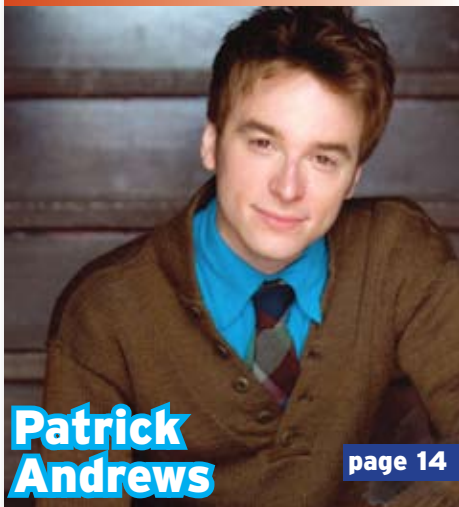




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An Era Ends** page 6



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**God-des
and She** page 16

nightspots
pick it up
take it home

2009 - The Green Issue

History-making gay judge set to retire

BY BYRON FLITSCH

Thomas Chiola, the first openly gay elected individual in Illinois, has announced his retirement from his 16-year Cook County Circuit Court judicial position.

Chiola made history when he won his rigorous campaign for Cook County Circuit Court judge in 1994 in the eighth Judicial Subcircuit.

In a telephone interview, Chiola recounted the campaign as "exciting because of how we were running [the campaign]. The "i" in my name was dotted with a pink triangle that was sort of a badge of honor. People knew where it came from and it stood for not backing down. It reminded people that we'd never go back."

According to the Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame's Web site, his momentous win was not only a political landmark, but also offered hope and inspiration for the LGBT community while fueling a connection between a diverse population demographic ranging from citizens living in neighborhoods like Chinatown, the Gold Coast and Cabrini Green.

His campaign was heavily supported by some segments of the Democratic Party, and he was the first gay candidate to have support from a majority in his Democratic ward. Chiola said, "I've been nostalgic [about retirement] lately, and while going through old articles and photos I realized how many people helped me get to get this far. My supporters have been instrumental

Turn to page 8



Fifteen years after making history as the first gay elected official in Illinois, Judge Tom Chiola is saying goodbye to the bench. Photo by Hal Baim

Obama has first trans appointees

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Amanda Simpson starts work this week as one of the first presidentially appointed transgender persons to the executive branch of any administration. The honor as the first belongs to Dylan Orr, a 30-year-old law school graduate from Seattle.

The Obama administration appointed both Simpson and Orr in late November. Orr began work Dec. 7 as special assistant to Assistant Secretary of Labor Kathleen Martinez in the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor. Simpson, 49, began work Jan. 5 as senior technical advisor in the Bureau of Industry and Security. The bureau's mission is to

protect national security through the management of international trade, the enforcement of treaties, and the promotion of economic, cyber and homeland security.

Orr, a native of Seattle, graduated from the University of Washington School of Law, in Seattle, in July and was admitted to the bar in November. During law school, his studies focused on disability rights, civil rights, and employment and immigration issues. He served as president of the law school's GLBT student organization. He did his undergraduate work at Smith College in Massachusetts, and also worked for a time with the Department of Social Services in Salem, Massachusetts.

Simpson, 49 and a native of Chicago, recently worked as a chief engineer with the Raytheon

Missile Systems in Tucson and holds degrees in physics, engineering, and business administration, according to National Center for Transgender Equality. She has worked in the aerospace-defense industry for 30 years, is a certified flight instructor, and has 20 years experience as a test pilot.

The YWCA of Arizona honored Simpson in 2004 as one of 12 "Women on the Move." She has also served on the board of the Southern Arizona ACLU, Equality Arizona (formerly Arizona Human Rights Fund), and the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance. She has also served on the Tucson Commission on LGBT Issues.

Simpson, a Democrat, ran in 2005 for a seat

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Nettelhorst Elementary School's devotion to acknowledging diversity is showcased on page 8.

Photo by Robin Schachtel



Windy City Times examines My Red Blood, a book by lesbian singer/activist Alix Dobkin. See page 19.

Photo by Tracy Baim

Cover photos and credits (from top): Photo of (from left) Susan Franz, Judith Markowitz and Star Gaze owner Mamie Lake by Linda "Kizzy" Ramos; Patrick Andrews romantic photo; God-des and She photo courtesy of God-des

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DISC AND THAT

Here are more DVD recommendations, including The Mysteries of Pittsburgh (right) and Streamers.



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LOOKING BACK



In his Bent Nights column, Vern Hester looks back at his favorite musicians of the year, including Jennifer Hudson (left).

Photo by Vern Hester

'WORLD' VIEW

Mike Manning, a bisexual who is part of the latest Real World cast, chats about everything from politics to sexuality.



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Joanne Herman. Photo by Chuck Colbert

Joanne Herman, explained

BY CHUCK COLBERT

She heard the same advice over and over: "You are so good at explaining this, you ought to write a book." At first Joanne Herman, who lives in Boston, Mass., just didn't see the need. And yet the same message kept coming back at her: "No, you really do need to write a book."

Herman began to wonder. Why is it that so many people don't seem to understand transgender people and our concerns? Long story short—she took the advice. Her book, *Transgender Explained: For Those Who are Not* is hot off the presses. It is an outgrowth of a series of 20 columns she wrote for the *Advocate* over a two-year period.

And much to her surprise, "There's a lot of excitement about it," Herman said during a recent interview. "I wasn't expecting that."

Over her years of educating about and advocating transgender equality before corporate executives and serving on LGBT community organizations' boards of directors, Herman has learned a thing or two. "One of the secrets we learned from the marriage wins," she said, "is that through [telling] personal stories people got to know the gay couple next door."

"That's what's [necessary] for transgender people," she explained. "We need people to be out and for folks to have an experience," for instance, "of working beside somebody."

More critical, Herman said, are "success stories," to which she devotes an entire chapter in the book. "People are thirsty for [them]." And, "If my book help makes it less challenging for transgender people to be out and successful at the same time, writing it will have definitely been worthwhile."

Altogether, the primary audience for the book, she said, is "people who have a transgender person in their life" in some cases for the first time, including parents, siblings, work colleagues, friends and extended family relatives.

"There is an important point to be made here about the challenge this presents to family members," Herman said. "Historically, we have been told that gender is binary, and many have worked for years to understand their gender non-conformity. For those who transition genders, many have also worked for years to plan for it. But chances are the family has not had that lead-time." Added Herman, "For family to accept, they need a little more time to catch up."

Knowing someone transgender may make all the difference in advancing equality and compassion. Herman is determined to reach as many people as possible, telling her own story and being open to people's genuine interest in what it means to be transgender or gender non-conforming. "I will answer anything, and people

tend to ask fairly sensitive things because there is such a curiosity out there," she said.

"Just think about how the rest of the world thinks about your being gay," said Herman. "For some people, it just doesn't compute."

Therefore, gay and transgender folks have a responsibility to help bring others along. Just as gay people tell about life with a differing sexual orientation, so transgender people must communicate their experience with an alternate gender identity (how they feel) and/or gender expression (how the look and act).

"But the transgender person must lead the way in explaining," she said. "Many aspects of the experience are very personal. Just because someone is transgender, you can't assume it's safe to ask if the boobs are real or not," she said, "because that is a violation of privacy."

Herman hails from the Main Line suburbs outside Philadelphia where she grew up until her family (she has one sibling, a brother, six years her junior) moved to Connecticut. As early as age seven Herman "knew something felt wrong," she said, but "I had no words to express it."

Growing into adolescence Herman experienced "teasing," she said. The perception, Herman explained, "was my being a lightweight" for a lack of interest in athletics in a sports-focused public school environment.

Excelling in high school academics, however, Herman went on to attend Dartmouth—"a real macho school," she said. But after Dartmouth went co-ed in 1972, Herman's discomfort over the frequent hazing of newly arrived female students led her to spend her junior year at Smith College. Yet even there she did not become fully aware of her transgender identity. That began to change after a 1995 trip to Provincetown for Halloween.

Fast forward, Herman read everything she could get her hands on. A fast study, Herman transitioned to live as a female by the end of 2002. "My life was so much better than my old life," she said. "I am so appreciative to be living in the right gender." Shortly after transition, Herman began to think about giving back. That opportunity presented itself when Jennifer Levi, transgender rights project director, at the Boston-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders approached her about serving on the organization's board. Herman said "yes," and has gone on to serve as a board director for the Point Foundation, which offers academic scholarship program for marginalized LGBT college students.

She now also serves on the board of Boston-based Fenway Community Health where Herman recently read from her book.

She has done radio interviews with broadcast outlets as far away as Madison, Wis., and Long Island, N.Y. Central Voice News, located in the "conservative" part of Pennsylvania, has scheduled print-issue interview with Herman for February.

Herman is optimistic, if not hopeful about

a brighter future for younger generations. Her hope rests on a basic goodness in human nature. "People have to stop worrying about understanding" all the intricacies of transgender and gender non-conforming identities. "Just think about computer software," she explained. "You don't need to know how every single function works in order to appreciate its value."

Keep in mind, Herman said, "For some folks gender is not as clear cut as it is for others. Just think about how you might help a person by being a little more open and understanding."

Mary Daly dies

Mary Daly—a renowned feminist theologian, philosopher and academic—died Jan. 3 after a lengthy illness, according to CatholicCulture.org. She was 81.

Daly's teaching career at Boston College—which ran more than three decades, from 1967 to 1999—was marked by two situations. In 1968 she was dismissed; however, she was brought back and granted tenure after students at the then-all-male school protested her firing. Just over 10 years ago she was again dismissed after she refused to accept a male student into a class on feminism.

Daly published several books, including the 1973 book *Beyond God the Father*, which some cite as "a foundational work in feminist theology," according to Wikipedia. In 1978's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Daly contended that men have tried to oppress women throughout the ages.

Her most recent book was 2006's *Amazon Grace: Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big*, according to her Web site, MaryDaly.net. Daly lectured at more than 300 colleges and universities in North America over the past 36 years.

According to NCROnline.org, Mary E. Hunt, co-founder and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER), said in an online statement that Daly's "contributions to feminist theology, philosophy, and theory were many, unique, and if I may say so, world-changing. She created intellectual space; she set the bar high. Even those who disagreed with her are in her debt for the challenges she offered. ... She always advised women to throw our lives as far as they would go. I can say without fear of exaggeration that she lived that way herself."

New Hampshire gays can marry

The new year has brought change to New Hampshire as the state has become the fifth to allow same-sex marriage because of a measure Gov. John Lynch signed last year, *USA Today* reported.

Any of the state's 600-plus same-sex couples who obtained a civil union can simply convert that certificate into a marriage license, according to a *Windy City Times* article that ran last June. The bill passed 198-176 in the New Hampshire House after passing the Senate 14-10.

New Hampshire joins Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa and Vermont in permitting full marriage equality.

Lesbian mayor sworn in

Annis Parker, 53, was formally sworn in as the 61st mayor of Houston, Texas, Jan. 2 in a private ceremony, according to the *Houston Chronicle*.

Judge Steven Kirkland—Parker's longtime friend and former campaign manager—administered the oath of office as her family and friends watched.

According to a statement from the city, Parker kept the weekend swearing-in private to avoid overtime costs that city employees would have been paid.

Windy City Times reported that Parker's Dec. 12, 2009, win made her the first openly gay person to be elected as mayor of one of the top five most populated cities in the United States.

Two public inauguration celebrations took

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NATIONAL NEWS

—Ellen DeGeneres in comic book (left)

—LAPD cuts ties with Scouts

—Ohio gay-bar fight results in death

place Jan. 4, including a morning event where a 200-member orchestra and choir performed, the *Chronicle* reported. Singer Jennifer Holliday ("And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going") sang at an evening inauguration concert.

LOCAL NEWS

Scholarship named for McKeon

Peoria's Acorn Equality Fund (AEF) has announced a new scholarship named in honor of the late gay-rights advocate/politician Larry McKeon.

A \$1,000 scholarship in McKeon's name will be given each year.

McKeon, who was 63 when he died in 2008, was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1996, becoming Illinois' first openly gay state legislator; he later announced that he was HIV-positive. McKeon represented the 13th District; Greg Harris is the current legislator for the area.

Prior to serving as a state representative, McKeon was an executive director at the Chicago Commission on Human Relations and Mayor Richard Daley's liaison to the city's gay and lesbian community.

See www.acornequalityfund.com.

TRANS from cover

in the Arizona House of Representatives, but was defeated by the incumbent Republican in the largely red state. She attended the 2008 Democratic National Convention as a delegate pledged to Hillary Clinton. She shares custody of her 13-year-old son with her former spouse.

Simpson said she moved into an apartment outside Washington, D.C., —in Silver Spring, Md.—on Saturday and that her first day at work at the Bureau would be Jan. 5.

According to LGBT blogger Autumn Sandeen at PamsHouseBlend.com, Simpson announced on her Facebook page in late November that she had accepted the appointment from the Obama administration.

"I like the idea that Amanda Simpson, a trans-identified woman with an incredible resume, is becoming an inspirational figure for trans youth," blogged Sandeen. "Amanda Simpson's appointment speaks to a new reality: The next generations of trans people can dream much bigger dreams than trans people in generations past."

In an interview in 2008 with a Tucson cable show, *Political Perspectives*, Simpson noted that she has worked with "a lot of people in the military."

"And my customers at the time of my transition were Air Force and Navy officers," she said. "And they were very accepting and supportive."

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Don Belton. From the Indiana University Web site

Gay Indiana prof murdered

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

Indiana University (IU) professor Don Belton—an academic and novelist who wrote extensively about the Black experience, queerness and masculinity—was murdered in his home in Bloomington, Ind., Dec. 27. Michael Griffin, an ex-Marine who was apparently a friend of Belton, was arrested and charged with the murder.

According to a probable cause affidavit released by the Bloomington Police Department, Griffin confessed to stabbing Belton in the chest “until he quit moving.”

A vigil took place Jan. 1 in front of the Monroe County Courthouse to commemorate Belton’s life and to ask local prosecutors not to accept Griffin’s allegation that Belton sexually assaulted him two days before the murder. Another vigil is planned for after students return from their holiday break.

Griffin has claimed that Belton assaulted him on Christmas Day. When Griffin confronted Belton about it two days later, according to the affidavit, Belton was “not in any way forgiving and ... he did not show or express any type of feeling that what had taken place was a mistake.” Griffin said that a scuffle ensued that ended with Griffin stabbing Belton to death with a knife he had purchased prior to going to Iraq, where he served in the Marine Corps.

Police found an entry in a journal that Belton kept in which he had written, shortly before Christmas, that he was happy about meeting an individual named Michael. The entry led police to Griffin, who has been pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder.

Belton, who taught at IU since fall 2008, was a former reporter for Newsweek. A prolific writer, Belton authored the novel *Almost Midnight* and edited a volume on black masculinity called *Speak My Name*. Prior to going to Indiana, Belton taught at the University of Michigan, Macalester College, and the University of Pennsylvania.

According to the Encyclopedia of Contemporary LGBTQ Literature in the United States, over the course of his life Belton maintained friendships with writer James Baldwin, filmmaker Marlon Riggs and poet Essex Hemphill.

Marlon Bailey, a professor of gender studies as well as African-American and African Diaspora Studies at IU, said that Belton’s work was interdisciplinary—“he was really in the realm of the public intellectual.” Bailey, who met Belton when they both taught at Macalester College in the 1990s, emphasized “how huge Don was in African-American literature—how important his work was and what kind of prominence he had.

“He was prolific and his work was very community-engaged,” said Bailey.

Professor Alyce Miller, who teaches in the English department at IU, said that Belton had “a very eclectic, intellectual, and creative imagination.

“Don was not someone who fell easily into categories,” Miller said.

Bailey noted that Belton’s death is one in a series of murders of black gay intellectuals to occur recently; others have included the killings of University of California’s Lindon Barrett and St. Mary College’s John Dennis. “This is ... at a moment of a wave of homophobic violence,” said Bailey, pointing out that many victims of such violence are queer and trans people of color.

Friends and allies of Belton have set up the Web site JusticeForDonBelton.org, which promises to monitor media outlets and the judicial system as they respond to Griffin’s claims that Belton sexually assaulted him. The introductory text to the Web site reads, in part, “we do want law enforcement to understand that there is a long, established history of suspects invoking a claim of sexual assault and/or a ‘gay panic’ defense to get charges reduced or to win over a jury when the victim was a gay person.”

Part of the reason for the Web site and the vigil, said Marlon Bailey, is to “create a counter-discourse—to anticipate the attempt to demean Don’s character” and to refute such claims.

The so-called “gay panic” defense has been employed by defense attorneys in some high-profile slayings of LGBT people, including unsuccessfully in the trial of Matthew Shephard’s murderers. Last year in Illinois, a Cook County jury acquitted Joseph Biedermann, who stabbed his neighbor Terrance Hauser sixty-one times after Hauser apparently made unwanted sexual advances. Biedermann claimed that the stabbing was done in self-defense.

According to his supporters’ Web site, Belton had been friends with Michael Griffin and his girlfriend as far back as last summer. Editors of the Web site criticized Bloomington media sources for suggesting that the relationship of the two men had been “brief” and “conflicted”—a suggestion, the Web site said, “not supported by evidence.”

“The person that murdered him was someone Don considered a friend,” said Alyce Miller.

Miller said that the circumstances surrounding Belton’s death were intertwined with the

intellectual interests of his life. As somebody who had worked “so much, and so tirelessly” to examine the contradictions and tensions within masculinity, Miller said, “my guess is that Don would also see this as a huge tragedy.”

Affinity cuts ties with YPS/YPC

Affinity—a local non-profit organization that serves Chicago’s Black lesbian and bisexual women’s community—is severing its ties with South Side’s Youth Pride Services/Youth Pride Center (YPS/YPC), which focuses on minority LGBT youth, according to a press release.

The release further stated, “Affinity made this decision due to a misalignment of the principles and values between the two organizations. However, we have informed the youth of YPS/YPC that Affinity will continue to be a resource to them.

The statement also said that youth who were previously in the joint drop-in program of Affinity and YPS/YPC and other youth who qualify for the program can still attend Affinity’s sessions.

AFC launches alliance

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) has chosen 17 AIDS advocates from across the state to form the Illinois Alliance for Sound AIDS Policy (IL ASAP), according to a press release. The goal of the project is to develop, nurture and support statewide policy and advocacy leaders;

to build stronger ties with stakeholders; increase involvement in HIV/AIDS activities; and to encourage ongoing communication with HIV/AIDS allies, elected officials and the media.

“This is a dynamic group of individuals who are taking the lead and fighting for the interests of our state’s HIV/AIDS community,” said AFC Policy Associate Pete Subkoviak, who coordinates IL ASAP. “In the short time since IL ASAP was created, I have been extremely impressed with what its members have accomplished, and expect great things from them in the future.”

IL ASAP’s “inaugural class” has already made headlines. Transgender and women’s health advocate Helena Bushong was believed to be the first-ever transgendered person to attend a White House National Strategy meeting on “Women and HIV/AIDS” held Dec. 8. (See her viewpoint on page 10 of this issue.) Also, IL ASAP member Patricia Johnson was featured in a recent local news segment about rising HIV-infection rates among African-American women.

Lesbian candidate’s comedic affair

Linda J. Pael, a lesbian candidate for Cook County Circuit Court judge, will host a fundraiser Saturday, Jan. 9, at Joie de Vine, 1744 W. Balmoral, at 4-6 p.m. The host will be comedian Jessica Halem, a former Chicagoan.

Tickets are \$40 each. See LindaJPael.com for more information. Also, see “Jessica Halem: Servicing the Public Good” on Facebook.

PASSAGES

John M. Bronczyk

John M. Bronczyk (known by family as “Michael,” and, when younger, “Mikey”) passed away unexpectedly Dec. 18, one month after his birthday, when he lost his battle with cancer. He was 55.

A 1971 graduate of Lane Tech High School, he was a four-year-member of both the ROTC, serving as battalion and color guard commander his senior year, and being in the National Honor Society. He wore the gold and green colors of Lane Tech with such pride that he would sing out the school song whenever something reminded him of his high school years. He was laid to rest in his beloved Lane Tech sweater that was clearly decorated with patches from all his achievements.

Bronczyk was an active and proud 1975 graduate of University of Illinois, where he was a James Scholar, member of Phi Eta Sigma and *summa cum laude* graduate. He was in the Brotherhood and past president of Alpha Kappa Psi, a past president of the National Education Association of Illinois; also, he appeared in “Who’s Who Among College and University Students.”

Bronczyk started his career as a C.P.M. (certified purchasing manager) in 1976 at the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. He moved to Sargent & Lundy LLC in 1985, where he worked for



13 years and, finally, was the senior contracting procurement officer at the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago.

He loved to play piano and enjoyed the Lyric Opera. He adored life, family and friends. He leaves behind the three sisters who he helped raise in the absence of their mother: Pauline (Chester) Fields, Sally (Charles) Kuss and Marie (Tony) Carnevale. He was the uncle of Charles Jr., Danya, Lindsey, Jay, Brittany, Sarah and Joey, and a friend of many.

A private service was held Dec. 20, 2009.

Arrangements were made by Cremation Society of Illinois (773-281-5058).

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The staff at Star Gaze on New Year's Eve; Mamie Lake is at bottom center. Photo by Linda "Kizzy" Ramos

Star Gaze: End of an era

As *Star Gaze*—the only remaining full-time lesbian bar in Chicago—closes, owner Mamie Lake looks back at how the Andersonville institution got started.

BY MEL FERRAND

Mamie Lake, then age 50, didn't know she was about to become the owner of Chicago's pre-eminent lesbian bar for the first decade of the millennium when she and her real estate agent rushed over to 5419 N. Clark with a proposed contract in hand, but that's exactly what she did; that was May 1998. With the bar closing its doors for the last time this week, what follows is Lake's story.

Lake and her real estate agent were scouring the northern end of the Clark Street shopping district in Andersonville. This area was rapidly becoming "the" lesbian neighborhood of Chicago and Lake wanted to open her bar there. The agent was able to identify three bars that met Lake's criteria. "When I walked in here, I just knew," Lake said of the winning spot. This is it. This is it.

"I was sold on it right away, then they showed me the beer garden and that was it. My sights were set on this place."

Initially, the agent scrambled her notes and mistakenly told Lake that it was already sold. As Lake remembered that day she said, "I was devastated. When you make up your mind that's it, everything else is, forget about it." However, realizing her mistake, the agent called back two days later and said the bar was still available.

Smiling, Lake explained, "I told her let's get over there and write up a contract right now. Nothing is going to stop me. I want this bar. And that's what we did!" The transition of Café Ashe into Star Gaze had begun.

Now Lake had a bar that needed a name. She had already decided she wanted something with "gaze" in it, so while she was visiting with her brother and nephew in Florida the three of them

discussed ideas. One night as the three of them were looking up into the sky, her brother suggested, "Gaze upon a Star." She said that was too long, but he was on the right track. After they played around with it for a while, "Star Gaze" was born.

Lake returned to Chicago, only to find a two-page violation report from the city inspector. She would have to correct these violations before she could open for business and the grand opening was less than a month away. Lake told the inspector she'd have it done in a week. Recalling that time, Lake told Windy City Times, "We cleaned, we scraped, we replaced tiles up in the ceiling." After seven days, the inspector returned and was amazed at the progress Lake had made. Although there were a few minor items still on the list, the inspector said she was going to pass the bar for inspection because she was so impressed with the dogged determination Lake exhibited.

Over the years, that unwavering determination would be challenged again and again as Lake faced the struggles inherent in being owner of a lesbian bar. But that is getting too far ahead in our story. We are only up to the first day.

"I had my grand opening and it was packed," Lake recalled. "It was lots of friends supporting me and, I'm sure, lots of girls because they had heard about us. We had a DJ. Everyone was in a great mood. They were dancing. I had a cook and we put out food so everyone could sample the cooking. ... It was [also] very scary to open the doors for the first time and get a sense of running a business."

As it turns out, the inspector and Lake's friends weren't the only ones that took notice of what she was doing with Star Gaze. In 1999, the Chicago Area Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce awarded Star Gaze "Best New Business of the Year." And, perhaps more importantly, lesbians were coming from the neighborhood, other parts of the city, and surrounding suburbs on a

regular basis to find "community." This includes, a safe space to be "out," friends, teammates, a sex partner(s), drinking buddies, a girlfriend, women just like themselves, etc. The following is what they saw when they arrived.

The old Café Ashe sign was up for a while, and many locals had gone there when it was the café, so the new name took some time to stick. However, the inside was transformed and only remnants of what had been there still remained. For example, the faux brick with grape vines painted on the southern wall remained for several years, while the diving wall was demolished early.

The interior was divided by a large bar, with service areas on two sides. This essentially gave the space the feel of two unique establishments: a dark dance club—complete with a mirrored wall, intimate seating on both ends of the dance floor, flashing lights and a disco ball—and the other, a Chicago-style drop-in after-work neighborhood bar with a jukebox and pool table. One could walk between the two spaces freely and find the area where she felt most comfortable. During the warm parts of the year, the beer garden was open. The coveted outdoor space was a tranquil haven that featured picnic benches with umbrellas and a swing-built-for-two.

However, over time, these spaces became multi-purpose. For example, the "dance club" was used as a cafeteria when Sunday brunch was served; ping pong until the table broke; and the raised club seating was used as a stage for a multitude of things including comedy and musical acts, sports league sign-ups and award ceremonies, burlesque, various fundraisers, and in most recent years, karaoke. The window seating area doubled as the darts league section and on the "neighborhood bar" side Lake's Bridgeport roots were visible on the North Side where Bears and Sox fans were always welcome, as were members of the lesbian pool league who were often found around the table several nights a week. On Sunday afternoons, the outdoors went from a romantic getaway to a cornhole-slingin' spot where women from various sports teams gathered to drink and play.

Sadly, this seemingly idyllic lesbian oasis also had its share of problems; a quick search on the Internet will yield opinions written by those women, and a few men, who've had less-than-pleasant experiences at the bar. While Lake acknowledged her awareness of these critiques, she also expressed a strong desire to stay true to herself and her decisions. She recognized the points made, but tried to explain things from the bar owner's perspective. For example, several comments are complaints about the cover charge. Lake said, "The lesbians are cheap, to put it bluntly. I can't tell you how many times I have seen two women show up at 8 p.m., stay until 1 a.m. and have a \$25 tab between the two of them."

"I understand men make more money than women, and women have to pick between Friday and Saturday to go out, but they have to expect to spend money when they go out," she said. She even expressed feeling abandoned by the lesbian community at times.

Lesbians "are not loyal to any gay-owned businesses. They will go to a straight bar that has a lesbian night and not come to gay-owned businesses because the drinks are cheaper," Lake said.

However, what came through in each of Lake's answers to my questions in our two-hour interview was that dogged determination expressed in her retelling of the inspector's story. Despite whatever adversarial thing came her way, she was going to stay the course and push forward. The Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame celebrated her determination and recognized her efforts when she and her wife, Dustin "Dusty" Fermin were inducted for Star Gaze in 2006.

Now, at the age of 62, she is beginning to tire of the fight.

Next week: Mamie Lake talks more about Star Gaze, including a controversial situation involving the denial of the facility's beer-garden license application.

Kirk's sexuality questioned; Meister weighs in

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The U.S. Senate race has taken on a unique twist, as Republican candidate Andy Martin has questioned party opponent Mark Kirk's sexual orientation, according to the Huffington Post.

Martin, described in the Post item as "a noted conservative dirty trickster," states in the ad that "Illinois Republican leader Jack Roeser said there is a 'solid rumor that Kirk is a homosexual.'"

Kirk's campaign manager, Eric Elk, said in a statement that "[t]he ad is not true and is demeaning to the political process. The people of Illinois deserve better." Kirk, a naval intelligence officer, is on active duty and is unavailable for comment, according to the Chicago Sun-Times.

On his Web site, Martin has a page devoted to the differences between Kirk and himself. He calls Kirk "one of the most liberal members of Congress" who "voted to endorse partial-birth" abortion, which Martin calls "infanticide."

According to the Chicago Tribune, Illinois Republican Party Chairman Pat Brady issued a statement criticizing Martin's radio spot: "His statements today are consistent with his history of bizarre behavior and often times hate-filled speech which has no place in the Illinois Republican Party. Mr. Martin will no longer be recognized as a legitimate Republican candidate by the Illinois Republican Party."

In a press conference held Dec. 28 at the law firm of Kluever & Platt, 65 E. Wacker, openly gay Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jacob Meister criticized Martin's tactic: "The use of sexual orientation in this race, whether overt or by innuendo, can no longer be tolerated. Mr. Martin's statements are clear attempts to use sexual orientation as a political weapon and are criminal in their perpetuation of ignorance and prejudice."

Meister also took aim at a Democratic foe, saying, "During the course of this campaign, my sexual orientation has been the source of underhanded remarks from my opponent, David Hoffman. ... Despite the enormous economic, national-security and domestic-policy challenges on which I have tried to focus my campaign, some think it more important to question someone's sexual orientation than to propose their own ideas on how to confront the many problems that desperately need our attention."

Meister also compared Hoffman to former vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin, saying that she, Martin and Hoffman use "the subtle innuendo of the 'family values' issue ... to [imply] that people who are lawfully refused the right to marry or begin a family are somehow less 'qualified.'"

Getting back to Kirk, Meister added, "Under the current circumstances, and in accordance with the very laws that he has wholeheartedly advocated, under current law Mark Kirk is subject to being removed from military service."

The Hoffman campaign team was swift to deny Meister's remarks about its candidate. Hoffman's campaign manager, Michael Powell, told Windy City Times, "The notion that David Hoffman is somehow slurring Mr. Meister about his sexual orientation is the most preposterous thing that has been said during this campaign—and a lot of preposterous things have been said. Jacob Meister keeps insinuating that David Hoffman is somehow critical of his sexual orientation, and that's just ridiculous. David is for gay marriage, he's for repealing [the Defense of Marriage Act] and [wants to] get rid of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Martin, once known as Anthony Martin-Trigona, has campaigned for various offices in Illinois, Florida and Connecticut, the Sun-Times noted.

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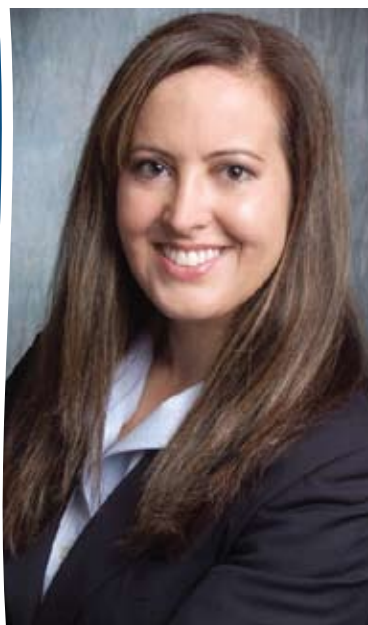
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Adam Robinson.

STATE SENATE: 7th DISTRICT

Adam Robinson: Pro-marriage Republican faces odds

BY CHASSE REHWINKEL

Adam Robinson—a small business owner who lives in the Edgewood community—has been running on the slogan of “Common Ground” ever since he announced his candidacy for the 7th District’s State Senate seat last month.

A Republican who is running in one of the most liberal districts in Illinois, Robinson has been attracting supporters through his rare combination of fiscal conservatism and select social liberalism.

“This nation is being split in two over social issues,” proclaims Robinson. “I think both conservatives and liberals need to debate more civilly in order to get things accomplished in our great nation.”

A graduate of the University of Illinois and DePaul Business School, Robinson has lived in Chicago since 1990 and hopes to defeat either incumbent Heather Steans or her Democratic challenger, Jim Madigan, in next year’s election.

Windy City Times sat down with Robinson for a brief discussion of his candidacy.

Windy City Times: Why did you decide to run?

Adam Robinson: Well, I’m a small-business owner, a father, a husband and a resident of the 7th District, and I love the community where I live. I’m on a first-name basis with almost everyone who works on my street. It’s a great community, an extremely diverse community and it’s a community that has all the structures needed to be a really vibrant one, but unfortunately the legislation that has been passed down by the state has handicapped this development, espe-



cially in terms of education, jobs and the family. There are basic things I think we can be doing in order to better this district. I look at the position of State Senator as being one of service. All of the needs of the community should be met by their representatives and I think I have the right ideas and the right mentality to represent the 7th District’s needs.

WCT: So what’s your plan for improving the 7th District?

AR: There are three things I want to do. I want to make it easier, not harder, for families to thrive in this community; I want to make it easier, not harder, for people to prosper economically and find a good job; and I want to make it easier, not harder, for families to give their children a good shot at life through a good education. Those are three things we don’t do well right now and I think we need to get those three things done before we move onto other things on the list.

WCT: How will you improve these three important areas?

AR: As far as strong families, as you know I am one of very few Republican candidates in the nation who strongly supports full marriage equality. We have families that are in productive, healthy households that will make our schools stronger and our community better, but they aren’t allowed to because of their sexuality. Allowing them the right to marry is better in so many ways and to deny them this right is absurd to me. We should be trying as hard as we can to create an environment for strong families and granting full equal marriage rights is a step in the right direction for this.

For job creation, residents of the 7th District pay an oppressive sales tax. The state portion of that is higher than it needs to be, the county portion of that is higher than it needs to be, we make it hard for small business to thrive in the 7th District. 90 percent of all employees that work in the 7th District live here. If we make it easier to operate a small business in our district, if we make it easier to open up that grocery store or hair salon we create so many new jobs within the our community, good jobs.

From an education standpoint, parents deserve the right to send their kids to a school that works for them. Only the very privileged few in our district can afford to send their children to a high priced private school. It’s a problem I worry about myself almost every day. I have a five-month-old and I wonder where he is going to go to school. As a parent I envision giving all

parents more choices, either through vouchers, more charter schools or smarter school reform. This is not an either or issue for me, I have no one set plan for how to make this better, but I do see education choice as extremely important to our district.

WCT: The incumbent in this seat, Sen. Heather Steans, recently introduced an equal-marriage bill to the Illinois Senate. You have come out in opposition to her action, citing the bill’s timing. Could you explain why?

AR: You have to ask yourself “Why now?” Why now when there is a civil-union bill vote within the next 30 days does the incumbent state senator introduce a marriage-equality bill for Illinois? Why would she do this when just last year she is on record as saying that civil unions are a good idea. Let’s start there—I’m paraphrasing here, of course. I’m encouraged that she has done it and I’m glad that she has raised awareness for this issue. However, she is facing a tough primary challenge from a well-respected gay activist in Jim Madigan. I think Jim pinned her down on this issue and she’s worried. To me it looks like she created this legislation in order to show how she is in support of marriage equality. I just don’t buy it; there were plenty of opportunities for her to do this in the last two years, so why now?

WCT: As a pro-equal marriage Republican do you find it hard to operate within the party?

AR: The Republican Party is founded on some basic fundamental rights. Personal freedom, the ability to have strong family, those are some of these fundamental rights. I know Republicans in general struggle on this issue, but if you look at the basic Republican platform we are in support of this. I think that in the next 20 years or so you will see a shift toward supporting full equal marriage rights in all states not just Illinois and I’m proud to be at the forefront of this thinking. I really feel strongly about this ideal; it’s absolutely the right decision.

WCT: Can a Republican actually carry the 7th District?

AR: A Republican can win the 7th District and will win the 7th District. Politicos will say this is the most progressive district in the state and that a Republican candidate will never stand a chance, but I just don’t believe that. I think that citizens of this district are sick of Blagojevich Democrats running this state and want change. I want to show citizens that they can elect an official that will truly represent them in this race regardless of party politics.

See www.adamrobinsonforsenate.com.

Coming next: Interviews with Robinson’s opponents, Democratic state Sen. Heather Steans and challenger Jim Madigan.

Greg Harris’ agenda: Marriage equality and more

BY ANDREW DAVIS

When the state’s General Assembly reconvenes Jan. 12, count state Rep. Greg Harris among those with a very full plate. (When asked if he has any aspirations beyond being a state rep, he told Windy City Times, “My aspirations [are] to pass marriage equality and to get our financial house in order and protect our vulnerable people.”) Harris (who is currently unopposed in the race for his 13th District seat) recently talked with Windy City Times about the items that are on his agenda:

—**Marriage equality:** Among the most important of Harris’ initiatives is making civil marriage possible for all of Illinois’ residents, regardless of sexual orientation. (“Civil marriage,” as stated in House Bill 0178, “is used as opposed to religious marriage,” explained Harris, who is openly gay. “Civil marriage [involves] the benefits of marriage the government confers on a couple; religious marriage is the consecration of marriage according to the laws or traditions of a particular faith.”)

“It’s a tumultuous time,” Harris said when asked if he had any inkling how the measure is shaping up in the House. “This has now become an issue that [is] in the forefront of the minds of virtually every one of my colleagues. This is the civil-rights issue of the day. I look at the defeats the community has suffered in Maine and California as well as the terrible defeat in the New York Senate, and I don’t want that to happen in Illinois.”

Find out a lot more about state Rep. Greg Harris’ agenda—ranging from foreclosure mediation to the state budget—online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



State Rep. Greg Harris.

ANN WILLIAMS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE 11th DISTRICT - DEMOCRAT

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—Ann

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LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS ILLINOIS

We applaud Illinois Republican Party Chairman Pat Brady on his recent statement denouncing an anti-gay Senate candidate.

The Illinois GOP took a step forward in advancing GLBT equality for all families by stressing that hate speech is not viable campaign speech.

Next meeting: February 7th at 3pm, The Center on Halsted

Next social: February 7th at 4:30pm, Sidetrack

Sign up for emails and learn more about us at www.LogCabinIllinois.org

Lakeview school focuses on diversity

BY BLAIR MISHLEAU

Bright, delicious colors take up every inch of space at Nettelhorst Elementary School. Exposed brick walls; donated museum-quality artwork; themed hallways showcasing everything from Africa to outer space; and a disco ball make Nettelhorst less than typical as far as schools go, public or private. As the first-period bell rings, little boots thump up and down the hallways, scurrying to class.

Nettelhorst, located at 3252 N. Broadway, gives and gets the support of the LGBT community, making the school relevant to its neighbors in Boystown.

The three-story school, nestled in a residential street, can blend in with the other brick buildings surrounding it. Upon entering, though, students are welcomed into a school that is overflowing with life.

All of this has been done by volunteers, many from the Boystown area. Jacqueline Edelberg, who was one of two parents to start the revitalization in 2002, was quick to note that every spot of color in the building was done by volunteers. Before the community stepped up to help, the building was painted in shades of dismal gray—leftover paint from World War II, Edelberg said.

Currently, parents involved with the Nettelhorst Community Group are trying to win a \$100,000 contest sponsored by U.S. Cellular. They want to use the funds to upgrade the school's science department. In the massive amount of work that volunteers have done, the science department is one of the few areas still in dire need.

"This is 21st-century science? Are you kidding?" said Edelberg as she toured the area. An ancient, dented metal counter, which looks like it came from a 1950's kitchen, is where the sink is nested.

"Our science room is crappy," a student in science class said as Edelberg toured the room.

The community group is encouraging anyone in Chicago to walk into a U.S. Cellular store and pick up a voting card. To vote, go to the U.S. Cellular Web site (www.uscc.com), click on the "Calling all Communities" button, enter the voting code and Nettelhorst's zip code, 60657, and choose Louis Nettelhorst School as the recipient.

The school is presently in the top 20. To win, they must be in the top 10. Voting ends Jan. 15, 2010.

Parents are hoping that the school's strong ties with its surrounding community, Boystown, will help it to garner votes, said David Neubecker, a gay man with children at Nettelhorst.

The school is particularly attuned to its neighborhood. Gay and lesbian parents are common at Nettelhorst. They are respected members of the school and, in many cases, are leaders as well. A large group of gay and lesbian families and many straight allies marched in Chicago's most recent gay pride parade.

They have also celebrated diversity in other ways, such as decorating the fence that surrounds the playground with fabric in the pattern of a rainbow. The decorations actively reprimand homophobic remarks or other negative language, and promote an open outlook on family.

"At Nettelhorst, we believe family is everything," said Edelberg.

Lambda lawyer joins private firm

Jeff Torres, a member of the National Leadership Council of Lambda Legal's Defense and Education Fund, has joined the Chicago Office of Lathrop & Gage. Lambda Legal is the oldest national organization pursuing high-impact litigation, public education and advocacy on behalf of equality and civil rights for the LGBT and HIV communities.

Torres has held leadership roles in the Houston-based Institute for Energy Law and the Chicago Bar Association's Energy and Communications Law Committee. While a partner at the law firm of McGuireWoods, Mr. Torres was a member of the firm's Diversity Committee and co-chair of the Chicago office's *pro bono* program.

Boystown eatery closing

Owner Doug Brandt has confirmed that, effective May 31, 2010, the lease of Pie Hole, 737 W. Roscoe, will end.

The lease agreement offered no option for Pie Hole to renew. However, the lease agreement for Cocktail nightclub—due to expire on the same date as Pie Hole's—will renew, according to a Pie Hole press release, and calls for expanding into the late-night pizza joint's vacated space.

"It was known from Day One that there was a possibility of losing our lease, so I've been running the business with options in mind," said Brandt. However, Cocktail will not be taking over the business nor will it assume the Pie Hole name, despite rumors floating around for years, according to Brandt.



Judge Tom Chiola.

JUDGE from cover

in helping me get to where I am today."

According to QRD.org, Chiola's career began shortly after graduating from University of Illinois-Champaign Law School in 1977. He moved from Springfield to Chicago, where his first position was as a prosecutor for the Illinois Attorney General's Environment Control Division, where he concentrated on pollution cases.

Shortly after, Chiola served as the chief administrative law judge for the General Council for the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. In his six years as chief judge, Chiola deliberated various medical cases that were often highlighted in the media due to scandals associated with the malpractice lawsuits that were brought to his courtroom.

Chiola later pursued his candidacy for Cook County Judge. About the political run, Chiola recalled, "I remember this giant banner—to me, it looked as big as a football field—hanging in Sidetrack. It was a big deal for me to see that. It [the campaign] became very real and exciting."

Chiola's impact on the gay community has been just as influential. As an activist, he successfully aided in passing the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance in 1993—a measure designed to protect all people who live and work in the county from discrimination and sexual harassment based on a variety of instances including sexual orientation. "I knew I had a big opportunity [to press bigger issues] in my position and went with it," Chiola told Windy City Times. Before his judicial candidacy, Chiola was a board

member for IMPACT (a Chicago gay and lesbian political action committee) where he continued to work for passing sexual orientation-based non-discrimination laws with the goal of adding "sexual orientation" to the Illinois Human Rights Act. He's also been celebrated for gaining the support of a variety of political representatives that pay attention to gay and lesbian issues because "people in our community wanted the opportunity to speak for themselves. It was important to be that voice and try to open more doors to more voices."

While volunteering as an attorney for Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Chiola learned HIV/AIDS patients were refused advice. According to QRD.org, in 1986 (with the help of Howard Brown Health Center) he organized a free legal project that allotted legal services for patients who would otherwise have no other option. His humanitarian efforts continued as an active participant in fundraising efforts for the Chicago office of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the NAMES Project and HIV/AIDS agency Vital Bridges (previously known as Open Hand), where he also volunteers.

Chiola's enthusiasm also extends to sports. Not only has he been an active participant in the organizational aspect of gay and lesbian sporting events across the nation, but he is also an athlete. According to QRD.org, Chiola has been on the board of the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) and Team Chicago; was a member of the Frontrunners; and a director of Proud to Run. He ran a marathon and competed in bowling in the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games. He completed a triathlon and multiple swimming events in the 1994 New York City Gay Games. He also participated in a triathlon in the 2006 Chicago Gay Games, and is preparing for another event in the 2010 Cologne Gay Games.

Chiola was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1998 for his unparalleled career and community efforts. He was honored with a Judicial Leadership Award in April of 2006 given by the Gay and Lesbian Legal Alliance (GALLA) from John Marshall Law School. In 2009, he became the president of AIJ (Alliance of Illinois Judges), an organizational resource for fellow gay and lesbian judges.

When asked what was next, Chiola said, "I would like to get more involved in community organizations. Because of my previous position, I wasn't able to be a part of certain projects. Whether it's lobbying or working on state legislation ... I'm looking forward to being active in the community again."

Chiola has been a devoted activist, an award-winning professional, an inspiration to gay youth and an avid athlete who continues to make an impact on the LGBT community. His generosity and professional strides will remain a permanent footprint in the history of Chicago public figures.

A private party will be held Jan. 8 to celebrate Chiola's success and retirement.



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Gay activists Alex Freyre and José María Di Bello legally married Dec. 28 at a registry office in Ushuaia, capital of Argentina's Tierra del Fuego province. Photo: Gobierno de Tierra del Fuego

WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Gay couple weds in Argentina

A gay male couple legally married in Argentina Dec. 28.

Activists Alex Freyre and José María Di Bello tied the knot at a registry office in Ushuaia, capital of the far-southern province of Tierra del Fuego.

The couple had been blocked from marrying in Buenos Aires on Dec. 1 after a national judge issued a ruling that conflicted with a city judge's ruling that had authorized their marriage.

The nation's Supreme Court then promptly announced it would resolve the matter of the conflicting rulings.

In Tierra del Fuego, meanwhile, Gov. Fabiana Ríos issued a decree allowing the marriage there.

She called the marriage "a breakthrough in human rights and social inclusion" and said, "We are delighted that it has happened in our province."

Federal and provincial human rights officials attended the wedding.

"Finally, the first marriage between persons of the same sex in Latin America and the Caribbean has occurred," said Claudio Morgado, president of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), who witnessed the event. "This took place after a strong activist fight by FALGBT (Argentina Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders) and great work of coordination between INADI and the legal secretary of Tierra del Fuego. INADI feels that we had to join in this historic moment marking a major advance in the fight against discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders."

INADI immediately featured the wedding at

the top of its official Web page.

"I am happy to have accomplished this, which for others is so easy and for us has been so difficult," Freyre told Radio 10 after the ceremony. "We promised that we were going to do the impossible to fulfill our wish, which is not (just) something of José María and Alex but rather the wish of millions of gays and lesbians."

A bill to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide is pending in Argentina's Congress and FALGBT President María Rachid says there are enough votes to pass it.

"There is sufficient consensus to address the law at the beginning of (2010)," she said. "The (vote) counts show we have a sufficient majority to act on it and approve it."

Buenos Aires, some other Argentine cities and the province of Río Negro already have civil-union laws for same-sex couples. Elsewhere in Latin America, similar laws are in force in Uruguay, Mexico City, the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, and the Mexican state of Coahuila, which borders Texas.

In addition to Tierra del Fuego, same-sex marriage is legal in Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. It will become legal in March in Mexico City and Washington, D.C.

Belarusians fined for picket at Iranian Embassy

Three members of GayBelarus were fined a total of about \$467 Dec. 23 for picketing the Iranian Embassy in Minsk to protest Iran's treatment of gay people.

Sergey Androsenko was fined \$307 for organizing an unauthorized protest and Sergey Praded was fined \$123 for taking part in it. A third participant was fined \$37.

An embassy employee testified that among the people handed protest material was the Iranian ambassador himself.

Androsenko said his fine was unusually harsh for nations of the former Soviet Union and equals one month's worth of his salary.

"I am going to appeal for review ... to the U.N. Human Rights Committee," he said. "It will reveal the roughness of Belarusian legislation to issues of organizing such actions and restrictions on expressing one's own thought."

"The world can't hear the voice of Iranian gays, who are being executed," he added. "We, activists of LGBT movement, have to become this voice."

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

Read more world news online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"MY PARENTS, MY FAMILY AND MY FRIENDS ALL LOVE ME AND ACCEPT ME for who I am, and even if the public are upset by this, I know the love of those people who mean the most to me will never change. I'm not going on a crusade, but I'm proud of who I am. I feel I have achieved everything I could ever possibly have hoped to achieve out of rugby, and I did it being gay. I want to send a positive message to other gay people that they can do it, too." — *UK rugby legend Gareth Thomas in a Dec. 18 coming-out interview with the Daily Mail. Thomas plays for the Cardiff Blues.*

"IT'S BEEN REALLY TOUGH FOR ME HIDING WHO I REALLY AM, but I don't want it to be like that for the next young person who wants to play rugby, or some frightened young kid." — *UK rugby legend Gareth Thomas in a Dec. 18 coming-out interview with the Daily Mail. Thomas plays for the Cardiff Blues.*

"IN 1993 I VOTED FOR A BILL PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION based on sexual orientation in public accommodation, housing and employment. That was 16 years ago. We overbaked that statute, for a couple of reasons. If I had to do it over again I would have changed some things. That statute is not worded the way it should be. I said I regretted the vote later because it included things like cross-dressing, and a variety of other people involved in behaviors that weren't based on sexual orientation, just a preference for the way they dressed and behaved. So it was overly broad. So if you are a third-grade teacher and you are a man and you show up on Monday as Mr. Johnson and you show up on Tuesday as Mrs. Johnson, that is a little confusing to the kids. So I don't like that." — *Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty to Newsweek, Dec. 21.*

"SHE (SARAH PALIN) IS EASILY AS QUALIFIED (TO BE PRESIDENT) as Barack Obama. I would argue she's more qualified in terms of leadership, experience, management and supervision—actually running something. She was a mayor, head of an energy commission and governor." — *Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty to Newsweek, Dec. 21.*

"DESPITE HAVING A VERY WELL-FUNDED AND WELL-ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN (in Maine), the main lesson in what we need to do differently is we need to figure out how we best counter the right wing's lies. Because they will lie about what will happen in schools, they will lie about how this will impact children and lie about what domestic partnership does and doesn't do." — *Equality California Executive Director Geoff Kors to The Atlantic, Nov. 6.*



Elton (John) will not be happy until I bang on his door in the middle of the night.

—George Michael

"I NORMALLY GET UP ABOUT 10 A.M., MY PA WILL BRING ME A STARBUCKS, I'll have a look at my e-mails. At the moment I've got nothing that pressurized other than keeping an eye on the video they're making for the Christmas single. Then, if I'm in the mood, I'll come up to the office in Highgate, do some work, writing, backing tracks or whatever. Come home. Kenny will be here, the dogs are here. Maybe eat locally, hang out, and then probably go off and have a shag or have someone come here and have a shag ... that's probably a couple times a week." — *Singer George Michael to Britain's The Guardian, Dec. 5.*

"ELTON (JOHN) WILL NOT BE HAPPY UNTIL I BANG ON HIS DOOR in the middle of the night saying: 'Please, please, help me, Elton. Take me to rehab.' It's not going to happen. You know what I heard last week? ... Geri (Halliwell) told Kenny that Bono, having spoken to Elton, had approached Geri to say, 'What can we do for George?' This is what I have to deal with because I don't want to be part of that social clique. All I'd have to do to stop it is hang out in London, so people realize I don't look close to death." — *Singer George Michael to Britain's The Guardian, Dec. 5.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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**HELENA
BUSHONG**

A tranny girl goes to the White House

As I sit here, I can't help but ask the question, "Just how did I find myself headed to Washington, DC to advise on public policy at the White House?" It's been a whirlwind fall that all started with me applying for and being selected as a member of the newly formed IL Alliance for Sound AIDS Policy (IL ASAP), a group of statewide policy and advocacy leaders picked to increase community involvement in HIV/AIDS activities, and fight for fair policies for those living with and at risk for HIV and AIDS.

On Nov. 12, 2009, IL ASAP was fortunate enough to take part in a National HIV/AIDS Strategy Focus Group. Jeffery Crowley, Director of the White House Office of National Aids Policy and Senior Advisor of Disability Policy was the guest at the focus group and listened as community members spoke to issues that need to be addressed when forming the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. I testified at the focus group meeting regarding the barriers facing transgender, women, and aging populations; I had a lot to say!

After the focus group, I spoke with Mr. Crowley as a follow up to my testimony and I offered him a business card in case he had any questions or needed further input from me. I was impressed that Mr. Crowley seemed to listen carefully to testimony, took notes and asked thoughtful questions. I thought to myself, "Who knows?"

I did not think about it anymore until I open my email in early December, and spotted an e-mail from the White House! Subject: Dec. 8, White House "Women and HIV" meeting. It was flagged: Importance—High.

At first, I thought it might be a joke. (I do have some prankster friends). I returned to the e-mail to read it again. As I read further, I felt almost unable to breathe. The email went on:

Dear Colleagues,

We are in the process of finalizing the participant list for next Tuesday's meeting at the White House.

And we hope you are able to join us.

Regards, Adelle Simmons

I got up from my desk and walked around a bit to keep my composure and to breathe! One of my colleagues was concerned. "Is anything was wrong?" she asked. I pointed to the computer and asked if she would read the email. She did:

"President Obama has charged the Office of Na-

tional AIDS Policy with the task of developing a national HIV/AIDS strategy that will address the goals of 1) reducing HIV incidence, 2) improving access to care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and 3) reducing HIV-related health disparities. As part of this effort, we have conducted a series of community discussions across the Country to obtain public input on the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. We are also hosting issues-specific expert meetings at the White House."

As my colleague continued to read, tears came to my eyes—this was real! A female transgendered person was being invited to the table at the White House to help develop a National HIV/AIDS Strategy regarding Women and HIV.

When I was first diagnosed with HIV, I expected, and sometimes hoped, I would be dead long before now. How would I gather the courage to live with yet more stigma, shame, and guilt? Every day I thought about death and how I knew I could not leave this planet without an honest attempt to leave at peace someday. Those thoughts have since been replaced with expressions of gratefulness. One's life will never be the same with this virus, but life can also be enriched by the experience of HIV/AIDS. After diagnosis, I gained a new perspective and started to give back and help others, as others had so often helped me.

When my colleague finished reading the email, we jumped, laughed, and then we sat quiet for a moment, letting it all sink in. After a time, my phone rang. It was Adelle Simmons, advisor of the Office of National AIDS Policy, calling to confirm I was planning to attend and to inform me that a security check must be conducted on all individuals attending White House meetings. "Oh God," I thought. I explained to her that I have an Illinois photo Driver's License, but at first, I did not tell her that the federal government has yet to change the gender marker on my Social Security card. So many of us trans folks do not have complete I.D. to suit the gender we live under. Ms. Simmons said that as long as I had a state I.D. with photo she would contact the Secret Service. They would have final say, but she would get a response within 24 hours.

I knew I was not going to sleep this night; I worried about my past. I wondered, "Will anything pop up to close the door to the White House for me?" The next day—Friday, Dec. 4—I checked my emails and there it was: From: Adelle Simmons Subject: December 8, White House "Women and HIV" Meeting Agenda. I was in!

I arrived at the airport early on Tuesday. I started to sweat as I came to the airport security check-in with boarding pass and photo I.D. in hand. There is always a bit of stress when a trans person has to show I.D. Trying my best not to faint, I stood in the line with about 12 or so folks ahead of me. Thankfully, all went well.

I arrived in D.C. late due to bad weather; if I wanted to make the meeting I had to hustle. Forty-five minutes later (and \$100 dollars poorer), I arrived just 15 minutes before the meeting that was due to start. As I arrived to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue I thought, "Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that I would

someday be climbing the steps to a meeting at the White House."

The meeting room was small and intimate. The ladies searched out seats and greeted old friends and colleagues while we waited for the meeting to begin as I went about the room introducing myself and passing out my bullet point sheet.

What an amazing group of women! I met such folks as Donna Hubbard McCree, PhD, MPH, RPH, a Team Leader/ Behavioral Scientist Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Ravinia Hayes-Cozier, of the National Minority AIDS Council Ms Hayes-Cozier, Director of Government Relations and Public Policy Division. I also spoke briefly with Ms Angela Burt-Murray, Editor-in-Chief of Essence Magazine.

The meeting was opened by Valerie Jarrett of the White House Office of Public Engagement/Council on Women and Girls, and then Jeffrey Crowley of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy did the welcome and introduction, describing the focus groups he had witnessed across the country.

This day was a revelation to me. I realized how many people, especially women, are fighting to help those who are under served. How special I felt knowing women such as Dawn Averitt Bridge of the Well Project, Dazon Dixon Diallo of Sister Love, Inc. Tina Tchen of the White House Office of Public Engagement/Council on Women and Girls and 40 or so others in the room were gathered to help improve health care for women and transgender such as myself and others all across the country.

My overall sense was that Jeffery Crowley and his team has been working tirelessly, traveling the country to hold focus groups and collect community input to develop a National HIV/AIDS strategy. The message was clear: Our President is committed to a National HIV/AIDS prevention Strategy. There are unresolved issues which stand out as we face the prevention of HIV/AIDS, but this administration is resolved to tackle them head-on.

Afterwards, I got to speak with Jeffery Crowley and thank him for the invite. We also discussed the impact of SSI and disability rules as an obstacle to productive workers. Some people who are HIV positive are able and willing to work part time, but fears of losing the crucial medical benefits that come with disability force some into boredom and isolation at home.

I realize I owe my lucky stars a debt of gratitude for this opportunity. There have been moments in life when I was ready to give in, and I am grateful to those who exhorted me, "Never give up, Never." I want to thank them and assure them that I will continue to fight and be of service to my community. I will continue to share my experience in hopes that I may be able to pass on the hope that was given to me.

As I left the White House, I thought with a smile, "Tranny girl goes to the White House. Who would have believed it?" Before that day, even I might have balked at the idea, but now, anything is possible.

lost himself in the autocratic norm that says because I said it must be so. Sectarianism should never have the final word on who can and cannot get married. That is the place for law and not the church. The church is only a witness and not a legislator in a Catholic marriage.

As someone who is both gay and Catholic, I have difficulty with anyone who would promote his/her own religious dogmatic biases in order to trample on the rights of people who are both different and tax-paying citizens of this nation. There is an important point that is being overlooked by the signers of the Manhattan Declaration: Their position that marriage is sacramental is not shared by all of Christianity or among themselves.

Evangelical Christians joining with Roman Catholic Bishops to promote a vision of marriage

that is not even shared with the rest of Christianity, arrogantly claim to speak for Christianity in the Manhattan Declaration. Evangelical leaders are divided. Dr. John MacArthur, an evangelical writer and minister, said, "The Gospel is barely mentioned in the Declaration."

Among the Catholic signers are those who reject Catholic and Orthodox doctrines that place church ecclesiastical authority equal to that of Scripture, among other things.

Gay marriage is a movement whose time has come; it is unfortunate the individuals such as Cardinal George continue to promote respectable bigotry, not unlike those of a redneck or Klan persuasion.

*Joe Murray
Rainbow Sash Movement*

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Letter:

By George...

Recently, Cardinal Francis George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote in his column his support for the Manhattan Declaration in the "Chicago Catholic New World." The cardinal says he sees marriage as a principle, and reducing it to a matter of "politics or a question of 'rights' is destructive of the social order.

According to the Catholic faith, marriage is limited to baptized persons—a point that I think Cardinal George would have difficulty refuting. I will not get into the theological dynamic of this nor will I ignore the fact that the Cardinal has

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Brokeback Mountain—starring Jake Gyllenhaal (left) and the late Heath Ledger—is among the best LGBT films of the decade. Read page 15.

THEATER

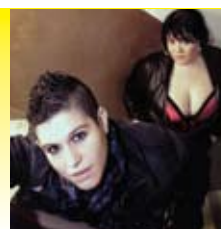
Lucky Kevin.
Page 13.

PR photo



MUSIC

Dynamic duo.
Page 16.



BOOKS

'Red' reckoning.
Page 19.

Photo of Alix Dobkin
by Tracy Baim



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Tryouts in trouble?

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Hopes were really high this season when not one, but two major New York-bound shows chose to tryout in Chicago. But by the time Cirque du Soleil's vaudeville-inspired *Banana Shpeel* and the new musical *The Addams Family* both opened in December, the critical reception was either mixed or as chilly as the weather.

At the Chicago Theatre, the just-closed *Banana Shpeel* received a major critical drubbing. It was a shock since most Cirque du Soleil productions prove to be such crowd-pleasers.

Cirque producers have now postponed the start of previews at New York's Beacon Theatre from the original start date of Feb. 4 to Feb. 25.

"The shift in dates will allow the production to have a full month of rehearsals at the Beacon," said Cirque producers in a statement. "The ideas continue to develop and the additional rehearsal time on stage will allow the best opportunity to fully realize the show's potential."

Meanwhile, *The Addams Family* received far kinder reviews when it officially opened Dec. 9, 2009, at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre. But many critics had complaints about the show's second act, plus many other reservations.

In response, the largely Chicago-based *Addams Family* producers have hired four-time Tony Award-winning director Jerry Zaks to oversee the production as a creative consultant. (Zaks was originally attached to direct the new Broadway-bound *Dame Edna/Michael Feinstein* show *All About Me*, but he was released from that contract.) Zaks previously directed Tony-winning *Addams Family* star Nathan Lane on Broadway in *Guys and Dolls* in 1992 and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in 1996.



GayCo will be part of the 2010 Chicago SketchFest. Photo courtesy of the company.

"We are very pleased that Jerry is willing and eager to come on board at this point in the process to collaborate with our creative team to insure that the show achieves its full potential for its Broadway debut," stated producer Stuart Oken to Playbill.com.

The production's original team of British directors/designers Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch will also stay on while composer Andrew Lippa and playwrights Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice continue to reshape the show. The Chicago run of *The Addams Family* concludes Jan. 10. The *Addams Family* performances on Broadway have also been postponed, but only by four days. Previews now begin at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre March 8.

Four festivals

Film fans everywhere waded through winter weather to get to the Sundance Film Festival every January in Park City, Utah. But in Chicago, there are four theater festivals starting up in January that make it worthwhile to bundle up and brave the cold.

First up is **The Ninth Annual Chicago Sketch Comedy Festival (a.k.a. the Chicago SketchFest)**. If you couldn't get into the Second City's big 50th anniversary bash (or if you didn't want to pay the outrageous scalper fees), check out these sketch comedy troupes from around the world.

On Jan. 7-17, 100 sketch comedy troupes perform 125 shows within two weekends. But it's not all performances. Networking events, workshops and even kids' shows are also part of the mix at the Theatre Building Chicago, 1225 W. Belmont. Tickets to each show are \$12.50, or \$150 for an all-festival pass. Call 773-327-5252 or visit www.chicagosketchfest.com.

Halcyon Theatre feels that women playwrights are unfairly underrepresented in the theater world. So the company is doing its part to right the imbalance through its **Alcyone Festival**, which was created specifically to showcase the theatrical writings of women.

The 2010 festival celebrates the work of influential Cuban-American playwright Maria Irene Fornes. Six of her plays—*Letters from Cuba*, *Manual for a Desperate Crossing*, *Sarita*, *Summer in Gossensass*, *Tango Palace* and *What of the Night*—rotate in repertory Jan. 21-Feb. 27 at Lincoln Square Theatre in Barry United Methodist Church, 4754 N. Leavitt. Single tickets are \$10-\$20, while a \$50 festival pass gets you into each show. Call 773-413-0453 or visit www.halcyontheatre.org.

Also back is the **Rhinoceros Theater Festival (a.k.a. Rhino Fest)**, now in its 21st year. This month-long festival, sponsored by Curious Theatre Branch and Prop Thtr, spotlights the best and brightest Chicago fringe artists and troupes that do experimental and off-beat theater and music.

This year's line-up includes artists such as Julie Caffey, BoyGirlboyGirl, Idris Goodwin and Hermit Arts, Bruised Orange, Silent Theatre and more. Featured events include Jeff Kowalkowski's porcine opera *King Pignacious*, a group show by faculty in The School of The Art Institute of Chicago's Writing Program and a special Valentine's Vaudeville show curated by Jenny Magnus.

RhinoFest runs Jan. 22-Feb. 14 at the Prop Thtr, 3502 N. Elston. Tickets are \$12-\$15 for each show. Call 773-508-0666 or visit www.rhinofest.com

The newest theater festival is the **Bricks and Mortar Fest**, which showcases old and new work by Chicago company The Bricklayers and Collectif Masque from France.

The two major productions in this festival are 2008 revivals—*Twelfth Night: Galaxy 4.2* (previously seen at the Athenaeum Theatre) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (previously work-shopped at the old Bailiwick Repertory space).

Both works feature unconventional staging techniques. *Twelfth Night* slips a sci-fi sheen over Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy, while puppets populate *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

On the newer side, the Bricks and Mortar Fest presents a slew of one-night-only readings of new works from other companies. Piccolo Theatre presents *The Return of the Lump Bros.* and *Other Vaudeville Gems* Feb. 5, Chicago dell'Arte presents *I'll Miss You Lop Zhang* Feb. 6, while Filament Theatre Ensemble presents *The Odyssey of Arlecchino* Feb. 7.

The Bricklayers also presents previews of its upcoming works this season, which include a mask version of *Mother Courage and Her Children* Feb. 3, and an Appalachian rethinking of the fairy tale *The Juniper Tree* called *Drainpipe* Feb. 10.

The Bricks and Mortar Fest plays Jan. 28-Feb. 14 at the Theatre Building Chicago, 1225 W. Belmont. Tickets prices to each show varies. Call 773-327-5252 or visit www.theatrebuildingchicago.org for more information.



Light in the Piazza. Photo courtesy of Peter Coombs and The Marriott Theatre

2009: The good and the bad

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Any given theater writer sees at most 250 shows in a year (if he/she sees five shows a week, and that's a lot) and most of us see far fewer. But Chicago's 200+ theater troupes offer 800 or so productions every year (according to the League of Chicago Theatres), so the likelihood is high that I—or any other reviewer—actually missed the best show or shows of the year. My best/worst of the year, therefore, are selections made through a relatively narrow window. They are listed in the order in which they opened, beginning last January.

The best

These Shining Lives, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble—Melanie Marnich's history play about young women who painted radium watch dials in the 1920s and 1930s featured fascinating and compassionate writing, given a caring and heartfelt production by Rivendell, which remounted the show late in the year.

The Shape of a Girl, Pegasus Players—I waited for years to see a Chicago company produce this exquisite one-character work by Canadian playwright Joan MacLeod that concerns adolescent girl-on-girl violence and is based on real Vancouver headlines. The wait was long but worth it, as Alice Wedoff delivered a primo performance as a conflicted 15-year-old.

Playing with Fire, Bohemian Theatre Ensemble—Based on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, this highly intelligent adaptation by Barbara Field recognized the work as a profound philosophical tract rather than a horror story. Boho's production, squeezed into a tiny storefront, offered an austere beautiful look and superb lead performances by Kevin Cox (Creature) and Buck Zachary.

Ghostwritten, Goodman Theatre—I'm in the minority of critics who really liked Naomi Iizuki's work of magic realism, freely based on the fairytale Rumpelstiltskin. Set in Southeast Asia and the United States, Ghostwritten is a contemporary of wishes granted and debts we owe with cultural identity thrown in as a major bonus. I really enjoyed Goodman's well-acted and atmospheric production.

Red Noses, Strawdog Theatre—Ignored for years, Peter Barnes's large-cast and strange comedy about priests and plague in the Middle Ages enjoyed two back-to-back productions in 2009. I saw only the Strawdog staging, which was an unblemished triumph of low comedy and ensemble playing as creative as it was energetic. Despite its 14th-century setting, Red Noses is very much a contemporary work, with its message of the forces unleashed—good and not—by profound social change.

The History Boys, TimeLine Theatre—A run-

away hit (and deservedly so), Alan Bennett's clever play about a battle for the hearts and minds of adolescent boys (and, more deeply, about the purposes of education) is on everyone's "best" list for 2009. Superb ensemble performances (with veteran Donald Brearly remarkable in the chief role) and a clever environmental staging helped fuel this production's triumphant six-month run.

The Light in the Piazza, Marriott Theatre—This unusual chamber musical, based on the novel (and film) of the same name, featured a dazzling score by Adam Guettel and Jeff Award-winning performances by a fine cast. This vehicle started life at the Goodman Theatre, went on to Broadway success and then returned in a touring version that was swamped at the Auditorium Theatre. The all-new Marriott production restored the proper intimacy and passion.

Ballad of the Sad Cafe, Signal Ensemble—Carson McCuller's tale of obsession, attraction and idolization is Southern Gothic all the way, and Edward Albee's talky stage version is dodgy at best, but Signal Ensemble's impressively staged and acted version overcame all obstacles to create a mesmerizing experience featuring intensely physicalized performances.

All My Sons, TimeLine Theatre—Even as The History Boys still was running, TimeLine scored again with a scorching rendition of Arthur Miller's early domestic tragedy, drawn from World War II headlines about war profiteering. The familiar play became fresh, new and emotionally devastating under director Kimberly Senior, with the deeply moving Janet Ulrich Brooks and Roger Mueller in the lead roles.

The worst

Oedipus, The Hypocrites—This ill-conceived comic strip version of Sophocles's noble tragedy robbed the work of all poetry, grandeur and profundity in a misguided attempt to make it relevant, hip, accessible and fun. Well, the pop-art environmental production WAS fun, but it sure wasn't Oedipus Rex.



Ghostwritten. Photo by Peter Wynn Thompson

Boom, Next Theatre—New Next artistic director Jason Southerland launched his first full season with a childish play about a new Adam and Eve, of sorts, after a modern Apocalypse destroys the earth. The downfall wasn't the improbable situation, but playwright Peter Sinn Nachtreib's vacuous characters and failure to establish them as believable individuals.

Fake, Steppenwolf Theatre—Eric Simonson overreached in both writing and directing this world premiere, which failed to be the poor man's version of Tom Stoppard to which it aspired. Set in two time periods, and purporting to be about the Piltdown Man (a famous early 20th-century fossil fake) and Arthur Conan Doyle, it was—really—about issues of faith and belief. That's OK, but Simonson shifted focus too many times, repeatedly lost his thread and set the audience up with red herrings.

THEATER REVIEW

A Fool Such as I

Playwright: Gus Edwards
At: eta Creative Arts Foundation,
7558 S. South Chicago
Phone: 773-752-3955; \$30
Through Jan. 24

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's nothing like a juicy affair to pique an audience's interest. And there's a scorcher in Gus Edwards' *A Fool Such as I*, now playing in an engrossing production at eta Creative Arts Foundation.

A Fool Such as I lures in audiences hook, line and sinker with a torrid love story that by the end turns (not altogether convincingly) tragic. But aside from that misstep, director Kamesha Khan skillfully helps make the overall journey a captivating one.

Like John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*, Edwards structures his comic drama largely and effectively in a series of character monologues (interspersed with bits of dialogue). While some may see this as an easy way to share insight into characters' thoughts and actions, it snappily allows for many perspectives to be presented at once.

It all starts when the unemployed Chicago transplant Lonnie (David Goodloe) spots a torn shopping bag being carried by the hospital worker Sharra (Kona Burks). She invites Lonnie home to help with the groceries and to meet her husband, Damon (a one-time boxer who has let his body go a bit to seed).

Not long after that, Lonnie and Sharra fall into a passionate affair unbeknownst to Damon. On the periphery is their embittered single mother neighbor, Aloma (Corvet Williams), who grows increasingly jealous of the two.

The one plot device that feels jarringly out of place is the late revelation that Sharra and Damon have a mentally challenged six-year-old boy. Burks overplays this shoehorned information in a red-flag-raising monologue. Clearly the child will become a flash point to turn the play tragic.

CRITICS' PICKS

Jersey Boys, Bank of America Theatre, through Jan. 10. The music of the Four Seasons spans generations, but this bio-musical is finally leaving after more than two sell-out years. You've still got one weekend, however, to see the show that's even better than the ads promised. MSB

The Merry Widow, Lyric Opera of Chicago, through Jan. 16. Fans of modern-day chick flicks will love this brand new Lyric staging helmed by Chicago director Gary Griffin, who wisely plays all the relationships seriously without overemphasizing the camp. You probably won't see a Merry Widow sung or acted better than this one. SCM

Oh Coward!, Writers' Theatre at Books on Vernon, through March 21. This sublimely and skillfully performed musical revue transports you to a celestial cocktail party celebrating the wit and sophistication of the (and gay) Noel Coward. SCM

The Taming of the Flu, The Second City, open run. The new 50th anniversary revue is sharply topical (and bound to change, therefore), witty more than ha-ha funny and features a six-person cast with acting chops in addition to comedy chops. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge,
Morgan and Sullivan



A Fool Such as I.

Since everything is told in flashback, it's odd that the character who commits the heinous act shows no indication of it early on. This flaw is a let down, considering how so much else in Edwards' play clicks effortlessly into place.

Previous productions of *A Fool Such as I* have just featured the cast reading the play from music stands, but director Khan effectively uses the colorful eta stage to tell this swirling story of love and betrayal.

Khan is blessed with very personable and attractive cast—so much so that in the cases of Goodloe and Burks, it feels like their characters should have dialogue about regularly going to the gym. But each cast member is able to get you on their side, no matter how devious their actions and justifications prove to be.

With *A Fool Such as I* Edwards effectively hammers home the fact that the most agonizing of adulterous affairs can happen under our noses on the supposedly worst street in town. Khan's entertaining production makes you glad that you got to spend so much time with Edwards' imperfectly passionate people.

NUNN ON ONE: THEATER

Kevin Chamberlin says uncle

BY JERRY NUNN

Openly gay actor Kevin Chamberlin has many show-stealing moments as Uncle Fester in *The Addams Family: A New Musical*, currently at Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph. Windy City Times turned the light bulb on this rising family member.

Windy City Times: Hi, Kevin. I just saw you in the *Addams Family* musical. You look like you are having a lot of fun up there on stage.

Kevin Chamberlin: Yeah, it's a great role. It's quite a gift. You rarely get these kinds of roles. At first when they talked originally about the Moon song, when they were developing it in workshop, I always pictured it in my head as something very fifth-grade pageant. It has that quality to it but I never expected it to get the reaction that it's getting. It's really very fun.

WCT: What was your journey to becoming Uncle Fester?

KC: Well, I was called to do a reading. I live in Los Angeles but was in town doing the musical *Chicago*. Every now and then I go in for a couple of weeks to help them out. I play Amos on Broadway. So I happened to be in town for the table read of the script. There was very little music written. I have been connected with it since then.

WCT: You have done a lot of Broadway work and been nominated twice for Tony Awards.

KC: Yes, I moved to L.A. in 2002 after 9/11. I didn't want to be at the center of the world anymore.

WCT: You can do more movies when you live in California that way.

KC: Los Angeles is not a big theater town *per se*. My partner is a television writer so he is doing really well out there. We have switched gears; I was the breadwinner in New York and now he is the breadwinner out there. [Laughs]

WCT: You were on the TV show *Better Off Ted*. I interviewed Jonathan Slavin before. He is a great guy.

KC: Yes, he is. We have worked together a couple of times before.

WCT: Hollywood has given you the opportunity to be on *Heroes* as well.

KC: It can be a tough town. Basically Broadway is 10 blocks and everyone knows each other. It is a tight inner circle and your work proceeds you. Your reputation is there when you walk into a room for an audition. In L.A. you are only as good as the last thing you did, and maybe not even that.



Kevin Chamberlin (center) as Uncle Fester in *The Addams Family: A New Musical*.

WCT: I talked to you at Grandma's Jackie Hoffman show and it seems like *The Addams Family* supports each other in whatever side projects that they do, with Zachary James show, also...

KC: A lot of us have known each other for a while.

WCT: Did you meet Bebe Neuwirth on the set of *Frasier*?

KC: Yes, Bebe and I had done two episodes of *Frasier* together. I also knew her through the musical *Chicago*. We did the 10th anniversary together. Nathan Lane and I had worked together on *Wise Guys*. It was an early version of a musical by Sondheim that turned into this thing called *Road Show*. It was the last show Stephen Sondheim did. Nathan and I have been social friends for a long time. We both hit New York at the same time.

WCT: You and Jackie had *Queer Duck: The Movie* in common.

KC: Yeah, I didn't even know that. I had met her when she was doing *Hairspray the Musical*. The Broadway community is very tight because we all do these fundraisers for Broadway Cares. Every three months there is a huge event. I can't imagine Broadway without it. It is the glue that brings all the Broadway people together.

WCT: Speaking of the group together, when *The Addams Family* is standing in the graveyard and the theme song played, I swear I got goosebumps! The old saying where casting is so important to the show was very true.

KC: Ninety percent.

WCT: Were you allowed to improv very much? Because I noticed Jackie [who plays Grandma] did...

KC: That's Jackie's thing. They have given her sections where she is free to put in different stuff every night. For the rest of us, we have been very instrumental in rewrites. They take many of our suggestions. But there is not very much improvisation for our parts.

WCT: When does the *Addams Family* Musical Broadway cast album come out?

KC: We are working on it two weeks after we

open in New York. We won't know what the final score is until a week before we open there, because songs get cut, rearranged and new songs come in.

WCT: When I spoke with Chita Rivera she said that Broadway cast albums get rushed sometimes but this one you really get to know your role beforehand.

KC: We have been working on this for a year and half. This is the longest development period I have ever worked on for sure. I am contracted to April of 2011.

WCT: You were in *Taking Woodstock and Die Hard with a Vengeance*. Do you want to do more movies?

KC: I have been very fortunate in my career to bounce back and forth. I never thought I would hear myself say it but I am truly bicoastal now. I will have a home in both cities. We have a home in Los Angeles and now I am setting up shop in New York. The grass is always greener, you get tired of city living then just go back out to LA and live the suburban life.

WCT: It sounds like everything is going great for you right now.

KC: It is. I am trying to get my show legs. I am sore from the dancing. I am sure that will pass soon.

WCT: Well, if you need some good food for fuel, eat at Andies restaurant where I work again.

KC: I loved that Mediterranean food. That was such a lovely night. Colin—our swing, who understudies all the chorus people—lives around there.

WCT: If you ever want to go out to the bear bars let me know.

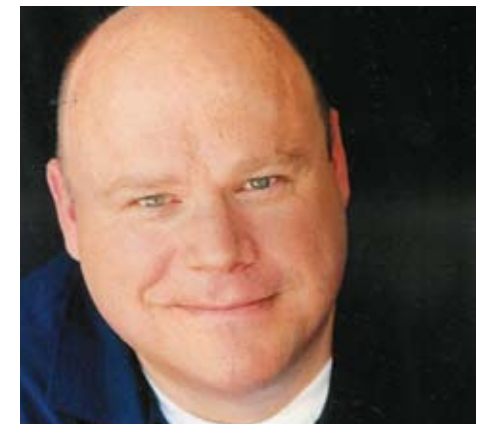
KC: I heard there is "Fur" on Saturday nights at Cellblock. I have been to Touche and Jackhammer, too.

WCT: So you have been able to get out and not just stuck inside rehearsing then.

KC: Oh, yeah. I need to have my blow out nights. It has been a stressful month of previews. I have three really great numbers. We are still doing a lot of development and work on the show. You will have to come back and see it in New York. The lines for the box office are apparently very long.

Get your tickets to this hilarious show by Jan. 10; after that, it heads to Broadway. For more information visit www.TheAddamsFamilyMusical.com or www.BroadwayInChicago.com.

Also, read an interview with one of Chamberlin's co-stars, Zachary James, online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



Kevin Chamberlin.

SPOTLIGHT



We've already seen a live LGBTQ soap opera called *The Ville* at Mary's Attic, so it was only a matter of time before Chicago got its first live drag-queen sitcom. *Glitter in the Gutter* was originally developed at the Annoyance Theatre as part of its Triple Feature new works Showcase. Now it's a full-fledged show courtesy of Kellen Alexander, with significant input from his drag stars, Wes Perry and Seth Dodson. *Glitter in the Gutter* plays at the Annoyance Theatre, 4830 N. Broadway, in previews 8 p.m. Thursdays before an official opening on Jan. 21. Performances then continue at 8 p.m. Thursdays until March 11. Tickets are \$8 for previews and \$10 during the regular run. Call 773-561-4665 or visit www.annoyanceproductions.com. Photo of Wes Perry and Seth Dodson in *Glitter in the Gutter* by Zach Dodson



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Patrick Andrews.

THEATER

Patrick Andrews: The play's the thing

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Patrick Andrews, despite being in his early 20s, already has extensive theater experience, appearing in everything from Drury Lane's Cabaret to About Face Theatre's The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later. Now, his skills are being displayed and tested in the Steppenwolf production American Buffalo—a play in which he is the only non-ensemble member of the cast. In an interview with Windy City Times, Andrews talked about growing up artistic in Texas; working with the revered Tracy Letts, Francis Guinan and Amy Morton (of "Buffalo"); and weighing the importance of About Face Theatre.

Windy City Times: You're from Amarillo, Texas. What was it like growing up there?

Patrick Andrews: [Laughs] Growing up in Amarillo was interesting. It's in the panhandle of Texas and is right in the middle of the Bible Belt, so it has its unsavory [mix] of religion and bigotry. However, I also thought it was awesome because the liberal-minded artistic types really had to seek each other; I had an awesome community of thinkers around me growing up because that was the community I had to create around me.

I dated this guy for four years who had grown up in the North, and his beliefs had never been challenged. Growing up in the South, you really had to form your opinions and stick by them.

WCT: So how did you develop a love of the theatre?

PA: I started in community theater when I was 5 years old, and growing up in community theater is what gave me my backbone for wanting [theatre] to be my livelihood. When you do community theater, everyone's doing it for the love of it. You wouldn't think of it, but Amarillo has a nationally recognized community theater, symphony [and] ballet, so I was able to delve into creating art at a really young age. It started out as a hobby and I pretended that I wanted to be in sports.

My family was really supportive. My dad is a minister. If I wanted to be a Buddhist or an atheist, I'm sure he'd be fine with it—just as long as I was believing in something passionately. He'd talk to me about him having a calling to be a minister. But my dad is a minister and my mom's a social worker; I remember having this existential crisis at 14 [because] I just wanted to create plays. I didn't know how I could make a difference—but I realized that I had a calling [of my own]. At around 14 or 15, I realized that I wanted to do it seriously; I started creating my own pieces.

WCT: You mentioned the support of your parents. What were their reactions when you came out to them—particularly your dad?

PA: It's interesting, because my dad is a really liberal minister, and my mother and father have been big advocates of the gay community for years, and my dad preaches tolerance. But it's funny—when it's your own son, you still have these fears and concerns.

My mother was pretty funny. She was proof-reading a paper, and she put her pen down and said, "Oh, I figured." My dad and I butted heads a lot when I was in high school, but I think there's something about fathers and sons, and there's going to be that conflict. But he's come up to Chicago and stayed with me and my [ex-] boyfriend.

WCT: Give me some insight about the life of a theater actor, because what I envision is people going to auditions but they have to hold down part- or full-time jobs. How accurate is that?

PA: That's really accurate. I've been really blessed to work consistently as an actor, for the most part. But I feel like I'm notorious for never being able to keep a day job. You look at my resume, and it can hold itself up; but if you look at my day-job resume, it looks like the worst person. But, yes, [people work] part-time jobs, and I work with a lot of people who have full-time jobs. And with the theatre schedule, you don't know when rehearsals might be. But I've worked my share of retail jobs, and I've worked in a diner.

I'm working at a gym right now; they've been really great in helping me with my schedule. It's weird, though: You feel like this comic-book character leading a double life.

WCT: Well, your theater resume is certainly impressive—especially considering you're 24. Tell me about working with About Face Theatre.

PA: Something I love about Chicago is that you can find groups of people who are really passionate about the art beyond themselves, and [find] some sort of global awareness. I think working with About Face has been wonderful because I feel very much in line with their mission, and it's a community that I'm a part of. So being able to take your wants and concerns for your community, and have a platform to speak about them is really beautiful. When I fell in with them, it felt like going over to a really great friend's house; we have a lot of talk about and a lot to catch up on.

When I was 18, I had to decide where to move. I'd been to Chicago, and saw some performances that rocked my core. I wanted to move to Chicago because I wanted to learn how to be an actor. Coming here has really helped me develop this eye for social awareness within art. About

Face is a shining example of what that is all about.

It was really good to fall in with them last year during [About Face's] financial crisis because I think that Stupid Kids (which I was in) literally put the [company's] mission on stage. The play was really in-your-face. We were asking people for money, and it felt like going to work had a purpose instead of doing a fluffy piece of theater.

WCT: Now, let's talk about American Buffalo. It's about three men who plot to steal a buffalo nickel, correct?

PA: Yes. The main character, Don, in his eyes, has been ripped off pretty horribly; he gets less money than he thinks he should get. So he is plotting to steal this guy's coin collection. It takes place in one day, and it's pretty claustrophobic because things get pretty intense in this junk shop; these three men have emotional crises with each other. It's like a Greek tragedy in this junk shop. It really speaks to me about the personal dramas that go on with everybody, but it's important to see into those stories and views because it gives you a deeper awareness of the throughline.

It's interesting that [playwright David] Mamet focuses on this class of people in this play; if you saw them coming down the street, you would probably cross over to the other sidewalk to [avoid] them. But their struggles are very universal. The play poses questions about friendship and business that are pretty spot-on, I think.

WCT: And you're working with Tracy, Francis and Amy. What is that like?

PA: Well, the first week I was very, very nervous; I was just starstruck and [thinking], "Wow. This person is talking to me." The three of them are just so wonderful and such great artists. It's such an education just sitting in the room with them. But they are people just like everybody else; they drop lines and get frustrated with themselves, just like everybody else.

When a place like Steppenwolf is built up so, it's something to work towards, you know? But there's a support system here, and they're really interesting artists who bring a unique energy.

WCT: Just so our readers can get to know you, what's one surprising thing about you?

PA: Oh, God—I don't know. [Pauses] I'm trying to grow my own kombucha. It's a [food supplement] that's good for health. You can grow it in your house; it's this crazy bacteria thing that's good for your body.

American Buffalo runs through Sunday, Feb. 7, at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 1650 N. Halsted. See www.steppenwolf.org.



From left: Francis Guinan, Patrick Andrews and Tracy Letts in American Buffalo. Photo by Michael Brosilow

Saints founder dies

Benjamin Joseph "B.J." Nelson, the president of the arts-volunteer organization known as the Saints, died Dec. 9, 2009, from injuries sustained in a car accident, according to the Chicago Tribune. He was 73.

Nelson's longtime partner, Kyl Hamby, said that Nelson was returning home after being an usher for a performance of The Christmas Schooner at the Theatre at the Center in Munster, Ind.

A funeral was held Dec. 14. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Freids Cat Shelter, 509 Indiana Highway, Michigan City, Ind., 46360 in Nelson's name.

The Saints currently have approximately 2,000 members who "serve over [80] of the Chicago and suburban theater, dance and music organizations," according to the organization's Web site. Those who wish to post a message can visit www.SaintsChicago.org.

Yoni Ki Baat at Strawdog

Rasaka Theatre Company presents an updated version of their 2009 hit Yoni Ki Baat, a production loosely inspired by Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues that includes new work from Chicago authors performed for the first time in 2010. By combining spoken word, music and dance, Rasaka presents an exploration of female sexuality, seen through the lens of desi women.

Yoni Ki Baat runs Jan. 7-31 at Strawdog Theatre, 3829 N. Broadway. To purchase tickets, visit www.rasakatheatre.org.



Yoni Ki Baat. Photo by Jonathan L. Green

Plays get L.A. award nods

Chicago Dramatists has announced that resident playwright Lydia Diamond's play Stick Fly was nominated for five L.A. Stage Alliance Ovation Awards (including Best Production, Director, Ensemble, Lighting and Scenic) and resident playwright Keith Huff's play The Bird and Mr. Banks was also nominated for Ovation Awards for Best Actor for Sam Anderson (Bernard on "Lost") and Best Sound Design.

The nods follow the recent success of the smash hit production of Huff's A Steady Rain, which opened in New York starring Daniel Craig and Hugh Jackman in September.

The 2008/2009 Ovation Awards will be held Jan. 11.

KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

The decade in queer movies; film note

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

The 1990s saw the unofficial birth of queer cinema, a trend that started in the underground, slowly made its way to the mainstream and expanded exponentially throughout the last decade. Though there still aren't nearly enough LGBT-themed movies breaking through to mainstream audiences (let alone queer ones) to suit me, the last 10 years have seen a steady upward momentum in terms of quantity, quality and most importantly, visibility for Our People at the cineplex. Now that the Aughts are behind us as we enter the tens here's a look back at some of the highlights of the past decade in queer movies.

The millennium opened with **Big Eden**, **Before Night Falls** and **Best in Show**—three movies that helped define the years ahead in queer cinema. **Big Eden**, the charming debut of out writer-director Thomas Bezucha remains my favorite gay-themed romance with its always-potent message of love conquering all; on the other hand, **Before Night Falls** gave audiences the double bonus of the compelling portrait of queer writer Reinaldo Arenas and an instant star in Javier Bardem, who played him. Christopher Guest's improv comedy **Best in Show** lovingly and hilariously gave us comedic portraits of both a gay and lesbian couple and the movie also gave out actor Jane Lynch her breakout role. The year 2001 saw the arrival of John Cameron Mitchell's **Hedwig and the Angry Inch**—his searing, moving and razor-sharp portrait of a transgendered rock singer along with the darling lesbian comedy **Kissing Jessica Stein**. Other highlights of the year included **The Deep End**, **The Fluffer** and director Robert Altman's **Gosford Park**.

The next three years saw an increasing number of LGBT-related movies with some terrific highlights that included out director Rob Marshall's **Chicago**, which won the 2002 Oscar for Best Picture and single-handedly brought back musicals



Gay Sex in the 70s.

to the movies. Nicole Kidman took the Oscar the same year, playing bisexual writer Virginia Woolf in the adaptation of gay author Michael Cunningham's **The Hours**. (Meryl Streep played a lesbian character in the film, garnering another of her 2,000 nominations.) **Far From Heaven**—new queer cinema director Todd Haynes' masterful homage to the '50s melodramas of Douglas Sirk with Julianne Moore and Dennis Quaid as her closeted gay husband—arrived in 2003, along with a batch of offbeat LGBT-themed fare: **Die! Mommie! Die!**, **Girls will be Girls**, **Latter Days**, **Monster**, **Normal** and **Party Monster** among them.

A Home at the End of the World and **Alexander** (both which featured Colin Farrell playing bisexual characters), **Mysterious Skin**, Bill Condon's **Kinsey**, Jonathan Caouette's autobiographical documentary **Tarnation**, Brian Dannelly's **Saved!** and **Hellbent**—the first queer slasher flick—were some of the LGBT film highlights of 2004.

Gay movies went to the Oscars in 2005, headed by **Brokeback Mountain**, the critically lauded financial hit which found Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal as two lonely cowboys romantically involved with each other, enthraling audiences worldwide. (Ledger's final film—Terry Gilliam's gorgeous-but-thin fantasia **The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus**, with Johnny Depp, Colin Farrell and Brad Pitt filling in Ledger's unfinished scenes—opens Friday, Jan. 8, at the Music Box Theatre.) **Capote** star Philip Seymour Hoffman won the Best Actor Oscar playing the gay icon/author Truman Capote while Felicity Huffman won a Best Actress nomination playing a transgendered woman in out writer-director Duncan Tucker's **Transamerica**.

Crash edged **Brokeback** for the Best Picture Oscar, an oversight that, in retrospect, perfectly justifies Our People's protests over the slight. The loss presaged a relative dry spell in queer cinema in 2006 and 2007—though **Imagine Me**

& **You, Hate Crime**, **Infamous**, **Quinceanera**, **Running with Scissors**, **Notes on a Scandal**, **V for Vendetta**, **The History Boys**, **Gay Sex in the 70s**, **The Quiet**, **Time to Leave**, **Kinky Boots**, **Two Drifters**, **Save Me**, **For the Bible Tells Me So**, **Zoo**, **The Man of My Life** and, especially, the return of John Cameron Mitchell's sexually explicit and rousing (pun intended) **Shortbus** helped keep LGBT-themed cinema alive.

The year 2008 had very little in the way of gay movies (and forget about lesbian and transgendered films) though again, there were some decided exceptions to the rule—**Brideshead Revisited**, **The Witnesses**, **Shelter**, **Chris & Don**: **A Love Story**, **Black**, **White + Gray**, **The Life of Riley**, and both **Mamma Mia!** and **Wall-E**, two of the year's biggest box-office hits—had gay characters or subtext. (I'm convinced little **Wall-E** the robot is gay and **Eve** is his gal pal.) This was also the year that we got big-screen versions of **Sex and the City** and its gay African-

American doppelganger **Noah's Arc**: **Jumping the Broom**. The highlight of 2008, of course, was **Milk**, queer director Gus Van Sant's tremendous biopic of slain gay-rights activist Harvey Milk that won a well-deserved Oscar for Sean Penn and scriptwriter Dustin Lance Black, whose impassioned acceptance speeches helped to momentarily heal wounds after the backlash of California's Prop 8.

The final year of the decade brought us another batch of award-worthy contenders—with **A Single Man** and **Precious** sure to be Oscar-nominated along with **Valentino: The Last Emperor** as a possible Documentary Oscar nominee. There were several other notable LGBT-themed films in 2009—**Outrage**, **Taking Woodstock**, **Bruno**, **Hannah Free** and **Little Ashes**, among them—for queer film enthusiasts to trumpet and which give Our People much to anticipate at the movies in the decade ahead.

Film note:

Chicago Filmmakers kicks off the new year Saturday, Jan. 9, with **Confessions of a Lesbian Director: Films of Chris J. Russo**. The evening, which is part of the ongoing Dyke Delicious screening series, will include a program of six of the short films of Russo, many of them autobiographical in nature. Russo will appear in person. Titles include **Straight Down the Aisle: Confessions of Lesbian Bridesmaids**, **Size 'Em Up**, **A Woman Reported**, **I Just Want To Be Alone: The Trailer**, **Directed By Dorothy Arzner: Scenes from the Directors Lab** and **25 Random Things I Did During My Big Fat Lesbian Depression**. As with other Dyke Delicious programs at Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark, the evening begins with a social hour at 7 p.m. followed by the 8 p.m. screening. Visit www.chicagofilmmakers.org or call 773-294-1447.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site.

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Julianne Moore in *The Hours*.

MUSIC

Three's a lucky number for God-des and She

BY RACHEL PEPPER

Ever wonder what happened to the ultra-hot dyke duo God-des and She after their infamous L-Word appearance a few years back? Wonder no more, because they're about to release their third record, *Three*, and have big plans for touring, Grammy awards and general musical magic.

Both originally from the Midwest, God-des and She started playing together in Madison, Wis., in 1999. Since then, they've released two albums, 2004's "Reality" and 2007's "Stand Up." A unique melding of hip-hop, soul, rock, dance music and electro-pop, God-des is the band's rapper, and She, the singer. The pair has been featured in two documentaries, including one on LGBT hip-hoppers, held the number one spot on MTV LOGO for 15 consecutive weeks, toured all over the world, and have enjoyed a growing and appreciative fan base. Currently, She lives in Queens, N.Y., and God-des recently moved to Austin, Texas. *Three* was a project they worked on with Public Enemy producer Brian Hardgroove, and the gals hope their more mature, mainstream sound will finally catapult them out from the underground.

In an e-mail interview, Windy City Times



God-des (right) and She.

caught up with this genre-busting act, who has a new CD out.

Windy City Times: You've been working on being full time musicians for several years now. When and how did you both realize that you could start actually making music full-time, and survive financially on that?

God-des and She: It was right after we were

on the L Word. We were playing too many shows to have day jobs. It was really exciting to make enough money to live on. That was four years ago now. We feel blessed and consider ourselves very lucky to do this as our job. We will feel truly successful when we hear our songs on the radio, and can pay off our parents houses for them!

WCT: Tell me what happened after the episode of The L Word with you both on it aired?

God-des and She: We were busy, and played a ton of shows. The L Word was responsible for the opportunity, and then we did the rest.

WCT: Describe how you would summarize your working relationship as a duo.

God-des and She: We have a special musical chemistry you rarely see. You just can't be bored watching a G&S show! I think this record really cements us as a duo. Two powerful people coming together to rock. It just works.

WCT: What are some of your musical influences, and what groups are you loving these days?

God-des and She: When we are on the road we listen to a lot of '80s and classic rock. We both like Kings of Leon a lot. We like older hip-hop and R&B. The new stuff has no soul. It's too much of a product and not real enough for people to feel.

WCT: What songs do fans love the best, and why? What are your current favorites to perform?

God-des and She: Fans will scream "Lick it" till the end of time! We always make them wait for it. "Love You Better" is a huge hit among show fans. A lot of people know the song from the video and get excited to belt out the hook.

"Love Machine" is shaking up the crowd along with Respect My Fresh. Everyone loves to make out during "Spin The Bottle."

"Yeah Yeah Yeah" is our opener and always a hit. We usually love to perform whatever are our newest songs.

WCT: What do you hope listeners most notice about the new record?

God-des and She: Our new record totally stands out. Everyone has a different favorite song which is awesome! There really is an equal amount of both of us on the album. We have fused our styles together to create something totally unique. We have some deep topics but mostly tried to have fun and inspire people on this record. The world is so depressed that we wanted to make people feel happy if only for that moment.

WCT: What will you be doing to promote Three? Any upcoming tours planned?

God-des and She: We will be touring a lot in 2010 to support the new record. Make sure to catch us on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace or our e-mail list via our Web site to get tour dates. Make sure to buy our new record, *Three*. It [came] out Dec. 3 and will be available via our Web site at www.god-desandshe.com and also on-line via iTunes, Rhapsody and other on-line sites! We also are doing a fundraiser to raise money for the release. We are in debt and our fans have been stepping up to help support the release. Since we don't have a record label, our fans are our record label. For more info on the fundraiser go to our Web site.

WCT: Any last words for your fans?

God-des and She: We will always represent and be positive role models.

MUSIC

Gretchen Bonaduce's new reality

BY SARAH TEREZ ROSENBLUM

For a woman who has graced the cover of Maxim magazine and whose marriage dissolved in front of a national audience, red-headed Republican and reality-TV darling Gretchen Bonaduce is surprisingly down to earth. Now divorced from former child star Donny Bonaduce, and thrilled about her engagement to "an amazing, wonderful, kind man," Gretchen spoke to the Windy City Times about her band, her love for Chicago and her feelings about her gay fans.

Windy City Times: Are you excited to perform in your home state?

Gretchen Bonaduce: I am absolutely ecstatic to play these shows. I was born in Waukegan, and still have many friends and family members in the area. My daughter, Countess Isabella (who my clothing line at Hot Topic is named after), was born in Chicago at Swedish Covenant hospi-

tal. You can imagine, as a mother, Chicago will always hold a special place in my heart.

WCT: Was performing always a goal of yours?

GB: I have been performing in bands and choirs for most of my life. I certainly was never the most talented singer in the class. Usually the teacher would throw me a bone and let me sing lead on a minor part in a show or concert. [They] knew I wanted to be the leading lady, but just didn't have the talent to pull it off. I have somehow reached a new level of confidence in my 40s that I did not possess in my 20s or teens.

WCT: You've been involved with several reality shows—Breaking Bonaduce and Gimme My Reality Show, to name two. Any regrets?

GB: I have no regrets about doing anything I have done. To give comfort to people [by doing] a silly little reality show, how can I be sorry for that? People always ask if I think the show had anything to do with my marriage collapsing. That was my life whether the cameras were rolling or not. Cheating, drugs and alcohol abuse [and] ruin marriages, not reality shows.

WCT: What was it like to pose for Maxim?

GB: Shooting those pictures was quite nerve-racking. They certainly were the most pro-



Gretchen Bonaduce (second from right) and the band Ankh.

vocative photos I had taken at that point. I was convinced there must be a gas leak at the Maxim headquarters, and they were so high on fumes that they thought making a 43-year-old a Maxim girl was a good idea! I also received a six-figure offer from a men's magazine to pose semi-nude, but I turned it down. I kept thinking, my dad's disappointed face vs. six figures. My dad's disappointed face vs. six figures. My dad's face won out. I figured the fact that I was married to Danny Bonaduce for 17 years was embarrassment enough for my family. Sit down Danny—just a joke!

WCT: What with the men's magazines and reality TV, how do you keep from being, shall we say, overexposed?

GB: Ha. I wish I were overexposed. I have tried to get on Dancing with the Stars and they think I am not a big enough name. Let's all work on overexposing me.

WCT: You'll be playing a show at Circuit, a gay Chicago club. How do you feel about your enthusiastic gay fan base?

GB: My gay fans are the most loyal and dependable. My lame straight fans say they will show up and never do—just kidding, of course. But I know if I call on the gay community for

support they have always come through for me. Always.

WCT: It's rumored that you do a bit of work for gay rights. Tell us about that.

GB: I have so many gay and lesbian friends who are family to me. My GLBT friends in Hollywood know that they can always count on me for support if they need me to show up at their events or fundraisers.

WCT: As a Republican, how do you reconcile your political views with your personal relationship with LGBT friends and fans?

GB: I think you would be surprised to find that a lot of Hollywood Republicans would support gay rights—if you could find a lot of Hollywood Republicans. This town was built on many of the gay communities' sweat equity. I cannot believe that there is an issue with gay marriage. To me it goes back to the Bible and the Ten Commandments; treat thy neighbor as thyself. I think people spend far too much time worrying about what the other guy is doing, when they ought to be worrying about themselves and treating people with human kindness.

Gretchen and her band, Ankh, will perform at Circuit Night Club Friday, Jan. 15, at 9 p.m. See www.myspace.com/gretchenbonaduce.

HAPPY 2010!



Pick up the next issue of *Nightspots* on January 20!

from **nightspots**

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THE LOSS OF A TEARDROP DIAMOND

PALADIN presents CONSTELLATION ENTERTAINMENT/BRAD MICHAEL GILBERT PRODUCTION A JODIE MARKELL FILM BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD CHRIS EVANS TENNESSEE WILLIAMS THE LOSS OF A TEARDROP DIAMOND
MAMIE GUMMER WILL PATTON WITH ANN-MARGRET AND ELLEN BURSTYN CASTING AVY KAUFMAN COSTUME DESIGNER MARK ORTON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRIS KARVONIDES-DUSHENKO EDITOR SUSAN E. MORSE, A.C.E.
PRODUCED BY RICHARD HOOVER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GILES NUTTGENS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS RON GILBERT CATHERINE KELLNER PRODUCED BY BRAD MICHAEL GILBERT SCREENPLAY BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS DIRECTED BY JODIE MARKELL

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Tabatha times two



Regina Upright took over the role of BRAVO TV star Tabatha Coffey at Halsted's, 3441 N. Halsted, on Tuesday, Dec. 29. The crowd gathered to watch the episode of Tabatha's Salon Takeover, which featured Boystown's own Chicago Male Salon. Regina, also known as Chicago Male desk manager Richard Biasi, was joined by many other salon employees for the night's festivities. Photos by Kirk Williamson

BOOK REVIEW

**My Red Blood:
A Memoir of Growing
Up Communist, Coming Into the
Greenwich Village Folk Scene,
and Coming Out in
the Feminist Movement**
by **Alix Dobkin**
\$16.95; Alyson Books;
275 pages

REVIEW BY TRACY BAIM



Alix Dobkin. Photo by Tracy Baim

The subtitle of singer/songwriter/activist Alix Dobkin's new memoir just about says it all. But this book is not about her post coming-out life in lesbian music, but rather of her growing up with Communist parents and relatives (the "red" in red blood), becoming a Communist herself before sliding out of that life into the folk music world, having a child with her husband, and then coming out as a lesbian and feminist.

That lesbian-feminist world, which has been filled with many controversies because Dobkin took a hard line on separatism, is only touched upon in the book's final pages. This is a look at a Jewish leftie learning and loving in New York and Philadelphia, with a brief Midwestern stint. She met famed Communists like singer Paul Robeson, and later was part of the emerging folk scene populated by Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert, Bill Cosby, Flip Wilson and many more. She traveled to Mississippi to work for Black voting rights. Dobkin was not a folkie Forrest Gump, but she was in the right place at the right time to be part of several of the last century's critical movements.

Here is one passage from *My Red Blood*: "We gathered [in Mississippi] in dim churches and

bright community centers, listened to eloquent speeches and plainspoken testimonies. Occasionally we crossed paths with others, like ... the Freedom Singers with Bernice Johnson [later Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock]. So impressed was Bob Dylan when he first heard her sing that, when he returned to New York, he informed me that rather than his 'favorite female singer,' I was now his 'favorite white female singer.'"

Most people who would look back on the early decades of their life would be hard-pressed to remember small and even some significant details. Fortunately for Dobkin, the FBI assisted. Because of Communist fears, the FBI kept detailed records of Dobkin's family, and later Dobkin herself when she joined the Party. When Dobkin retrieved her much-blacked-out records from the FBI years later, it helped to jog her memory of the details of her young life.

The love Dobkin had for her family and her friends is especially clear in these pages. There is tremendous minutia recalling her early school-

ing and travels. It feels in some ways like a time capsule, or an anthropological excursion into a very unique time and place, the East Coast of the U.S. during the pre- and post-World War II years of fear and fanaticism, freedom, folk and fun.

When Dobkin drops the names of famous people, it does not feel as if this is some celebrity tell-all. In fact, don't expect gossip on these famous singers. Rather, we see them as simply humans, mostly on their way up the ladder and trying to stay true to their art. Some met tragic endings due to drugs, while others made it big. It's also a closer look at the "before" life of one of the lesbian community's most long-standing musicians, and therefore provides some details behind this controversial singer's non-lesbian life.

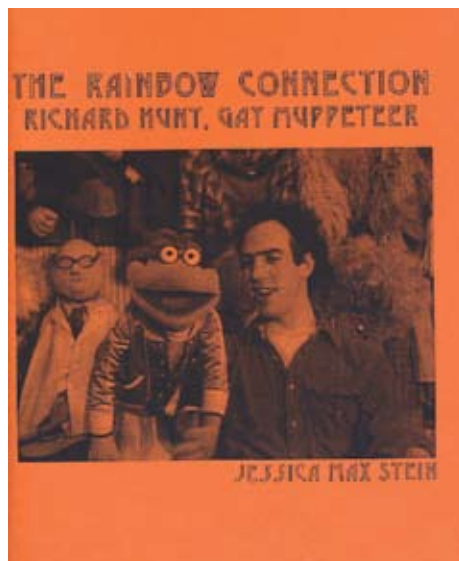
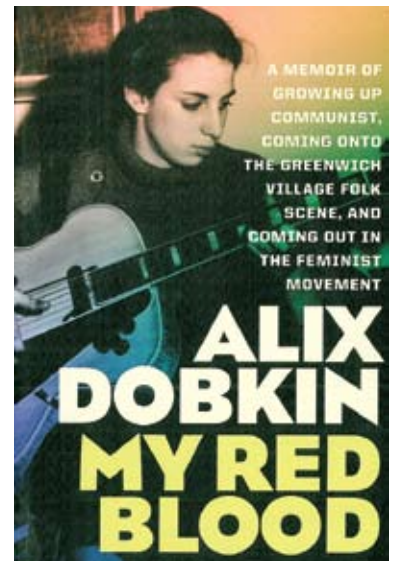
It's really a treat to hear first-hand about New York's Village in the early days of the hippie movement, and how Dobkin navigated the sexism of the 1950s and 1960s before she even had a name for it. The consciousness-raising movement was her saving grace, but she doesn't show regret about her previous life, instead seeing it just as part of the journey. In fact, it is fascinating to see how she often hated the idea of lesbians and she was full of mistaken stereotypes of what that life would be for her if she followed that path (she had been with some women, but mostly men).

Dobkin's book ends just as she starts to make her mark in the lesbian community. Her *Lavender Jane Loves Women* was the first lesbian album made all by women, in 1973. Dobkin was 33 years old, and ready to expand her horizons.

I'd recommend this book for anyone interested in learning more about the anti-Communist witch hunts in the U.S., about the early years

of East Coast folk music, and the start of the women's movement. It's very detailed, and provides one woman's take on important events of the past century.

NOTE: The seeds of some of the passages in *My Red Blood* were first published in column form in *Outlines* newspaper in Chicago, and later in *Windy City Times* after *Outlines* purchased WCT. I first met Dobkin during one of her Illinois concerts in the 1990s. She mentioned she was working on a memoir, and I suggested we publish excerpts as she was working on her book draft. The column, *Minstrel Blood*, ran for several years. Chicago lesbians were familiar with Dobkin from her almost-annual summer shows at Mountain Moving Coffeehouse. She will return to Chicago April 17 for a program at Women & Children First Bookstore.



BOOKS

**Chicago makes
a rainbow
connection**

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Muppets have entranced and educated generations of children and generated nostalgic memories for millions of adults. Fans can even take a Facebook quiz to determine which Muppet they most resemble. Yet, comparatively little is known about those who turned the simplest hand puppets into expressive, unique and sometimes cantankerous but always beloved characters. On Jan. 10, the New York City-based writer and zinester Jessica Max Stein will be at Quimby's Bookshop to discuss the life and work of Richard Hunt, a gay man who was the voice behind Scooter, Janice, Beaker, Statler, Wayne and Sweetums, among many others. He also shared the role of Miss Piggy with Frank Oz until the end of the first season of *The Muppet Show*.

Hunt is the subject of Stein's new 84-page zine, *The Rainbow Connection: Richard Hunt, Gay Muppeteer*, which showcases Stein's inter-

est and absorption in the life of a man who was among the most long-standing behind-the-scenes performers on *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*, and whose off-screen humor and colorful personality imbued his puppets with the kind of vivacity that has made them popular for so long. Hunt was born in New York City in 1951 and, according to his mother, got the job on the *Muppet Show* when, a few months after graduating from high school, he decided to cold call Henson Associates (the late Jim Henson's company) and ask if they were hiring puppeteers. It so happened that they were auditioning, and Hunt was soon hired.

For Stein, it's that kind of impetuosity and bravado that proved most intriguing and enchanting as she began to hear more about Hunt's life and career. Hunt, an out gay man, would go on to become a main performer on *The Muppet Show*, and one of five performers to be a regular performer on all five seasons. He was also on *Fraggle Rock*, playing both Junior Gorg and Gunge.

Both *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show* have gained enormous success and international renown, and those who worked on them have continued to do well professionally in large part, according to Stein, because Henson was intelligent about maintaining creative and financial integrity. Hunt, according to Stein and other historians of the show like Christopher Finch, who wrote *Of Muppets and Men*, was well-liked, energetic and every bit as playful as the puppets he gave voice to. He died in 1992 of AIDS-related complications, with Frank Oz among those at his bedside. According to the Wikipedia entry under his name, "many panels were created in his honor for the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt, including one created by his friends in *The Muppet Workshop*." Jon Stone, a former director of *Sesame Street*, said about Hunt's death and influence: "A generation has grown up absorbing Richard's art, and I have to believe that every one of them is a smarter, funnier, stronger, sillier, more generous person because of him."

Stein said that her fascination with the man has a lot to do with the ways in which his life and personality imbue the show with a queer-

ness that might otherwise be overlooked if we only think of the Muppets and their characters as aimed at children: "I love that this project speaks to these contradictions," she told *Windy City Times*. "People think of muppets as exclusively for kids, but I also see them as very adult and queer. Richard and Oz created Miss Piggy and when you think of it, hers is a total performance of femininity." What also intrigued her was the character of a man who had clearly engendered fondness, even as some admitted he could be acerbic: "He was totally effervescent; his mom described him as 'expansive,' and I see that's a great synonym for 'big queer.'" Stein was also intrigued by Hunt's life and work as emblematic of the era he lived and died in: "We can't separate his life from the times."

Hunt was in one sense a casualty of the AIDS epidemic, which decimated the U.S. gay male population in particular in the 1980s. But in his death, Stein saw an opportunity to celebrate a decade that the gay community now looks at mostly through the lens of loss and sometimes in very simplified terms, without much attention to the vitality of those who died. Stein is clear that she has no inclination to romanticize the era, and she has friends who speak of feeling like survivors as most of their friends died: "It was a plague." For her, however, the lingering questions are about how we choose to remember the decade and grieve the dead. The project has also prompted questions about the state of the current gay movement. Speaking of the current emphasis on gay marriage, she said that "We made all these trade-offs and we've forgotten that there used to be different options for gay people. People are forgetting that very fast. What I loved about Richard Hunt is that he lived with abundance." She bases her understanding of him not only through histories like Finch's book, but also through the interviews she has conducted with the people who knew him, like his mother and co-workers.

The *Rainbow Connection* was conceived as a zine, but Stein's research on Hunt has continued even after its publication. She is contemplating the possibility that the greater amounts of material she has since been uncovering might

result in a book-length project. For now, she is busy with a zine tour that began in Albany, N.Y. Jan. 2 and will culminate in Chicago. This tour is a follow-up to the first one she undertook in the summer of 2009, traversing New York City; Madison, Wis.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Portland, Ore.; and San Francisco. Stein is especially looking forward to connecting with the motley crew of people that comprise her audiences: "The readings bring together a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise be in the same room: the fanboy nerdy straight guys, the people who just love the Muppets, queers."

Jessica Max Stein will read from *The Rainbow Connection* Sunday, Jan. 10, at 3 p.m. at Quimby's Bookstore, 1854 W. North. See www.jessicamaxstein.com.

Book on Queen out

QUEEN: The Ultimate Illustrated History of the Crown Kings of Rock, a comprehensive look at one of rock's most unique bands, is now available.

Containing more than 400 photographs and pieces of memorabilia, **QUEEN: The Ultimate Illustrated History of the Crown Kings of Rock** also includes a discography as well as commentary from dozens of admiring musicians and performers.

The book retails for \$40.

Lady Gaga at Rosemont Theatre

Lady Gaga is headlining her own national show ("The Monster Ball Tour")—and will sing at the Rosemont Theatre Jan. 8-9. The show had previously been scheduled for the Chicago Theatre.

Tickets are \$37.50-\$75. Tickets are available at www.livenation.com, www.thechicagotheatre.com or www.ticketmaster.com; the venue box office; or by phone at 800-745-3000.

calendar

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WINDY CITY TIMES



Wed., Jan. 6

World Music Wednesdays Continuing celebration of the record release of The Pilsen Soundtrack 1.0, an independent production with 7 bands of Pilsen/Chicago, the heart of the immigrant and Mexican community in Chicago. Genres range from traditional Mexican music and Cuban son to ska, bossa nova and alternative rock. Two of these, Fandanguero and Son del Viento, will take the stage in a Chicago take on the Son Jarocho tradition. 8:30 p.m., 773-728-6000, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N Lincoln Ave, www.oldtownschool.org/concerts/world.html

Lesbians-of-the-North meet up Come out for drinks and tappas. Please RSVP online. 7pm, 847-398-2400, <http://www.meetup.com/lesbians-of-the-north/calendar/12149562/>

DJ Phil DaBeatz at Scarlet ChicagoPride.com's own and Centaur Music's "Boys-town's Favorite DJ" Phil DaBeatz brings a damn fun night of great music every Wednesday at Scarlet. Happy Hump Day! 9pm, Scarlet, 3320 N Halsted, <http://www.scarletbarchicago.com>

Thursday, Jan. 7

Funny Girl opening Rounding out their 2009-10 smash hit season, Drury Lane Oakbrook, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace, IL, presents the 1964 classic Broadway musical comedy Funny Girl. January 7-March 7. RSVP (630) 530-0111 or TicketMaster (312) 559-1212. 1:30pm, (630)530-0111, <http://www.drurylaneoakbrook.com>

NewTown Writers writing workshop Chi-

POETIC 'JUSTICE' Saturday, Jan. 23

Equality Illinois' "Justice for All" gala will take place at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan.

Photo of Jim Madigan at the 2009 gala by Kat Fitzgerald



cago's GLBT writing workshop meets. Info at framn8@yahoo.com; 7:30pm, 773-528-3637, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.newtownwriters.org>

American Veterans for Equal Rights (gay veterans) Monthly meeting. AVER is a non-profit association dedicated to full and equal rights for all present and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces. 7:30pm, 773-472-6469, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, www.averchicago.org

Friday, Jan. 8

"A Hero Comes Home" exhibit on the life and times of Daniel Sotomayor Sotomayor, an inductee in the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame, was a cartoonist and one of Chicago's most explosive AIDS activists. The exhibit includes cartoons by Sotomayor, photos, T-shirts, the AIDS Quilt panel created in Sotomayor's honor, and more. On display until March 5, 2010, from 9am to 5pm on Mon, Tue, Thur, and Fri; 11am to 3pm on Sat. Closed Wed and Sun. 11am

Elvis Fest On what would have been Elvis' 75th birthday, meet Radio Hall of Famer Dick Biondi from True Oldies 94.7 as he broadcasts live and talented Elvis Tribute Artists take the stage to rock the songs that made the King...well...the King. Elvis-look-alike contest for a trip for two to Graceland in Tennessee. \$5 suggested donation. 7pm, 312-642-7251, <http://www.originalmothers.com>

Two Way Street Coffee House Pete Norman's Post-Christmas Blues Fest! Folk/Americana Music, 25th annual show, sure to banish your post-Christmas blues. Gongwriter Pete, DK and guests present folk, blues and fun songs. Guitar, Dobro, fiddle, banjo, more. \$7. 8:15pm, 630-969-9720, <http://www.twowaystreet.org>

NAGAAA World Series Kickoff Party The Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) and Spin present the NAGAAA World Series Kickoff Party. Bar package including Miller Lite and Absolut from 9-11pm, Drag Show starring CMSA Members at 11pm. \$20 tickets. 9pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave, <http://www.chicagosma.org>

Girl Shower Contest Dida Ritz hosts Spin's "girl" Shower Contest with \$150 first prize. Sign-up by 11:30pm. 11:30pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave, <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

Saturday, Jan. 9

Pancake Breakfast-Rainbow Friends Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist invites the LGBT community to a pancake breakfast and social. 9am, 847-359-8440, <http://www.ccuu.org>

Jessica Halem fundraiser for Linda J. Pael In "Servicing the Public Good", Halem brings her best comedy with music by The Daisies to support Pael in her run for Cook County Circuit Court Judge. \$40 regular ticket (includes free food, live entertainment and cash bar), \$200 host level (or bring 5), \$500 benefactor level. Donate at <http://lindajpael.com/> thru Paypal and enter "Jessica Halem" in the notes section. 4pm, <http://www.lindajpael.com>

Dyke Delicious Screening Series: Confessions of a Lesbian Director Chris Russo has been charming audiences with her fun, quirky films for years. She puts a lot of herself in the films and relates to women who don't fit into easy social straightjackets. This program is the first ever dedicated to Chris' work, and will feature six short films made since 2000 with Chris herself providing a revealing guided tour. Social hour 7 pm. Screening of six short films begins at 8 pm. \$10. 7pm, 773-293-1447, Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N Clark, <http://www.chicagofilmmakers.com>

Sunday, Jan. 10

Queer Muppets at Quimby's Jessica Max Stein reads from the Rainbow Connection. We all know Ernie and Bert are gay, but what about the puppeteers? "The Rainbow Connection: Richard Hunt, Gay Puppeteer," chronicles the life and work of Richard Hunt, a central puppeteer on the international blockbusters Sesame Street and The Muppet Show. Stein will read from the zine and screen over an hour's worth of Muppet footage. 3pm, 773-342-0910, Quimby's Queer Store, 1854 W North, www.quimbys.com

Live Band Karaoke Every Sunday after our all new Sunday Brunch Gone Wild Minibar will be host to live band Karaoke. Come enjoy your favorite songs performed live on stage. Whether singing or watching it is an experience not to be missed this fall! 3pm, 773-871-6227, Minibar Ultra Lounge and Cafe, 3341 N Halsted, <http://minibar-chicago.com>

Male Call with Miss Foozie Roscoe's and ChicagoPride.com present Male Call with Miss Foozie. Here's your chance to meet the unexpected and end the weekend right. 5pm, Roscoe's Tavern, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.missfoozie.com>

Roman Catholic Mass Dignity-Chicago celebrates a Roman Catholic Mass every Sunday, 5PM, at Broadway United Methodist Church 3338 N Broadway; 5pm, <http://dignitychicago.org/current.htm>

Monday, Jan. 11

ASL Class (Winter) American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities in the United States and Canada. Whether you have Deaf co-workers or customers, friends or family, or you are simply curious about signing our course will introduce you to the basics of this visual style of communication. You will build your sign vocabulary and begin to understand ASL's unique grammar, while becoming acquainted with aspects of Deaf Culture. Location: Deaf Quest, Inc., 3711 N. Ravenswood Ave, Suite 146, Chicago, IL 60613; 6pm, (773) 857-7709, http://www.deafcomm.net/asl_class.htm

Oberman for Illinois State Treasurer fundraiser 43rd Ward Democratic Committee hosts a reception to support Justin Oberman, Candidate for Illinois State Treasurer. Parking available in building. Suggested Contributions: \$50 Individual, \$250 Sponsor, \$500 Patron. Purchase tickets at <http://tiny.cc/January11> or mail check to Oberman for Illinois, P.O. Box 146475, Chicago, IL 60614. Info and location at Nora Sheahan, nora@obermanforillinois.com; 6pm, 773-316-3468, <http://tiny.cc/january11>

Viniyoga Monday Class at Yoga Now Edge Water Viniyoga class focusing on asana, pranayama and meditation. All levels welcome. Adjustments in teaching are made for the physical abilities of the attendees. \$16 class fee. LaGenia Bailey, Certified AVI Instructor; 7:30pm, www.yoganowchicago.com

Tuesday, Jan. 12

Chicago I2I Monthly Social Are you API/Asian/Asian American and looking for a safe space to meet other lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning APIs? Then, this is a great first place to start. Chicago I2I is a community organization and was established in 2004 to build community, celebrate, and affirm. Restaurant to be determined; 6:30pm, 773-330-6878, <http://www.chicagoi2i.org>

Musical Open Mic on Tuesdays at the Closet; 7pm, The Closet, 3325 N Broadway, <http://www.theclosetchicago.com>



ACE OF BASE Friday, Jan. 8

The NAGAAA World Series kickoff party will be at Spin, 800 W. Belmont.

Photo from the 2009 World Series by Ross Farman

Wed., Jan. 13

COH: "I am... Living Positive" exhibit closes Artist John Cotter's photography exhibit "I am... Living Positive" closes. Third floor art gallery. Part of World AIDS Day 2009. 12pm, -773-472-646, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Dollar Skate Admission is only \$1 every wednesday night from 6-8pm. Roller Skate Rental \$3 and inline skate rental \$5. 6pm, 630 289 8000, Mainstreet USA Roller Rink, 23 West Streamwood Blvd., <http://www.mainstreetusaskating.com>

Friday, Jan. 14

Energy Efficiency, Green Room Sessions at Uncommon Ground Free monthly eco-awareness series featuring local environmental organizations along with live music and free appetizers featuring the product of a local farmer; 6pm, 773-465-9801, <http://www.uncommonground.com/>

Speed Dating for women Speed Dating at Center on Halsted is scheduled on the 2nd Thursday of every month, alternating between Men's Night and Women's Night. The first round will begin at 7:15 pm. 6:45pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Center's danceOUT: conversation with The Joffrey Ballet's "Cinderella" Sir Frederick Ashton's "Cinderella" returns to The Joffrey Ballet. In Ashton's ballet of this timeless fairy tale, Cinderella transforms from a sad young woman into a beautiful princess, despite the best efforts of her overbearing stepsisters, portrayed, as is tradition, by male dancers. Center on Halsted's danceOUT event will feature the talented Joffrey dancers in their gender-bending roles! Moderated by dance critic and editor Zachary Whittenburg. 7pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted

Saturday, Jan. 23

Equality Illinois "Justice For All" Gala Equality Illinois "Justice For All" fundraising Gala! 7pm, 773-477-7173, Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S Michigan Ave, <http://www.eqil.org>

Sunday, Jan. 24

Lesbian Comic Kate Clinton, The Lady Haha Tour Kate performs her world-famous burlesque Bubble Wrap Dance and pops the air out of deniers and disruptors, birthers and dearthers, conservadems and bibliocrats, the -stans and the bans, spine flu and whine flu, ex-gays and A-gays, the audacity of nope and of course, the pope. All material digitalized and styled by the Haus of Ha. Hoover-Leppen Theatre. 6pm, 773-472-6469, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>



'GOOD' TIMES

Saturday, Jan. 9

Comedian Jessica Halem (above) will host the "Servicing the Public Good" fundraiser for judicial candidate Linda Pael.

BILLY MASTERS

"If I wanted to tell people what I do with my vagina, I'd have made a sex video a long time ago."—Michelle Rodriguez responds to those ever-present lesbian rumors.

Welcome to a brand new year. 2010 is only a few hours old, but there's already gossip. However, that's got to wait. You don't think someone can tackle a pope on Christmas Eve and I won't have something to say about it, do you? First off, did you know that the crazy bitch tried this before? Last year, she attempted to climb over the barrier at the service but was stopped. So how the hell did she get into St. Peter's again this year? I'm sure people aren't just milling around the Basilica and wandering in on Christmas Eve. That's gotta be a hot ticket—easily one of the top two of the year. Did she hobble in with the cripples? I suppose I'd be understanding if she were an anxious leper. Other than that, there's gotta be a hungry lion somewhere who still likes Christians. Don't get me wrong—I certainly have no undying love for this Nazi pope. But I'm all about a little pomp, a little circumstance. And what's the use of having Swiss Guards if you can't use them? Admittedly, they don't look like they could do anything more menacing than keep you off "It's A Small World" at Disneyland. But, they do carry sticks with little spears at the top. Use 'em, God damn it. It's the Vatican, for Christ's sake!

I read that Renee Zellweger spent Christmas meeting the family of her "boyfriend," Bradley Cooper. (The quotes around "boyfriend" were not in the other reports, but they seem appropriate.) We even hear the couple is looking to buy a home. Sigh, when will that Zellweger learn? I'm reminded of my sister-in-gossip Ted Casablanca's take on Cooper's numerous romantic entanglements a few months back: "We seriously think his publicist has more to do with these A-list couplings than his heart. He knows he's unavailable—in more ways than one, trust—but he's trying to convince these women otherwise." Truer words were never uttered.

But Bradley is playing gay—at least on screen. In the upcoming "Valentine's Day" (which comes out, you guessed it, on Valentine's Day), he's paired with sexy Eric Dane. Well, now I've got your attention! Dane plays a closeted football player who is dating Cooper. Of course, no one at the studio is talking about this subplot. And from the ads, it kinda looks like Bradley's character is dating Julia Roberts, who actually is the best friend. We're told that the screen time for the gay duo is pretty minor, but it's still enough to make me wanna check it out.

We got an end-of-year gift from ABC—the first same-sex love scene on daytime. Scott Evans and Brett Claywell (collectively known as "Kish") consummated their relationship on "One Life To Live" in a sex scene that included candles, long-lingering glances, and unbearably slow removal of clothing. In short, all the passion usually exhibited in a love scene with Jeanne Cooper! When a post-coital Claywell deliriously asked, "Is it always going to be like this?", I audibly responded, "God, I hope not!" That's not to say it wasn't sexy. It was—in that "Playboy After Dark" kinda way. But it certainly wasn't what I'd expect from two hot guys with pent-up "enthusiasm." Still, it's a step in the right direction. You can see it for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

Now, onto New Year's Eve. Dick Clark...sigh, what can I say that I haven't said before? Last year, he made it through about 13 minutes of live TV and then disappeared. Ironically, this year 13 was an unlucky number for Dick—he completely forgot it in his countdown! In case anyone is keeping track—because I am—Dick clocked in 6 full minutes. Yup, SIX MINUTES! And is it me or is Mrs. Clark's New Year's kiss starting to resemble someone performing CPR? Over on CNN, Anderson Cooper and Kathy Griffin

managed to make the show even gayer by adding Vegas correspondent Lance Bass. He really was the most feminine person on the telecast—and that included Sushi the drag queen being lowered in a giant shoe in Key West (and how fabulous was it to see Randy Roberts as Cher)! Kathy tried her best to embarrass Andy, but he never took the bait. Instead, he just stood there, giggling like a giddy girl while winched into his Gloria Vanderbilt jeans. Another New Year for the record books.



Bradley Cooper might have a love hangover.

I always call Bravo our *de facto* gay network, but CNN is really giving it a run for its money. Prior to the New Year, porn star Collin O'Neil turned up doing the weather! The sexy stud filed an iReport for CNN Dec. 17 under his given name, Shawn Loftis. He was in capri pants and a white tank top while reporting about heavy rain and, at one point, waded through a puddle. Oh, it was riveting footage. Catch it on BillyMasters.com.

Our first "Ask Billy" question of the New Year is about someone I haven't thought of in eons. Travis in Baltimore writes: "I hear that the kid from 'Billy Elliot' is now some hot buff guy and making a period piece with Channing Tatum. Can you confirm and maybe show us what he looks like all grown up?"

Believe it or not, Jamie Bell is all grown up and quite buff. Although he's been working steadily, most people probably think of him as that 14 years old boy in tights and a tutu. Now at the ripe old age of 23, he's in Scotland filming "Eagle of the Ninth." He plays a slave to Roman soldier Channing Tatum—which apparently means it's a comedy! Some pics have surfaced from the production and it does appear that Buff Bell is a good nickname for Jamie. He's shirtless, muscular, and a little dirty—just how I love my men. If they throw in one of those bathing scenes from Spartacus, I'll be there! Pics can be found on BillyMasters.com.

When Channing Tatum has been cast in a period piece, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Every year, people ask me if I have any New Year's Resolutions. Although I usually don't, this year is different. I want to be a contestant on "Wipeout." You may not know this about me, but I am as agile as a gazelle. I'm also as clumsy as an ox. Obviously this is a winning combination—at least in terms of riveting television. I seriously think I could kick ass on this show ... except for those damn balls. They could be my downfall. While I'm practicing maneuvering all sorts of balls, I'm still updating www.BillyMasters.com. If you've got a question, drop a note at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before CNN hires Michael Lucas as a foreign correspondent! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



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The Chicago Force during the 2009 season. Photo by Ross Forman

SPORTS

Force gears for another run

BY ROSS FORMAN

The Chicago Force will have two regular-season games against the defending IWFL Champion Kansas City Tribe in 2010, and none against its long-time rival, the Detroit Demolition.

The eight-game regular-season opens April 3 with a home game against the Wisconsin Warriors at the Holmgren Athletic Complex, 3225 W. Foster. Game time is 3 p.m.

The Force will play at the Wisconsin Warriors April 17. The Warriors are the Tier 2 defending champions.

"We have an exciting and challenging schedule," said Force general manager/owner Linda Bache. "The two games against Kansas City will define our season. We both run a high-powered spread offense. Our entire offensive line is returning, which is huge for us. All five members of our offensive line were voted to the all-star team and jointly received the offensive MVP award last year. In addition, we return quarterback Sami Grisafe, and wide receivers Trish Harper, Albi Zhubi and Martha Dantuma."

The Force will play four home games, including the grudge match May 1 against the Tribe—the team that knocked Chicago out of the 2009 playoffs. And May 22, the Force hosts the Pittsburgh Passion, a former champion and perennial contender.

The 2010 IWFL National Championship will be held July 24 in Austin, Texas.

"The Detroit Demolition are not on our schedule this year as [Detroit] changed ownership and will not be fielding a team in 2010," Bache said. "At this point, it's unclear whether they will be returning in 2011. After spanking them twice in 2008, our main rivalry shifted last year to Kansas City."

The Force held tryouts in late 2009 and more than 90 women participated, including 57 newcomers.

"We definitely could see 5 to 10 new players that we expect to contribute right away," Bache said, "and a number of other players showed great potential as well."

"There is a tremendous amount of opportunity at a variety of positions for incoming players. The coaches are looking to improve at certain positions and considering replacements at others. We have a lot of talented veterans returning, but they're going to have major competition for their positions."

"There was a lot of talent in general [at the tryouts], with a higher level of athleticism than we've seen in previous years which has the coaches and management very excited."

Conditioning and injury prevention for all players starts Jan. 11 and rookie camps begin on Jan. 16. Formal team practice begins Jan. 30.

"We've been contacted by a number of interested athletes who found out about us after tryouts," Bache said. "Our policy is to take athletes whenever they become available. We'll

have players joining in our workouts throughout the pre-season.

"If you missed tryouts and are interested in playing, contact us now. We'll assess your abilities, coach you up, and work you into the program."

Play ball: The 2011 World Series

BY ROSS FORMAN

The road to the 2011 Gay Softball World Series in Chicago—which actually will be held in the suburbs—officially kicks off Friday night, Jan. 8, 2010, with the first of what will be many fund-raising parties for the event.

The inaugural party will be held at Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont.

The Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), which will be hosting the 2011 Series, has an eight-person World Series board of directors, led by Jack Neilsen, who has played in numerous past series.

The CMSA must raise \$160,000 to cover use of the fields; opening and closing ceremonies; transportation; and more.

The 2011 Gay Softball World Series will have men and women participating. More than 200 teams and 4,000 participants are expected from across the United States and Canada.

The Amateur Sports Alliance of North American (ASANA) holds a separate, annual all-women's softball world series—and CMSA officials did not bid to also host the 2011 event.

"When you have a budget of about \$160,000 to cover, you need to plan as far out as possible," Neilsen said.

The 2011 event, running Aug. 31-Sept. 3, will be played at multiple-field complexes in the suburbs of St. Charles, Elmhurst and Schaumburg.

"Hosting the World Series is a huge undertaking," Neilsen said. "We just want it to be right when it comes back to Chicago. We want the city to be showcased; we want everyone to have a great time; we want it to be a Series that everyone remembers."

Chicago has played host to the annual Gay Softball World Series only once, in 1983, since it was first held in 1977. Chicago has had only five championship teams in series history, including the 2009 Spin Cougars (B Division).

"I want to see an opening ceremony where everyone has a great time, with great entertainment. That's key," Neilsen said.

Opening ceremonies will be Monday night, Aug. 29, 2011.

Chicago will have two teams in B, C and D divisions, and an unlimited number of A-Division teams; along with one extra team (from any division) since it is the host city. Next year, the CMSA will have its first A-Division team in at least three years, Neilsen confirmed. Cameron Turner will run the A-Division team.

"It may only be a few teams from Chicago participating, but everyone will see [participating] players all around town. The event is a huge fi-

nancial benefit to the city," Neilsen said. "I want everyone to have an amazing experience here in Chicago."

CMSA's World Series Board meets every month, and includes Doug Malm, Brian Redar, Aaron Brost, Aaron Feeney, Nathan Jenks, Brian Harder and Frank Kisner.

GAY GAMES: VOLLEYBALL

Stephen Hewitt's net gain

BY ROSS FORMAN

When he was 9, Stephen Hewitt tried out for the Sports Performance Volleyball Club (SPVC) and became the youngest and first boy inducted into a primarily all-girls 12-under program. He ultimately played at SPVC for nine years, qualifying for the National Tournament when he was 14, 16, and 18.

"I was constantly plagued with injuries and illness in my later years," said Hewitt, now 19 and a Chicago resident in the South Loop. "When I was 16, I severely injured a muscle in my lower back that took me out for weeks and also developed a tendency to pass out from dehydration. When I was 17, my knee began giving out and, [when] 18, I injured my hand right before a big tournament in California. In order to keep playing I covered it up and never let it heal properly. I also punctured a hole the size of a quarter in my foot at National's, and [this fall] I may have popped a vein or two in my right hand."

Despite the injuries, Hewitt is still driven, motivated to excel. He's weight-training to get back in top shape and focused on the 2010 Gay Games in Cologne, where he will compete in beach volleyball and/or indoor volleyball.

"My [Gay Games] goals are to represent myself as a strong competitor/teammate who will help lead my team to [victory]," he said. "I also would like to represent young gay men in sportsmanship, teamwork, drive, and communicability."

"For me, the Gay Games mean an official return to the sport that I built my life around."

Hewitt is now the men's and women's club volleyball coach at Illinois Performance Volleyball, and also a sales associate at Aeropostale. He is single, a 2008 graduate of St. Francis Catholic College Preparatory in Wheaton and now a sophomore at Columbia College in Chicago.

More about Stephen Hewitt ...

—**Hobbies:** Volleyball, running, hanging out with friends, movies, screenwriting, and visiting my family back home.

—**Superstitions:** "I'm not sure if this is a superstition, but I cannot begin eating my popcorn in a movie theater before the previews start. Honestly, [but] bot really sure why."

—**Little-known fact:** Can say the alphabet backwards

—**Greatest sporting accomplishment:** Competing at nationals when I was 18 for the third time

—**Favorite sports team:** Chicago Bears

—**Favorite pro athlete:** Shawn Johnson



Stephen Hewitt. Photo courtesy of Hewitt

FGG seeking to get athletes to Gay Games

The international Federation of Gay Games (FGG) has awarded scholarships to 34 sports and cultural participants from countries as diverse as South Africa, China, Chile and The Philippines so they can attend and participate in the 2010 Gay Games in Cologne, Germany, July 31-Aug. 7, according to a press release.

Ten additional deserving applicants from Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa and Sri Lanka have been approved, but will not be able to go to Germany unless \$20,000 in additional scholarship funds are raised. (Games Cologne is separately funding some athletes from Eastern Europe.) Contributions can be made online at www.gaygames.com/en/donate/.

"Many of these athletes face challenges that most of us will never experience," said Paul Oostenbrug, co-chair of the FGG Scholarship Committee. "Where being openly gay or lesbian can risk life or limb, participating in the Gay Games may seem like a luxury. But the experience is extremely moving for them, and offers our scholarship athletes a chance to learn how the LGBT sports movement can be a vehicle for change in their own community. Without a full scholarship, participation would be impossible."

SkiBudz trips to Wis. and Aspen in Jan.

SkiBudz, a local LGBT skiing/snowboarding club for participants of all levels, is travelling to Wauwau, Wis., for its 4th Annual Granite Peak Trip Jan. 8-10, 2010 and Aspen, Colo., Jan. 19-24.

The Jefferson Street Inn is even offering SkiBudz discounts for its rooms, which now cost \$109-\$259 per night. Reservations must be booked by Dec. 5. For more information on the Granite Peak ski area, see www.skigranitepeak.com.

Regarding the Aspen trip, the cost is approximately \$950, which includes round-trip air SFO to Aspen on United Airlines, ground transfers to and from the Aspen Airport, five nights lodging and a four-day lift ticket good at all four mountains.

For more, visit www.skibudz.org.

Red Stars holding winter clinics

The local women's pro team Chicago Red Stars is holding multiple soccer clinics throughout Chicagoland.

Several sessions include the opportunity to learn alongside Red Stars defender and 1999 World Cup champion Kate Markgraf as well as Red Stars forward and former University of Illinois All-American Ella Masar. Space is limited for the Red Stars' winter clinics, so register early.

Contact Red Stars Camp Director Kate Westfall at 708-496-9511, or register online at ChicagoRedStars.com. Winter sessions run through Feb. 27.

Vital Bridges bowling Jan. 30

"Strike Out Hunger," Vital Bridges 13th annual bowling event, will take place Saturday, Jan. 30, at River Rand Bowl, 191 S. River, Des Plaines. Registration is 6:30-7 p.m.

Tickets are \$30 per person, or \$150 for six people. The cost covers three games of bowling, shoe rental and light snacks. All proceeds benefit Vital Bridges, an agency that helps more than 2,000 people impacted by HIV/AIDS. See www.vitalbridges.org or call Genevieve at 773-271-5117.



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January 2010

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State Senator Heather Steans understands the needs of the GLBT community and the Seventh District. Her re-election will continue to yield progressive results for all Illinois residents. That's why we urge you to vote for Heather Steans on February 2nd.

Senator Steans has earned our enthusiastic support with her effective and progressive work on vital state policy issues. Consider that she has already:

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- Successfully fought for a responsible budget by leading the charge to reject a budget plan that would have dramatically under-funded vital health care and human service programs.
- Played a key role in restoring funding to HIV/AIDS services and secured funding for programs and services for the GLBT community.
- Hired openly gay and lesbian employees for both her service and campaign offices.
- Led the charge for political reform in Springfield. Senator Steans helped to re-write Senate rules to reduce the power of the leadership. She also worked closely with political reform advocacy groups on a ground-breaking bill that imposes Illinois' first-ever limits on contributions to candidates, political parties and political action committees. The new law also makes campaign contribution and expenditure information more open and available to the public.
- Passed health insurance reform that allows Illinois' consumers to appeal when insurance companies deny claims and requires insurance companies to publicly disclose how premium dollars are spent.

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