barbie*.

Barbie's 1957ish Corvette

Nowhere but in Barbieland does a first-generation 1950s Corvette have a back seat and run without an engine. But



The 2024 Chevy Blazer is all EV and all power. Interior, below



there's no more classic car than a pink Barbie Corvette. Or a blue one. My sister had both, and I was jealous. I would take either and forgive the second seat in pursuit of a plot. Heck, I'll take any 1950s Corvette and love it like Ken!

Back in the real world, the first-generation's side coves, toothy grille, wrap-around windshield and fuel-injected V8 engine made it an icon. Look close at the "Chevrolet" logo on the rump and you'll realize this one is electric. 1957 Corvette Value: \$100,000

2024 Chevy Blazer EV

When America Ferrara rolls up to collect her daughter and Barbie, she's driving the upcoming Chevy Blazer EV SS. It's blazing hot, whether driven by Ugly Betty, Barbie or your Uncle Bernie.

DREAM, Next Page

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DREAM, From Previous Page



The 2024 Hummer EV Pickup looks pretty buff in front of Ken's cowboy casa

Debuting later this year, the Blazer SS EV lays down 557 horsepower and 648 lb.-ft. of torque.

In WOW (Wide Open Watts) mode, and all-wheel-drive gripping, it runs 0-60 mph in under four seconds. Suck it, Barbie!

Enjoy up to 290 miles range, 22-inch wheels, camera mirror and sport-tuned chassis, too. Future tech includes a head-up display and hands-off Super Cruise. Base price: \$61,790

2024 Hummer EV Pickup

When Ken discovers patriarchy, he goes all-in with a Hummer EV Pickup. It does look pretty buff parked in front of his little cowboy casa.

Beyond a dream, the big truck boasts a 381-mile range, 0-60 mph in three seconds, and 22-inch wheels. Fortifying capability, it flaunts four-wheel steering with CrabWalk diagonal drive capability, Air Ride Adaptive Suspension and skid plates.

Remove roof panels over all the seats to let in the sky and go hands-off with

Super Cruise. Production recently began at GM's Factory ZERO in Detroit. Base price: \$106,945

2023 Chevrolet Suburban

When Barbie goes AWOL, Will Farrell and the Mattel clan load up and chase after her in a pair of black Chevrolet Suburbans. Let's be clear: In no real world would those Texas Cadillacs (especially when loaded with a boardroom) catch the new Chevy Blazer EV. Barbie would have left them at the beach!

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Send comments to Casey at AutoCasey@aol.com.



The Chevy Suburban wouldn't catch Barbie's Blazer, but it does offer smooth luxury

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Making it rein

BEYOND THE STAGE

Queer actor helps bring lovable reindeer Sven to life in 'Frozen' onstage

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

As the saying goes, "There are no small parts." But some parts are definitely somewhat less visible than others. And that is the case for queer actor Collin Baja's role in the stage version of the Disney hit *Frozen*.

Baja has the task of turning a reindeer into a fully-realized character onstage, and doing it with humor and personality.

Challenging much? Yes, but he has some good inspiration: "I have a strong bond with my dog, so I modeled Sven off of him," the actor explained.

Baja is one of two actors who play Sven in *Frozen*, which opened Thursday, Aug. 10, at Bass Hall and runs through Sunday, Aug. 20.

When it comes to musicals onstage, one would think that every role is all about the music and the actor's voice. But not this role in this musical.

"To not speak or sing is a challenge," Baja admitted. "But it's kinda beautiful. To tell a story through physical movement and nonverbal communication has been a great experience."

And this experience has given him the chance to become an expert at the role. This is Baja's first national tour, but he's been with the show since 2019. Minus the COVID year, he is coming to the end of his second year with the show and just signed on for a third.

Life on the road has become a somewhat perpetual adventure for the New York-based actor, who said the experience has its "pros and cons, but touring with this show is particularly joyous. It's been fun, and it came at a perfect time in my life."

Baja speaks with an air of profundity. He seems to examine his words before he says them, giving him complete clarity in what he has to say. That clarity translates to his life perspective. So when he said "the perfect time," there is



Collin Baja, above, and Collin Baja as Sven and Jeremy Davis as Olaf in *Frozen*, right.

deep meaning behind it.

"I had gotten divorced, and I was recovering from that," he said. "I was thinking about what kind of quality of life I wanted, and I was asking those questions about my next chapter. This felt like the right opportunity."

While he can satisfy his need for performing onstage, the tour is also giving him the chance to experience what different cities offer, and that could come in handy when deciding where his next home might be.

His profound nature serves him well in his other career as a life coach, too. In addition to performing, Baja has dedicated himself to being of service in the mental health field. By day, he works with clients through the company "a) plan coaching," often helping LGBTQ clients with leadership skills. As a coach, he helps clients to — simply stated — live their best lives.

"We break down certain beliefs and get to an understanding, and then we make forward-action plans to get there,"



Baja said of the company's goals for its clients.

While he has clients from across the

board, it is his work with his queer clients he finds especially fulfilling.

"I love working with my community because we still live in a world of oppression," he said. "But we can tap into their authentic light where they can move with more confidence and less hesitation."

In a year, Baja will be able to add "therapist" to his resume.

But for now, he's trying to keep it cool while he is in Fort Worth, bringing a reindeer to life onstage.

"*Frozen* may not seem the deepest of work, but it does have powerful themes of family and love, so it's been rewarding," he said of his current role. But this Texas summer weather? He's not a fan: "Now the heat? I do not

love."

For tickets, visit BassHall.com.

[applause]

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Sister Mel Atonin of the DFW Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, left, and AnaLee Pleasured host a '70s Disco Party Saturday night, Aug. 12, at The Hidden Door to benefit Dallas Hope Charities, which provides housing for LGBTQ youth. See listings for details.

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

■ **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.

AUGUST

■ **Aug. 12: Landmark Dinner**

Celebrate 50 years of Lambda Legal at the Landmark Dinner at the JW Marriott Dallas Arts District, 800 N. Harwood St. LambdaLegal.org.

■ **Aug. 12: Cathedral of Hope Night of Cabaret**

Cathedral of Hope's Music Ministry presents an evening of cabaret entertainment beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Rose Room at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. For ages 21 and up. Tickets start at \$10, available online at OnRealm.org.

■ **Aug. 12: Dallas Bears club night**

On the patio of The Hidden Door beginning at 8 p.m.

■ **Aug. 12: Guerilla Queer Bar**

Collin County Stonewall Democrats holds its monthly take-over of a straight bar in Collin County from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Visit Collin County Stonewall Democrats' Facebook page for details.

■ **Aug. 12: Decades with Mel '70s Disco Party**

DFW Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence present a '70s Disco Party, hosted by AnaLee Pleasured and Sister Mel Atonin, from 7-10 p.m. at The Hidden Door, 5025 Bowser Ave. The event raises funds for Dallas Hope Charities, which provides housing for LGBTQ youth. In addition to or in lieu of cash donations, donations of items such as shampoo, conditioner, gel, etc., to donate to Dallas Hope Charities.

■ **Aug. 12: FIITT Camp**

WiL Turner hosts FIITT Camp, a health and wellness group fitness workshop, from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Reverchon Park, 3505 Maple Ave. Register at LivingWellWithWil.com.

■ **Aug. 13: 'The Juno Show'**

House of Blues Dallas, 2200 N. Lamar St., presents *The Juno Show*, featuring "everyone's favorite alien drag queen," Juno Birch, at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$37-\$72, available online at ObsessedWith.co/the-juno-show.

■ **Through Aug. 13: 'Chicken and Biscuits'**

A funeral is the setting where secrets and revelations come to a head for the Jenkins family. The comedy closes Uptown Players current season at the Kalita Humphreys Theatre. UptownPlayers.org.

■ **Through Aug. 13: 'Miss Molly, A Marital Deceit of Honest Intentions'**

Amphibian Stage presents this original play by Christine Carmela is inspired by Oscar Wilde's *England* but with modern themes and queer sass thrown in for good measure. Directed by Evan Michael Woods. AmphibianStage.com.

■ **Aug. 13: 'Pee-wee's Big Adventure'**

Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd., presents a salute to the late Paul Reubens with a screening of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* at 7:15 p.m. Tickets range from \$10.50-\$12.50, available online at TheTexasTheatre.com.

■ **Aug. 15: Classic Chassis Car Club**

Classic Chassis meets for happy hour the third Tuesday of the month at The View, 525 S. Riverfront Blvd. at 6 p.m.

■ **Aug. 15: 'Pee-wee's Big Adventure'**

Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd., presents a salute to the late Paul Reubens with a screening of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* at 7:15 p.m. Tickets range from \$10.50-\$12.50, available online at TheTexasTheatre.com.

■ **Aug. 17: Log Cabin Dallas**

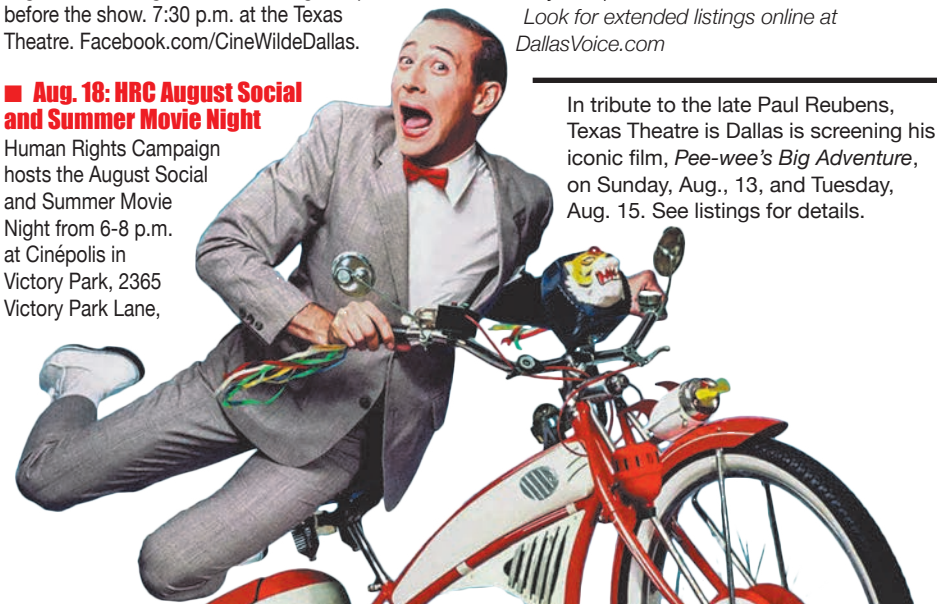
Log Cabin Republicans meets with happy hour at 6 p.m. and a presentation at 7 p.m. at Mattito's, 3102 Oak Lawn Ave.

■ **Aug. 17: CineWilde presents 'To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar'**

The queer film series screens this 1995 comedy classic starring straight guys as drag queens. But we'll try to forget Ru's cameo in that Confederate flag dress. The night features a drag competition before the show. 7:30 p.m. at the Texas Theatre. Facebook.com/CineWildeDallas.

■ **Aug. 18: HRC August Social and Summer Movie Night**

Human Rights Campaign hosts the August Social and Summer Movie Night from 6-8 p.m. at Cinépolis in Victory Park, 2365 Victory Park Lane,



In tribute to the late Paul Reubens, Texas Theatre is Dallas is screening his iconic film, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, on Sunday, Aug., 13, and Tuesday, Aug. 15. See listings for details.

starting at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$5-\$10, available online at EventBrite.com.

■ **Aug. 19: Under the Sea Gaybingo**

Gaybingo at 6 p.m. Play for a chance to win cash and prizes. Station 4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Tickets at myresourcecenter.org/gaybingo.

■ **Aug. 19: BBBS Takeover**

Big Brothers Big Sisters Takeover of The Naked Stage at Union Coffee to tell their stories and provide information as a community building, volunteer recruitment and child outreach event. From 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Union Coffee, 3705 Cedar Springs Road.

■ **Aug. 19: Rainbow Market**

TAG presents Rainbow Market at 10 a.m. at Bergfeld Park, 1510 S. College Ave., Tyler.

■ **Aug. 19 FIITT Camp**

WiL Turner hosts FIITT Camp, a health and wellness group fitness workshop, from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Reverchon Park, 3505 Maple Ave. Register at LivingWellWithWil.com.

■ **Through Aug. 20: 'Disney's Frozen'**

Elsa is gonna "Let It Go" herself when this blockbuster musical returns to North Texas. Fort Worth hosts the snowy fairy tale musical which may offer a break from this heat. BassHall.com.

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

Look for extended listings online at DallasVoice.com

Cassie Nova

ASK A DRAG QUEEN

Remembering Robbie



Good day my loves. A few months ago — May 25 to be exact — I lost one of best friends: Robbie. My old friend Danny called, and

I knew when his name popped up on my phone exactly what he was going to say.

I have the amazing ability to compartmentalize my grief and sadness. When I found out that Robbie had passed, I put my grief in a box in my head to deal with at a later time. It's like my head keeps the information away from my heart until I can cry or mourn on my own time. But the tricky thing about compartmentalized grief is that if you don't deal with it soon, it seeps out at the worst times.

I met Robbie in 1993, and we bonded immediately. He had a friend, Deborah McElhanney, who was apparently obsessed with Cassie Nova. He asked if I would jump out of a cake for her birthday and perform Melissa Etheridge's "I'm the Only One." I told him absolutely and asked if I could help make the big-ass cake. Robbie, Danny and I spent the next few days constructing a giant fake cake out of cardboard and construction paper. It was hideous, but it served its purpose.

By the time we finished and had Deborah's birthday party, Robbie and I were inseparable. I spent days at a time at Robbie and Danny's. They had a cute apartment off of Gilbert and Herschel, an intersection that just so happened to be a cruising area for the gays. One of my favorite memories of that place was when we yelled at this guy who had been cruising and walking his dog for like six hours straight. We hung out of their window and yelled for him: "Take that dog home! He needs a break! If you ain't found no dick yet, you ain't gonna. Go home!"

Over the next months, we all became very close friends. Some of you may judge and not understand, but when we were all together, we partied. Like, hardcore. We were young and dumb, and, although I wish I hadn't partied for as long as I did, I do not regret any of it. We had some of the best times of our lives back then.

Robbie was a once-in-a-lifetime kind of friend. He was weird, and he made you

feel like you did not have to hide your weirdness. When I say "weird," I do not mean that in a bad way. I have always been an odd bird, so having a friend that not only embraced my uniqueness but encouraged it was so freeing.

Robbie always carried a bag of some sort, and in it would be the most random shit. He always had stickers, a disposable camera, a puppet of a cockroach. (He called it BlockaRoach, because he would tell us tales of BlockaRoach cruising the block, always on the hunt for dick.) He always had a book of blank pages in case he decided to draw something or wanted to leave a note somewhere. He always had markers, glitter and glue, because he never knew when he would want to make a collage.

One of my favorite things about Robbie was his love of music. He created the soundtrack of my youth. He could make you fall in love with a song just by how passionately he loved it. He made mixtapes for all of his friends. I jokingly told him once that Celeste Martinez puts the Uptown Girls song "Losing You" in all of her mixes, and, after that, every mix he made had that song on it.

Every night we went out — it didn't matter where — we would dance. We danced for hours at a time. Robbie did not care if there was no one on the dance floor or even if there was a dance floor; he would dance. His unabashed love of just dancing whenever he felt like was such a special thing to me.

I always wanted to be that person but never found the courage until I met Robbie. When he started to dance, it was like it gave everyone else permission to dance.

Our party ended when Robbie went to jail.

It was soon after 9-11, and that judge wanted to make an example out of Robbie and anyone else that was caught with drugs. He went away for about three years, and, in all honesty, it actually brought us closer together. He would send me a letter just about every week. His letters were amazing. He was a talented writer and would make up little stories for me when he didn't have anything he wanted to talk about. I wrote to him, but, I'm ashamed to say, not nearly as much as I should have.

He told me once that any day he gets something in the mail is a good day, so

I got him subscriptions to about five different magazines. Everything from Entertainment Weekly to Cat Fancy. I sent him books that he wanted to read. I would send him books I hoped he wanted to read because I liked them. We had very different tastes but usually liked the same books.

When he got out, we hung out some. But by then I was with my husband, so we didn't hang out as much. Plus, Robbie lived in Waco. But at least once a month he would drive to Dallas for us to go to a movie, a concert or shopping. He made time to be with me. Whenever we would go to a concert or anywhere, we always had a good time. It was different but still fun.

Our friendship was more than just drug buddies. He was part of my family. We could go weeks without talking, but as soon as we got together again, it was like no time had passed.

Then he stopped coming to hang out a few years ago. I just figured he was as busy as I was, and finding the time when we were both free was getting difficult. We still texted a few times a week or would tag each other in stuff on Facebook. Then one day I realized I hadn't heard from him in a while, so I called him, and he didn't answer. I texted and got no reply. I realized I hadn't seen any of his Facebook activity in a while either, so I got worried.

It turns out that he had Huntington's disease, a disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain. His dad died from it, so when he started showing the symptoms, he didn't tell any of his friends. He hid it, but it progressed much faster than it did with his dad.

I wish I had pushed him to talk to me about it. I wish I could have been there when he was feeling alone. I wish I was a better friend to him. I realized the other day that the last time I heard his voice was when he called me to see if I was okay after we lost our pup, Sunny. It sounded like he had been crying, but I wasn't thinking of him. I was in my own feelings. Robbie was not a big sharer when it came to what he was going through, but I should have forced it out of him.

Last Sunday we had a celebration of his life. Our friend Danny put together an amazing event. Instead of a funeral, we had a dance party. It was cathartic

and fun dancing with Danny and our other bestie Ruel. We danced to a Robbie Dodd playlist, and it almost felt like he was there. Danny gave me two vials of Robbie's ashes mixed with glitter. Sounds weird but it was perfect for Robbie. The second vial was to sprinkle around Robbie's favorite places. He will be with us forever in the Rose Room and on every dance floor I can find.

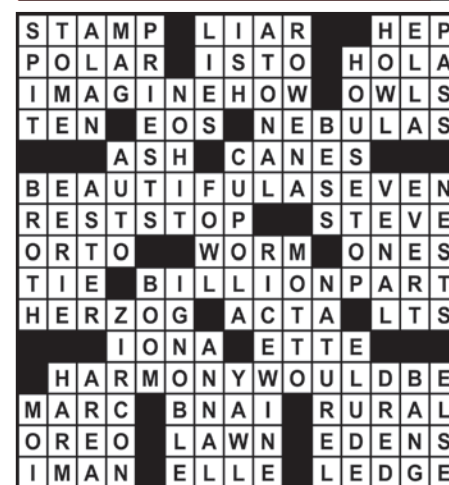
I will miss him forever. Now I need to open my box of grief and deal with these emotions ... maybe tomorrow.

Remember to always tell the people you care about that you love them, while you have the chance. Also, love more, bitch less and be fabulous! XOXO, Cassie Nova

word search solution



this week's solution



browse

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

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

SCENE

PEOPLE, PLACES AND FACES



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WORD SEARCH



Diversions Word Search - Megan Rapinoe

Find the words in the list below hiding across, backwards, up, down and diagonally in the grid. Words separated by a slash "/" are found individually in the puzzle. Words in parentheses "(") are not in the puzzle. The unused letters starting at top left and going down by row will reveal a quote by Megan!

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 OL Reign (2013 to) (present) Many/Awards/Firsts LGBTQ/Activist Retiring (after) (2023) Season
 Advocate (for)/GLSEN (and) Athlete/Ally (2020) Best/Selling Memoir/One Life (Received) Presidential Medal (of)/Freedom (2022)

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/DiversionsPuzzles> for more free puzzles and book info by Kerry Shatzer!

Solution on Page 22

Solution on Page 22

Across

- 1 Terence of *Billy Budd*
- 6 Iago, notably
- 10 Like some cats
- 13 Kind of bear
- 14 Words in an analogy
- 15 "Hi" to Lorca
- 16 Start of the conclusion to Scott Hoying's "If music was the language of the world..."
- 18 Mail carriers at Hogwarts
- 19 Caesar's X
- 20 Shooter in Bruce Weber's field
- 21 Awards for Ursula Le Guin
- 23 Grate expectation?
- 24 Candy in stockings
- 25 More of the conclusion
- 32 Where drivers get off
- 33 Carell of *Battle of the Sexes*
- 34 "Here ___ go?"
- 35 Fruit invader
- 38 Column by the decimal
- 39 Butch fashion accessory
- 40 More of the conclusion
- 43 Saul Bellow novel
- 45 Court records

46 Some OCS grads

- 47 Island of Barrie's land
- 49 Suffix with leather
- 51 End of the conclusion
- 57 *Hairspray* composer Shaiman
- 58 Sons of, at Beth Chayim Chadashim
- 59 Like the area around Gomer's Mayberry
- 60 Bite it
- 61 Blades of grass, collectively
- 62 Ideal spots
- 63 Bowie married her
- 64 "She" to Bonheur
- 65 Building shelf

Down

- 1 Swallow alternative
- 2 Weighty volume
- 3 Ball of film
- 4 *The Advocate*, e.g.
- 5 Mychal Judge and Malcolm Boyd
- 6 Positions for Patty Sheehan
- 7 Language suffix
- 8 Not like the traditional sound of music
- 9 *Ivanhoe* heroine
- 10 Ginsberg poem
- 11 Enchanted Disney girl
- 12 Word after *Hail Mary*

15 Where Santa comes once a year?

- 17 Like a superbly pitched game
- 22 *Pastor, I Am Gay* author Howard
- 23 Station wagon, e.g.
- 24 Top of St. Peter's
- 25 Thin soup
- 26 Like Lestat and Louis
- 27 Fall flower
- 28 Eagle or chicken hawk
- 29 Easily bribed
- 30 Turn inside out
- 31 Chicken hawk pads
- 36 Beverage for samurai
- 37 *Lesbians ignite!* e.g.
- 40 Big bang sound
- 41 Like *The Talented Mr. Ripley*
- 42 Au ___ (in the nude for love, maybe)
- 44 One of December's stones
- 48 Record in a queer archive?
- 50 Give the slip to
- 51 Do damage to
- 52 Field of expertise
- 53 Two-master
- 54 Lincoln-Douglas debates subject Scott
- 55 Have sex with
- 56 Besides that
- 57 Colette, to herself

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