

# dallasvoice

The Premier Magazine for LGBTQ Texas

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## *A new 'Golden' era*

Blanche, Rose, Dorothy and Sophia are back!

By Rich Lopez, page 8

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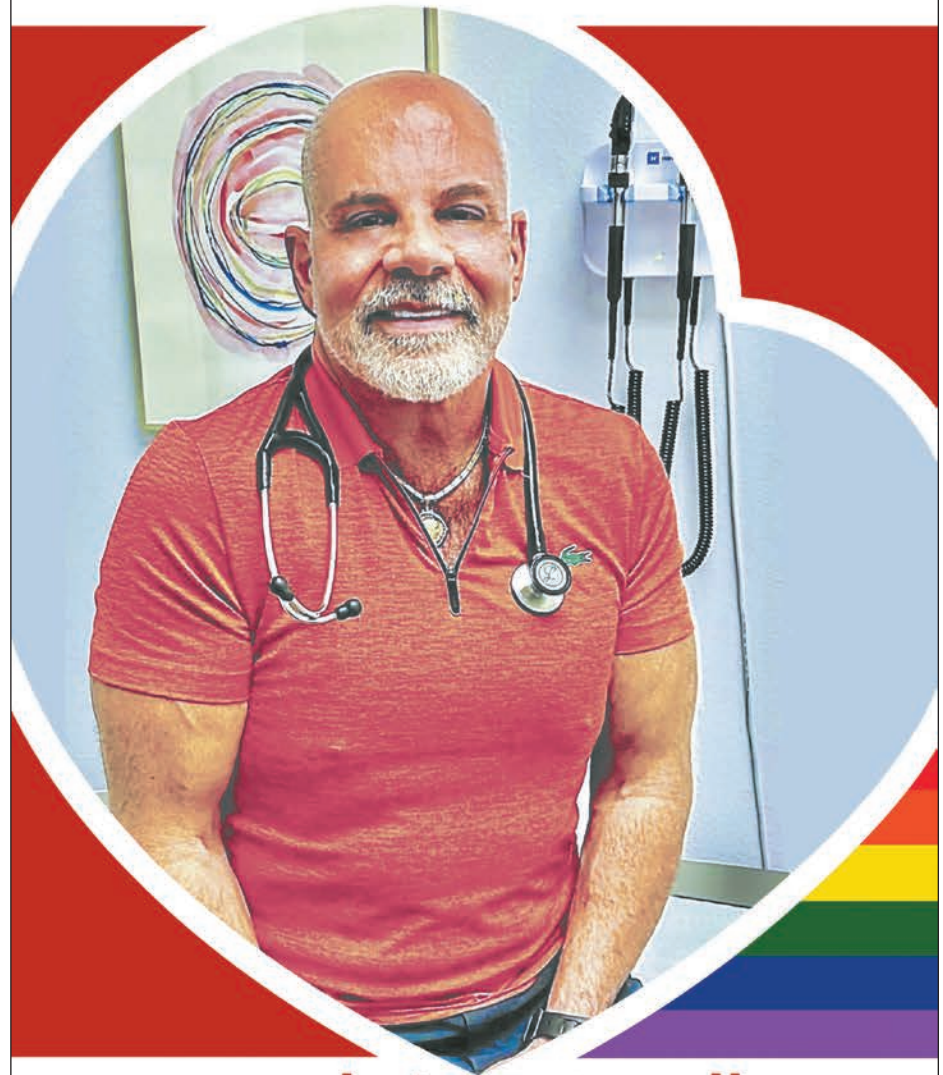
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**Lorie Burch,**  
Attorney of Burch Law

# Bites from our blog

**WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com**

## Civil rights organizations send allegation letter to U.N. over Texas' anti-LGBTQ laws

763 which allows chaplains to counsel school children without any limit on proselytization or requirements for official training, SB 12 which bans public drag performances by labeling them as "sexually oriented" (SB 12 has been declared unconstitutional by the courts), HB 900 which enables schools to ban LGBTQ books through a broad and vague definition of "sexual explicit" content), and HB 2127 which encroaches on local power and threatens local non-discrimination ordinances.

The letter to the U.N. spells out how these laws violate the U.S.'s obligation under the ICCPR and other human rights treaties. Specifically, the civil rights organizations allege, these laws violate Texans' rights to non-discrimination, to privacy, to health, to freedom of expression and to education.

Ricardo Martinez, CEO of Equality Texas, said in a written statement, "Failing to meet the minimum standards of international human rights treaties highlights the dire state of LGBTQIA+ rights in Texas. When state leaders fail us, we turn to the



Ricardo Martinez

courts and the federal government, when they fail us we turn to the world."

— Tammye Nash

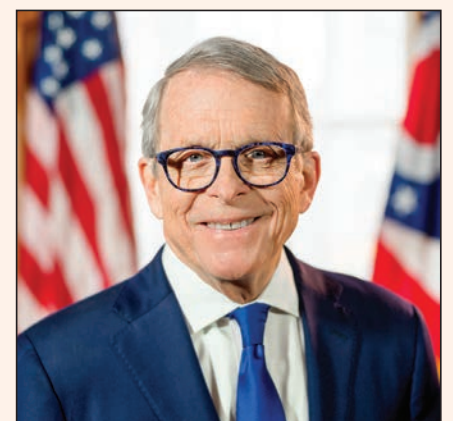
Equality Texas, the ACLU of Texas, GLAAD and the Human Rights Campaign, with the support of the Human Rights Clinic at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law, on Monday, Jan. 22, submitted a Joint Allegation Letter to 17 independent experts, working groups and special rapporteurs at the United Nations "about the human rights crisis facing LGBTQIA+ Texans," according to a press release from Equality Texas.

Noting that a record-breaking number of anti-LGBTQ bills — more than 140 — were filed in the 2023 Texas legislative session, the press release said, "Texans are now struggling with a collection of new laws that eliminate medical freedom for trans youth, censor school libraries, ban trans athletes from participating in collegiate sports, end DEI practices at public universities, threaten drag performance and undermine local government's already limited power.

"Together these laws are a systemic attack on the fundamental rights, dignities, and identities of LGBTQIA+ persons that opens the gates for discrimination by both public and private actors," it continued.

The Joint Allegation Letter focuses on seven bills that "intentionally target or disproportionately impact LGBTQIA+ Texans," the press release said. Those are Senate Bill 14 which bans essential health care for trans youth, SB 17 which prevents public universities from maintaining DEI programs, SB 15 which prevents trans athletes from competing at the collegiate level, SB

## Ohio Senate overrides governor's veto on trans healthcare & sports bans



Ohio Gov, Mike DeWine

A measure banning gender-affirming health care for transgender minors and banning trans women from participating in school sports will go into effect in Ohio after the state's senate voted today (Wednesday, Jan. 24) to override Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's veto.

The vote in the Senate was 24-8. The Ohio

WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com

House voted 65-28 to override DeWine's veto on Jan. 11.

The ACLU of Ohio has already pledged to "do everything we can to fight" the measure, set to go into effect on April 23, according to reports by LGBTQNation.

Equality Ohio representatives have also said

their organization is looking into legal and legislative actions against the law. TransOhio representatives said that organization has already spoken with 68 families and seven trans adults who requested emergency relocation funds to leave the state because of the new law.

— Tammye Nash

■ Adoptable / Candy

Meet **Candy**, a 5-year-old retriever mix weighing in at a perfect 50 pounds. She has a special place in her heart for people, and once she settles into her surroundings, she transforms into a sweet and affectionate friend who craves human connection. Her preference for being the only dog in the house makes her the ideal furry companion for those seeking an exclusive bond. Candy loves leisurely walks, and while initially a bit fearful, she blossoms into a loving and loyal companion once she feels secure in her environment. Like all pets from the SPCA of Texas, Candy is spayed and microchipped and current on all her necessary vaccinations. She is waiting for you at the SPCA of Texas Russell E. Dealey Animal Rescue Center, so you'll need an appointment to meet her. To do that, find her profile at [SPCA.org/Dogs](https://www.spcatexas.org/Dogs) and click on the "Make an Appointment" button. Candy's team will take it from there. It is best to bring all two- and four-legged siblings to a meet and greet prior to adopting. Animals are available for adoption at both the SPCA Dallas Animal Care Center and the Ellis County Animal Care Center, 2570 FM Road 878 in Waxahachie. Throughout the month of January, all adult dog and adult cat adoptions are only \$25.



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## Twilight zone of the republic

How easily wishful thinking morphs into nightmare

It is premature, I think, to write America's obituary. Know-nothings and demagogues have roiled our republic before, although, granted, no former president was charged with 91 felony counts prior to the Mad Marquis of Mar-a-Lago.

A pathological narcissist threatens our constitutional order with chaos by deploying what conservative columnist George F. Will calls his "feral cunning." But while Trump's MAGA fans have doubled down in support of him, they are not the majority of Americans. They can only win by confusing and demoralizing the rest of us with a flood of disinformation.

There is also the problem of progressives who defeat themselves with all-or-nothing demands. A person named Jenna on the X social media platform wrote, "When Biden loses in November, I'm going to relish your tears." Someone named Jeffdc5 replied, "Leftie or MAGA?" By all signs, Jenna is a pro-Palestine leftie, but the question of who she is actually helping is a good one.

A Jewish friend and I were discussing the Israel-Hamas conflict. I said that my position is grounded in opposing the murder of Palestinian children as much as that of Israeli children. Rather than he-



**Richard J. Rosendall**  
Contributing Writer

roes and villains, I see terrorists on one side and an embattled politician seeking to thwart democracy on the other.

In short,

I do nuance. She advised me not to talk to Jews about nuance after Hamas's murderous attack on Oct. 7.

Nuance, however, is vital to the honest resolution of differences. I will no more abandon nuance than my friend will abandon her Zionism. Without nuance, we merely toss slogans at one another.

It may be convenient to reduce complex matters to something easily chanted in the street, like "Palestine will be free! From the river to the sea!" But that makes it neither realistic nor just.

Some pro-Palestine advocates are calling President Biden "Genocide Joe" for his support for Israel. I, too, criticize the Israeli Defense Force's brutal assault on Gaza for its devastating impact on non-combatants. But IDF's invasion was in response to the Oct. 7 terrorist attack, which Hamas vows to repeat.

Piling on more war crimes is no way



out of a conflict. As for Israel's determination to eliminate Hamas, the death and destruction caused by IDF in Gaza serve more as an effective recruitment effort for Hamas.

I oppose Israel's illegal annexation and dispossession in the West Bank. I support a two-state solution, which Prime Minister Netanyahu has rejected. There can be no peace until people on both sides recognize one another's humanity.

That seems a distant prospect.

CUNY professor Marc Lamont Hill, who was fired as a CNN contributor in 2018 after remarks before the United Nations that included the highly charged "free Palestine from the river to the sea" (widely understood to mean the elimination of Israel), recently gave impassioned remarks from a church pulpit demanding a ceasefire and accusing Biden of genocide.

It was a fine, thunderous rant, but Professor Hill essentially demands a one-sided ceasefire. Another word for that is a massacre. If you only recognize the casualties and legitimate aspirations of one side, you are seeking vengeance, not justice.

Which brings me back to the need for nuance. My Jewish friend's understandable outrage at the Oct. 7 atrocities does not make a real, durable solution any simpler. At the same time, the threat by pro-Palestinian activists to withhold

their votes in retaliation against Biden is like taking bleach to avoid COVID.

America's Founding Fathers, faced with the competing factions of their day, established a governmental structure that requires compromise. To reject any compromise as a betrayal makes it impossible to govern. Demonizing imperfect Democrats only helps Republicans in thrall to a third-rate dictator.

Dogmatism blinds us to opportunities as well as consequences.

The democratic process, both in court and in Congress, has yielded great gains for the LGBTQ community. If we sit out the election, whether from overconfidence or dissatisfaction, we could reap the whirlwind.

Jeffdc5 on X wrote: "No one has ever truly explained this to me. We withhold our votes and then what?"

I replied, "The revolution comes and paradise breaks out. Then it dawns on you, like a twist at the end of a *Twilight Zone* episode, that you're trapped in a nightmare."

We are in an age of comforting narratives, truth be damned. Personally, I prefer wrestling with reality. But choose a soothing fantasy if you must. Just hope you don't wake up on a cold winter's night with the monster under the bed asleep beside you.

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# Golden ticket

## BEYOND THE STAGE

'The Golden Girls' are back with brand-new laughs

**RICH LOPEZ** | Staff writer  
rich@dallasvoice.com

**B**lanche, Dorothy, Rose and Sofia are back — and not in syndication. Thanks to producers at Murray and Peter Present, writer Robert Leleux and director Eric Swanson — not to mention a cast of four men in drag — *The Golden Girls: The Laughs Continue* puts everyone's favorite '80s ladies in a whole new light, starting on Tuesday, Jan. 30, at the Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St.

The show continues through Feb. 4 in Dallas.

Actor Vince Kelley plays Blanche, alongside Ryan Bernier as Dorothy, Adam Graber as Rose and Christopher Kamm as Sophia. Jason Bowen gets in on the fun as both Stanley and Burt.

Kelley had worked with the production team before, and when this project came to fruition, he helped curate the script. That also gave him an opportunity to call dibs on his character.

"I have always wanted to be Blanche," he said. "And being with this project since inception, and given that I'm kind of in charge, I'm finally doing it."

Kelley has clearly given this some thought. He has deconstructed Blanche with aplomb. And by the sound of it, he really isn't far off.

"First, she has the best costumes and gets to wear heels," he said. "Blanche is so fun because she makes fun of herself, and that's how I approach myself, really."

"Plus, I love the idea that in her mind, she is this beautifully tragic Tennessee Williams heroine — just like Vivian Leigh in *Streetcar*."

The stage production is a total tribute to the show, but it also brings with it a whole lot of sass. In *The Laughs Con-*

*tinue*, Sophia is out of jail on bail after having been caught running a retirees drug ring.

Blanch and Rose are focused on CreakN, the new hookup app they created for seniors, and Dorothy — well, she's just trying to keep it all together with the rest of the ladies and her sex-starved younger lover.

Or as Kelley described the production, "it's as if *Golden Girls* never went off the air, but just switched from NBC to a streaming service."

These *Girls* are more prone to R-rated language and not-so-subtle innuendos. Plus, there's that whole drug ring business. And that hookup app is far less a Tinder-type and "a little more like Grindr than anything," Kelley said.

So what is it with gays and the Goldens? Many a queer folk will cite them as favorites or throw out a random quote. Graphic tees depicting the four are popular in every gayborhood. The episodes are perpetually showing somewhere.

"We love our icons, and they absolutely fall into that status," Kelley explained. "Plus, I think everyone can relate to the show or at least one of the characters."

"I think in a queer space, they were trailblazers," he continued. "The writing was smart, and, throughout the series, Rose had an HIV scare, Blanche's brother is gay, Sophia's son is a cross dresser. But they all approached them with the utmost respect."

He also pointed out that *Golden Girls* set up the blueprint for female-ensembles that followed. That four-person dynamic would later be seen in *Sex and the City*, *Girls*, *Insecure* and *Desperate Housewives*.

Essentially, these icons paved the way for other queer TV icons.

The irony is that Kelley has noticed something particular about audiences at *The Laughs Continue*: Murray and Peter Presents shows often feature many of the *RuPaul's Drag Race* queens, so the audience is often full of gay men. They all figured the same for this *Golden Girls* run until ....

"It's 40-50-year-old white women," Kelley exclaimed. "That's been our core audience, which has been a fun surprise but so amazing. And sometimes they bring their kids, so we have this multigenerational thing going."

That's great and all, but do they get the gay jokes laced into the script? "Well, they don't know what poppers are. I think us gay men can get away saying things a little differently, but really, the Golden-verse is for everyone," Kelley said.

For tickets, visit [ATTPAC.org](http://ATTPAC.org).

All photos courtesy of Murray and Peter Present



Adam Graber as Rose.



Vince Kelley as Blanche



Christopher Kamm as Sophia



Jason Bowen as Stanley



Ryan Bernier as Dorothy

# Red Tie Gala

## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER

Celebration Church on the Lake raises money to do good things

**DAVID TAFFET** | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**F**inding a new pastor seems to be second on the list of priorities for Celebration Church on the Lake, as services continue on Sunday mornings, just in a new format. The church has recently affiliated with Cathedral of Hope, so Celebration streams the service from the church in Oak Lawn to Celebration's Mabank location near Cedar Creek Lake.

"We've been having guest ministers, and we're looking for a minister," said church member Muddy Moxley. But most important, she added, "We've

been thriving."

To support the ongoing programs of Celebration on the Lake, the church is holding its Red Tie Gala on Feb. 17.

Celebration on the Lake is now in its 21st year. It started as an offshoot of Celebration Community Church in Fort Worth, and the Rev. Carol West pastored both congregations then. So services were held on Saturdays back then because West had to be in Fort Worth on Sundays for services there. When West retired, Cathy Bowser took over as pastor for about 10 years, followed by Mary Clair Lawrence.

Celebration's first Red Tie dinner was held because the church youth wanted to have a Valentine's dinner. The next gala was held a few years later, and it sold out. So by 2019, the event moved to the CR Legacy Event Center in nearby Gun Barrel City.



Celebration on the Lake is a small church with a big heart

Like Black Tie Dinner, Red Tie Gala has beneficiaries. Unlike the large Dallas dinner, beneficiaries don't apply or have requirements. But, Moxley explained, sharing proceeds does increase attendance.

Eleven Cedar Creek area non-profits share the proceeds from Red Tie.

Moxley said church members work at many of the organizations, and those groups are inclusive, serving everyone in the community.

Animal rescue organizations are the largest group of beneficiaries of the gala.

**Celebration**, Page 17



**Ismail Boodhwani**  
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# Legendary status

BEYOND THE STAGE



Queer actor talks about becoming an icon in 'Tina'

**RICH LOPEZ** | Staff Writer  
rich@dallasvoice.com

**W**hen Parris Lewis found out that she would be playing Tina Turner in the musical based on the singer's life, it wasn't the big moment one would expect. But Lewis does remember that she started that day as a member of the cast and ended that day as an icon.

Since then, the actor says, it has been an honor to play the role,

"It's quite a feat to cover the iconic Tina Turner, from her powerhouse dance moves to her voice, and some days it feels impossible. But some days, I know I got this," she said.

Lewis switches out playing the role with Ari Groover, and both have brought *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* to North Texas. *Tina* is running at the Music Hall at Fair Park for Broadway

Dallas through Feb. 4, then moves on to Bass Hall in Fort Worth to run Feb. 6-11.

When she was presented with the role, Lewis was already with the show. In year one, she was playing Tina's sister, Eileen, but she also understudied the lead. She said in her second year, she kind of fell into the role of Tina.

"Oh yeah, they told me that night that I would be playing Tina, but it felt different that time," she recalled. "The next day, I was in the role. I had just played Eileen that afternoon. Plus, I was preparing to leave the tour at that time."

A big change like that kept Lewis on-board. The actor/singer/dancer said playing the role as the understudy was one thing. But to officially be the lead — the star — definitely took things to a new level.

"I talked to my partner in New York, and we thought this was going to be a great thing for me as an artist to lead the tour," Lewis said. "I wanted to have the full capacity. Being in the role feels different, so I wanted to experience that and not feel like being on the edge of the role anymore."

Since then, Lewis has found that Tina Turner is giving her an education while she embodies the rock star legend.

"She was a shining example of hard work and dedication — especially in the Black community," Lewis said. "She had to fight for her access while experiencing racial prejudice, while experiencing Ike [her former husband and music partner] and finding her own worth once she was on her own."

That, alone, resonated with Lewis as a Black woman. But in other ways, it paralleled her own queer experience.

"That worth starts from the inside when the world doesn't always accept us," she said. "What makes us authentic makes us acceptable, and, within our own community, we find that in our chosen families or our tribes or our own families if lucky."

Playing the role of Tina has also been a somewhat existential experience for Lewis. In her own research, Lewis found she was diving less into the singer's music and moves and more into her depth.



"Telling her story keeps me present, and I'm reminded that first, we're all human beings," she said. "Tina was a human being, so every day is not a great day. Finding those ways to relate to her in her own struggles, I think, helps me tell her story."

Since her high school days in New York, Lewis had a strong feeling about her place. Her voice teacher once called

Lewis grew to eschew pronouns and labels [Editor's note: *Lewis did allow for she/they pronouns to be used for this article*] and embrace a flexible, fluid outlook.

"That's the beauty of people. We can be so many things. I know I'm a good time," she said. "I don't want to identify one way, but I grew into myself uncomfortably. I had to find my



Parris Lewis is Tina Turner in the North American touring production of *TINA The Tina Turner Musical*. (Photos by Matthew Murphy for MurphyMade, 2023)

her a Renaissance woman, and that stuck with Lewis. She wants to accomplish everything she can and do it all while being authentic.

"He was a gay man, and I thought he was trying to shade me," she said with a laugh. "But I learned what it meant, and I liked it."

Lewis would find her authentic self in a variety of ways — through singing and dancing, through athletics. She was feminine but presented masculine.

own spaces where I felt safe. I'm in the LGBTQ community, but I invite people to find their own and not even let our own community define them. It really is a great feeling."

But how does it compare to being on-stage as an icon like Tina Turner?

"Well, in those moments, I am a rock star," she said. ■

For more information and tickets visit the website [BroadwayDallas.org](http://BroadwayDallas.org) or [BassHall.com](http://BassHall.com).

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# A trans advocacy *how-to*

## LGBTQ BOOKS

'The Advocate Educator' is an invaluable guide to supporting trans, nonbinary students

**T**ransgender and non-binary youth are facing increasing social and political attacks, which is why a new, action-oriented guide for educators and others wanting to create supportive school environments for these young people is set to be one of the most important LGBTQ-related books of the year.

Vanessa Ford and Rebecca Kling, authors of *The Advocate Educator's Handbook: Creating Schools Where Transgender and Non-Binary Students Thrive* (Jossey-Bass), spoke with me about the volume, which includes strategies and insights from their own personal and professional experiences as well as from the varied group of 52 teachers, researchers, advocates, parents, and trans and nonbinary students whom they interviewed.

Ford was a public-school classroom teacher in Washington, D.C., for 14 years, during which time one of her two children came out as transgender. She became a nationally recognized advocate for trans and nonbinary youth while continuing a career in education, and she was a founding member of HRC's Parents for Transgender Equality Council. She and her husband JR also co-authored Calvin, a Lambda Literary Award-winning picture book about a trans boy.

Kling, a trans woman, is now co-owner of the social impact consulting firm Better World Collaborative. Her background is in theater and performance, and she has extensive experience working with middle- and high-school students in after-school theater programs and as part of the leadership team at Harbor Camps, a summer camp for trans and gender variant youth. She and Ford met in 2016 through the National Center for Transgender Equality, where Kling was the organization's community storytelling advocate (and later education director).

Their book is organized around four core principles: Educate, Affirm, In-



**Dana Rudolph**  
Contributing Columnist

clude and Disrupt — a framework Ford developed after leading many training sessions for educators. She explained, "Educate the community; affirm through practice and policy; include through representation, and disrupt — from when you see individual bullying, all the way up to what we are calling legislative bullying. What can you do to disrupt the narrative and make change?"

Each chapter is full of ideas, examples, and encouragement from people who have done this work before and ends with two sets of questions: ones that ask readers to self-reflect and ones that urge them to think about how to apply the chapter's learnings to specific real-world challenges.

While the book does include some basic definitions and statistics about trans and nonbinary identities for those less familiar with them, Kling said, she and Ford primarily wanted to focus on "pragmatic and practical steps that get things moving" rather than simply on memorizing dictionary terms. She stressed, too, that "a big throughline is advocating with trans communities, not necessarily just for" — although the book also looks thoughtfully at when and how adults should bring trans young people into this work versus when they should shield them and advocate on their behalf.

The book also places a strong emphasis on intersectionality because, as Ford observed, "Our students are coming to us with multitudes." The authors therefore look closely at the interplay of students' trans or nonbinary identities with race and racism, physical disabilities, neurodiversity, family structure and dynamics and economic class.

Despite its wealth of strategies and examples, the book nevertheless argues



Rebecca Kling

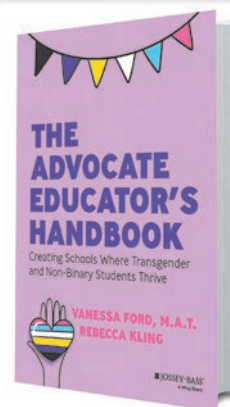
that educators already have many of the tools they need. With trans and non-binary students, Kling said, "it seems like adults forget all of the things they know" about handling bullying, talking respectfully about diverse communities and incorporating different identities into lesson plans. In reality, however, "These are all things that educators are already being tasked with."

While the specific needs of each population may vary, she said, the core philosophy of "Get to know your students and support them where they are" isn't different.

Ford added that this is a central part of becoming a board-certified teacher — as she learned from Peggy Brookins, president and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, who wrote the book's forward. Supporting trans students, therefore, "is already embedded into what makes a good teacher. We're asking educators to build on that, not to throw it out the window."

But in places with anti-trans legislation, like Florida and Texas, Kling admits, "It's hard." Some people they interviewed said, "Educators need to keep themselves safe and employed, so you only push as hard as you can." Conversely, others asserted, "You put yourself at risk because that's what we do as teachers. We take care of our students."

At the individual level, Kling said, "I don't know that there's a one-size-fits-all answer." Still, she advised, even in challenging locations, everyone "can still make clear that humanity is diverse, that we need to respect that diversity and that bullying and teasing is not going to be acceptable regardless of who the tar-



Vanessa Ford

get is.

"I know that it's not that simple, but I do think on some level people make it more complicated than it needs to be."

"We also say 'Do not go it alone,' especially in those places," Ford added. "There are local, regional and national organizations who are looking to support the work." Many are listed in the book's appendices, along with model policies, assessments, curricular and professional development resources, and more.

While many educators and parents may at first feel like trans advocacy is "totally uncharted territory," Kling continued, "Trans and nonbinary students are far from the first population who's had to fight to get a good education." We can learn from those other populations, she said, while showing allyship to them in turn.

Ford also stressed that readers shouldn't feel the need to do "everything," explaining, "We need the work happening at all levels: a parent and a student who are working with an individual classroom to make it safe, all the way up to leaders of organizations who are doing this systemically."

No matter how readers are seeking to make things better for trans and nonbinary students, or where they are in their journeys, *The Advocate Educator's Handbook* will be an invaluable guide. Learn more at [theadvocateeducator.com](http://theadvocateeducator.com). ■

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian ([mombian.com](http://mombian.com)), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1,400+ LGBTQ family books.



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# Cupid in *love*

## BEYOND THE PAGE

Mason Deaver discusses their newest book and the need for trans stories

MELISSA WHITLER | Contributing Writer  
editor@DallasVoice.com

**B**estselling author Mason Deaver is back with a heartwarming romance that reveals the complexities of human love. *Okay, Cupid* follows the story of Jude, a young Cupid looking to redeem themselves after failing their previous assignment. What is a Cupid, you may ask. They're somewhat magical beings whose purpose is to help human beings fall in love. They play a background role in people's lives, making sure not to get too attached or invested in their assignments.

Except Jude isn't satisfied with that.

Mason Deaver discussed with Dallas Voice the inception of *Okay, Cupid* and their experience writing transgender and non-binary love stories.

**Dallas Voice: Where did you first get the idea for *Okay, Cupid*?** Mason Deaver: It was during the query process for my first novel, *I Wish You All the Best*, that I found myself eager to work on something. It's a common piece of advice that authors will give other writers, to make yourself busy while you wait for news. I had this thought, an idea of someone perpetually stuck as the best friend in a rom-com, someone we never see get their own happy ending. And from there, it spiraled. What if that was their purpose? What if they were meant to never get their own happy ending? It was easier to connect the dots to Cupids and build the world from there.

**How does it feel to finally have this story released to the world after so long?**

It's a huge relief honestly. It took me so long to find the right voice for this story, to adapt Cupid in a way that I found satisfactory. It was a lengthy process to finding happiness with this book, and I'm so grateful that I did.



**How did you come up with the kind of magical system in the book? Do you have an extended backstory on the cupids and how they came to exist**

**differently than humans?** Yes and no? I went in wanting to write a contemporary fantasy, but with my own concession that it was going to be 95 percent contemporary, and 5 percent fantasy. I just don't have the brain for so much worldbuilding and magic, I'm here for the characters.

There are details and elements about the Cupid world that I wrote in previous drafts that I like to think would've made it had I found the room in the newer versions of the story; there are things that nearly made it that I cut at the last minute, and there are details that I never wrote down, that I figured out for myself later. What remains in the book, I left because it has a purpose. Everything else feels superfluous or redundant. Like I said, I'm here for the characters, for their love story. That's its own kind of magic.

**What do you want young LGBTQ readers to take away from the book about first love?** That they're messy and imperfect. That it can hurt; it can even feel like the end of the world. That it doesn't always

end well, but to have had it in the first place, to experience the thudding in your chest and the rolling in your stomach and the sweat on your palms is all so beautiful, and perfect, that it's wonderful to be so alive that you're able to feel these feelings.

**What has it been like getting to work with David Levithan, prolific and award-winning LGBTQ+ author, as an editor?**

David's amazing! He has such an eye for voice and character in a way that I know for certain has made my own voice stronger. But when the time comes, he's also ready to trust my judgement, to respect my own instinct when it comes to storytelling. It's been such a great partnership over the years.

**All your books center around non-binary/transgender characters. How does it feel to be writing that representation for kids growing up now?** It's exciting, but it's also terrifying. First and foremost, I'm writing for myself. I'm writing the stories that I wish I'd had as a teenager. The fact that there are readers around now who are still desperate for the same stories I was desperate for at that age just means that my books are able to find their audience. It's so heartwarming to hear from readers, to see their faces at signings and events, to hear their own stories of how they felt seen by my characters.

There's no other feeling like it.

Unfortunately, it tends to be a double-edged sword, because no person is a monolith, and no one artist can create for everyone. So of course, there are those who go to my books only to be disappointed by what they find, and that's no fault of theirs just as it's no fault of mine. Not every story is for every person, even when you want it to be. So, there is this fear of being made into a voice that supposedly represents an entire community, when that's incredibly irresponsible to even want, let alone to have the label applied to you.

It's about finding where you fit in. Much like in real life, it's about finding community, finding those who want to hear your voice in the hope that they'll feel seen, or that they might be given the chance to learn something.

**Do you get a lot of inspiration from your own life experience?** I think it's impossible to say that anyone's personal life hasn't impacted their art. It's a common point of discussion as the conversation around A.I. generated "art" comes to the forefront of technology. There's a lifelessness to this form, thrown together via stolen elements found from artists who've poured hours into their work to post online. And it isn't to say that A.I. doesn't have a place in our lives to help with questions and research, but to call what it creates "art" feels grossly irresponsible.

I don't even like to use the word "create" in relation to A.I. To be a human is to feel, to be hurt, to be in love, to form connections and develop anxieties. It's these things that inform us both in our everyday lives as well as the things that we create. Everything I write draws from my personal experience, even when I don't mean for it to.

There are characters or story elements or emotions that I recall years after they're published that I realize hit closer to home. It's an impossible thing to avoid; I think as authors we're completely helpless to it. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that, I think it's amazing to see how experiences and life shape how we write certain characters and dialogue. It makes things so unique and personal.

For more information about *Okay, Cupid* and Mason Deaver, visit [MasonDeaversWrites.com](http://MasonDeaversWrites.com).



# CELEBRATION

, From Page 9



Then come food banks in Tool and Mabank and Meals on Wheels in Malakoff.

Libraries throughout the state are under attack, so a portion of the money earned will go to the Cedar Creek Library, which has computers, offers a GED program, teaches English as a second language, has an adult literacy program and offers children's reading

and craft time.

The Tri County Library in Mabank will also receive funds to be used for its Batter Intervention and Prevention program.

The church will make a donation to the Payne Springs Fire Department, and Toys for Tots is another beneficiary.

Then there are blessing bags. Church members put together bags containing



toiletries, socks and gloves, which Moxley said will go to the "couch surfers in Athens" — young people who have no home of their own so they "surf" from home to home, staying with friends.

That's an awful lot of helping Celebration on the Lake is doing, but Moxley said her church is just "doing what a church should be doing." She called it "a small church with a big heart."

Moxley invited people to come and enjoy their Red Tie "Fun" raiser and to expect fellowship, dinner, dancing and a silent auction. "We'd love weekenders to come visit," she added, noting that weekenders are Dallas-area residents who spend weekends at their vacation homes on Cedar Creek Lake.



That includes lots of LGBTQ people. But Celebration OTL also embraces its ally members just as strongly.

For more information visit [Facebook.com/Groups/CelebrationOnTheLakeChurch](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/CelebrationOnTheLakeChurch).





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*Self-Portrait* (detail), 1923. Abraham Ángel. Oil on cardboard. Museo Nacional de Arte. INBAL / Secretaría de Cultura, Mexico City.

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



Dallas Theater Center presents *I Am Delivered'T*, a play that celebrates being your authentic self, Feb. 2-18 at the Kalita Humphreys Theater. 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, send an email to THRIVE@myresourcecenter.org.

## JANUARY

### ■ Jan. 26: Dallas HIV Task Force Meeting

The Dallas HIV Task Force holds an in-person meeting from 3-6 p.m. at David's Chapel MBC, 4363 S. Hampton Road. The meeting is followed by networking and dinner from 5-6 p.m. Admission is free; reserve your spot at the EventBrite.com page.

### ■ Jan. 26-28: Rajaton Sings Queen

Six-person Finnish group Rajaton, accompanied by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, performs Queen's greatest hits, 7:30 p.m. at Meyerson Symphony Center, 2301 Flora St. Tickets start at \$46, available at DallasSymphony.org.

### ■ Jan. 26: Peaches Christ & May May Graves' Nightmare show

Filmmaker and drag icon Peaches Christ joins forces with May May Graves for the Peaches and

May May's Nightmare live drag show at 8 p.m. at Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd., followed at 10 p.m. by the Brian DePalma classic film *Carrie*. Tickets start at \$24, available at PreKindle.com.

### ■ Jan. 27: 'The Watermelon Woman'

Filmmaker/actress Cheryl Dunye presents her film, *The Watermelon Woman*, from 3-4:25 p.m. at Spacy, 1300 S. Polk St., Ste. 160A. Tickets are \$10, available at SpacyDTx.com.

### ■ Jan. 27: 'Dressed in Blue'

Antonio Giménez-Rico's *Dressed in Blue*, exploring the lives of six transgender women living in Madrid following Spain's transition to democracy, screens at 5 p.m. at Spacy, 1300 St. Polk St., Ste. 160A. Tickets are \$10, available at SpacyDTx.com.

### ■ Jan. 27: Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis' with live score

A restored version of Fritz Lang's sci-fi masterpiece *Metropolis* screens at 8 p.m. at Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd., accompanied by an original score by Austin composer and multi-instrumentalist David DiDonato. Tickets start at \$18; available at PreKindle.com.

### ■ Jan. 28: Hart Institute for Women Conductors Showcase Concert

The Dallas Opera presents a concert of opera selections showcasing some of the world's most brilliant young conductors at 7:30 p.m., at the Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Tickets and info available at DallasOpera.com.

### ■ Jan. 29: 'The Watermelon Woman'

Filmmaker/actress Cheryl Dunye presents her film,

*The Watermelon Woman*, from 7-8:30 p.m. at Spacy, 1300 S. Polk St., Ste. 160A. Tickets are \$10, available at SpacyDTx.com.

### ■ Jan. 30-Feb. 4: 'The Golden Girls'

The four seniors from Miami are back in an all-new show. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. Visit ATPAC.org for details.

## FEBRUARY

### ■ Feb. 1 Chick Happy Hour

Join Chick Happy Hour at Nova, 1417 W. Davis St., for their monthly mixer at 6 p.m.

### ■ Feb. 1: Queer Factor

Stefan G. hosts Queer Factor at 9 p.m. at the Dallas Comedy Club, 3036 Elm St. Tickets are \$15, available at PreKindle.com.

### ■ Feb. 2: After Bark Hours

S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road, introduces a fabulous late-night gathering for all 18-plus furry friends at 11 p.m.

### ■ Feb. 2-18: Dallas Theater Center Presents 'I Am Delivered'T'

Dallas Theater Center, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd., presents a stage production that celebrates the joy of being your authentic self. Information and tickets are available at DallasTheaterCenter.org.

### ■ Feb. 3: The Scott Joplin Chamber Orchestra

The Scott Joplin Chamber Orchestra performs music of Black classical composers at the Black Academy of Arts and Letters, 1309 Canton St., at 5 p.m. Tickets available at AAMDallas.org.

### ■ Feb. 6: Classic Chassis Car Club

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

### ■ Feb. 9: 'The Golden Girls'

The four seniors from Miami are back in an all-new show. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. ATPAC.org.

### ■ Feb. 9, 11, 14, 17: 'Elektra'

Dallas Opera presents a retelling of the classic Greek myth at the Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Visit DallasOpera.org for showtimes and tickets.

### ■ Feb. 10: Valentine's Bake & Sip

Join Fern Connections for a delightful afternoon at Kitchen Social, 4887 Alpha Road, Farmers Branch, for their Valentine's Bake & Sip Event from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Tickets and information are available at FernConnections.com

### ■ Feb. 15: OASIS LGBT+ Monthly Social Support Group

Oasis is an online, 90 minute monthly social support group for LGBT+ folks 18 and older providing a safe, welcoming space for people to connect. To register email Oasis.Tag.Plus@gmail.com.

### ■ Feb. 16: Dinner for a Cause

Join Legacy Cares at Snooze, 3211 Oak Lawn Ave., Suite A, for a meal and a drag performance, at 7 p.m.

### ■ Feb. 17: Red Tie Gala

Red Tie Gala is for LGBTQ people and their allies to celebrate Valentine's Day, in an intimate setting, with dinner and dancing, at CR Legacy Event Center, 2205 W. Main St., Gun Barrel City. There will be auctions and raffles benefitting Cedar Creek Lake-area organizations. Tickets available at GiveButter.com/RedTie.

### ■ Feb. 17: African American Museum Family/Community Day and Read-In

The African American Museum Dallas, 3536 Grand Ave., will host this free family-fun day will offer arts and crafts, a paint party, live music, exhibition trivia and documentary and film screenings throughout the day. The event will take place from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Have an event coming up? Email your information to Mathew Dominguez at Mathew@dallasvoice.com by Monday at 5 p.m. for that week's issue. Look for extended listings online at DallasVoice.com



Dee Pennington, cofounder of Chick Happy Hour, invites everyone to the February Happy Hour event, Feb. 1 at Nova. See listings for details.

# Cassie Nova

## ASK A DRAG QUEEN

Looking back,  
paving the way forward

Hello beautiful people. This is my second attempt this morning to write my column. I just spent the past hour writing about something that has been on my mind lately. It was, to be honest, actually really good, but I deleted the entire thing. On purpose.

I am gonna need a few people to die before I can tell that story in an honest and open way.

So instead, I thought I would titillate you with a story of drag in the olden days way back when I was a twink, even before the use of the word “twink.” Back then young guys were called “chicken,” and the older guys that stalked the young guys were called “chicken hawks.” Now it’s all “twunks” and “zaddies,” and I am always confused.

Anywho, when I was just a young warthog — I mean, chicken — I was the head of a gay and lesbian youth group. Most of us were too young to get into any of the clubs. Back then they didn’t have 18 and up nights at any of the clubs on The Strip, so we would all meet up at Hunky’s to hang out. Sometimes we would cruise around Reverchon Park or White Rock Lake, but we mostly went to parties at one of our houses or apartments.

If someone said that their parents were gonna be away, we would inevitably end up at their place, usually for the weekend. We would drink Bartles and Jaymes wine coolers or Boone’s Farm Strawberry Hill wine. We felt bougie as fuck, but we were also broke as fuck. We lived off off sandwiches and chips.

At this one particular “gathering” of the baby gays, I decided to show up in drag. The party was at the home of the parents of this big-titted, beautiful lesbian girl named Crystal, way out on the other side of Allen. (Back then, there really wasn’t as much development north of 635.)

For the record, at that time I had done drag maybe eight times, and I was pretty horrible — huge-ass eyebrows, no pads, no lashes. Just a long-haired, nelly boy with a little bit of make-up on. I honestly looked more like a girl then than I ever



did once my drag got good.

My friend Lee and a couple of other li’l homos thought it would be funny to stop at a grocery store in Allen to buy some chips and other miscellaneous junk foods. I thought it would be funny to get a picture of me shopping for tampons and douches. Once again, remember: This was back when you had to take a photo with an actual camera, then get the film developed and hope that your pic turned out.

We walk into, well, in my mind it was a Piggly Wiggly, but it was probably a Minyard’s or Brookshires, whatever grocery store they had in small towns back then. And it went exactly as you are thinking it went. Cue the record scratch, music stop. All heads turn our way.

Looking back now I realize what we must have looked like:

The three boys were wearing cutoff Daisy Duke short shorts, white muscle shirts (with little to no muscles), black army boots that went up to mid-calf, a long sleeve flannel shirt tied around their waist and, of course, their Pride rings necklace.

I was wearing black lace bell bottoms with a matching bell sleeve shirt, a light mug and bone straight hair parted on the side that hit a little below my shoulders. Oh, and big, neon yellow daisy-shaped earrings that made no sense then or now and hideous platform shoes.

No, it was not the ’70s; it was the ’90s. We were the epitome of out, loud and proud homosexuals, and we were soaking it all in.

One lady even had her mouth open from a literal jaw drop.

I did a full photoshoot in front of the douches then had the nerve to ask an employee if this brand of tampons were any good. She only said, “They work!” as she all but ran from us.

We, of course, went to the only guy working the check out. He was cute, maybe 17. His name was Brad and he had three zits on his left cheek that he tried to hide with his hair. You could tell we made him nervous. Then when he gave me my change for the chips, dips and small box of tampons, he scribbled his number on my receipt. A month later, Brad was my boyfriend.

We show up to the party with a great story and a camera full of awful photos. That party lasted the entire weekend. We’d sleep most of the day. We’d watch movies. We’d couple up and hook up for a few hours. I ended up messing around with Crystal’s best friend, Brian, on the floor next to Crystal’s bed while she pretended to sleep. She later told us that she was awake the entire time but was so happy that Brian was finally “gettin’ some” that she just kept quiet. She was a good friend.

I love having these stupid stories from when I was a dragling. I love remembering the good times with great friends. But then, inevitably, you start to think about what has happened to those kids from back then: Brian was shot and killed by a carjacking, thieving piece of shit about a year after that party. He had gone to

Austin for a Splash weekend getaway and never made it home. Crystal, his best friend since they were in elementary school, was never the same after that.

The point of the youth group was to introduce you to others like yourself, and our group — GLYA (Gay and Lesbian Young Adults) — did just that. It introduced me to so many great people, many of whom I am still friends with today.

To a young gay person that always felt alone, a group like that could save your life. G.L.Y.A. did that for me and so many others.

I hope you all have great memories of when you first found your tribe. I definitely do. If you still haven’t found your cabal, it’s coming. Be patient and be open to opportunities for friendships that maybe are a little bit odd.

You were born to stand out. Being gay means, you are part of a group of people who have had to hide their true selves for so much of human history. Now is your time to live. So live loud and proud for every gay person that couldn’t, yesterday or 100 years ago. Let’s normalize “us” and make it even easier for the next generation.

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

this week's solution

T	I	L	L		P	R	I	O	R		A	H	E	M
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C	O	N	N		E	L	U	D	E		O	B	I	E
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P	E	T	E		S	N	E	R	T		T	E	E	N

browse

For a more complete Community Calendar online, visit [Tinyurl.com/dvevents](http://Tinyurl.com/dvevents).

submit

To submit an item for inclusion in the Community Calendar, visit [Tinyurl.com/dvevents](http://Tinyurl.com/dvevents).

# SCENE

PEOPLE, PLACES AND FACES



A cute couple at Round-Up Saloon



DJ Josh Sanders spins at S4



Ernest at Fashion Optical



He works hard for the money at TMC



Jeff at Fashion Optical



Michael does the welcome at Salon Aura

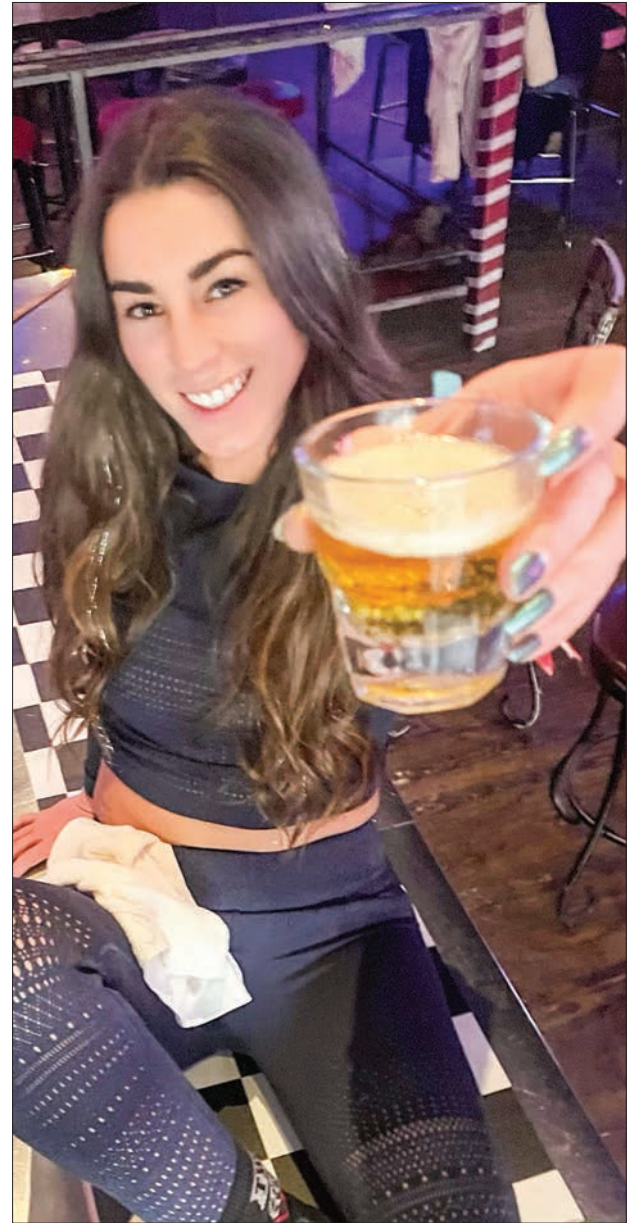
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## New Year, New Mary's Kick off Party





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# Alternatives

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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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58					59						60			
61					62						63			

Solution on Page 22

### Across

- 1 Where to put money in drawers
- 5 Rap sheet item
- 10 Deep throat clearer
- 14 Personal lubricant ingredient
- 15 Rimbaud's room
- 16 Seasoning for Rick Rodgers
- 17 DVD recording software
- 18 Get the cappuccino foamy
- 19 Ian McKellen and Elton John
- 20 He wrote *Englishman in New York*
- 22 Start of a quote by 4-Down
- 24 Inside tongue?
- 26 No-tell motel meetings
- 27 Heartthrob's fan
- 30 Be a breeder
- 31 More of the quote
- 36 Shakespeare's Puck, e.g.
- 37 Forest feline
- 38 Lily for Colette
- 39 Untouchable head
- 41 Zip
- 42 Items on hand
- 44 Behind
- 46 Murdoch with a flower?
- 47 Dog that Elroy Jetson stroked
- 50 Gave an edge to
- 52 End of the quote
- 58 Neighbor of Mass.
- 59 Give the slip to
- 60 *Village Voice* honor
- 61 Shake it or break it
- 62 Moliere comedy, with "The"
- 63 Bone in a limp wrist
- 64 Secretary of Transportation Buttigieg
- 65 Hagar's dog
- 66 *Dawson's Creek* type

### Down

- 1 Enjoys South Beach
- 2 Line from *Rent*?
- 3 *Gun Shy* author Lake
- 4 Bernstein, subject of the movie *Maestro*
- 5 They go at the bottoms of letters
- 6 One to ten, e.g.
- 7 *My Heart in San Francisco*
- 8 Word on a drag queen's bottle
- 9 Most hard to get to
- 10 Ore tester
- 11 Top choices?
- 12 Plumed wader
- 13 High places with flat tops
- 21 Spanish painter, with "El"
- 23 Sexual desire, e.g.
- 25 Fruit handler
- 27 Opposed to, to Gomer
- 28 Rounded top
- 29 "My bad"
- 30 Benefit
- 32 Longtime lesbian couples may do this
- 33 Place for Pee-wee's Mr. Window
- 34 River to the Seine
- 35 Takes advantage of
- 40 *Hope is a \_\_\_ invention* (Dickinson)
- 42 Singer Fure
- 43 What you shouldn't have to do in the closet
- 45 Letters in cyberspace
- 46 Dildo, e.g.
- 47 Protector of k.d. lang and Janis Ian
- 48 Got to second base, perhaps
- 49 *God loves everybody*, to Mychal Judge
- 51 More queer, but not ess straight
- 53 Precious stones
- 54 *Brothers & Sisters* producer Ken
- 55 Type of seaman
- 56 "Come here often?" is one
- 57 Jack portrayed Hayes

# MarketPlace

## MarketPlace

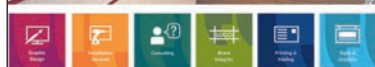
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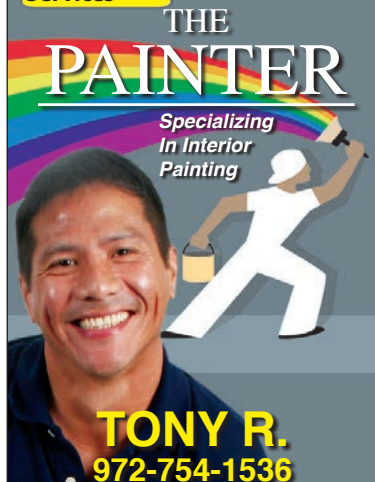


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