

Gender
JUST rally



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Chicago
Red Stars

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Cantone

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nightspots
pick it up
take it home

Obama signs LGBT hospital access memo

President calls lesbian denied access to partner

BY TRACY BAIM

"I'm sorry."

Those two little words are what Janice Langbehn has been waiting to hear since February 2007, when her partner of 18 years, Lisa Pond, just 39 years old, died separated from Langbehn and their children.

But the apology did not come from Jackson Memorial Hospital in Florida, where Pond lay dying from a brain aneurysm suffered Feb. 18, 2007, hours after the family boarded the R Family Cruise. Instead, President Barack Obama said those words to Langbehn in a phone call April 15, 2010, when he phoned her in Olympia, Wash., from Air Force One, ironically while it circled over Miami, where Jackson Memorial is located.

Obama called Langbehn to explain a memo he had signed that day to address discrimination LGBT families face from healthcare facilities.

The Obama memo directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Kathleen Sebelius, to move forward on steps to address hospital visitation and other related LGBT healthcare access issues. The resulting regulation is expected to require hospitals that receive



Janice Langbehn (left) and Lisa Pond in 1996.

Turn to page 6

Dan Choi sounds off at Boston gala

BY CHUCK COLBERT

In the nearly six weeks since his arrest for civil disobedience, Lt. Dan Choi, an Army infantry officer turned gay-rights activist, soldiers: From coast to coast, Choi preservers—speaking out on college campuses and other public venues. His is a one-man advocacy campaign, pressing the president to show more leadership to repeal "don't ask, don't tell."

Despite some criticism for handcuffing himself in uniform to the wrought iron fence surrounding the White House gates, Choi remains unapologetic in taking aim at the commander-in-chief. Choi's beef with the president is this: Obama is not using his bully pulpit strong enough in pressuring Congress to lift the ban on openly gay military service.



Lt. Dan Choi in Boston. Photo by Chuck Colbert

What should the president do? Choi insists that the president include repeal language in the Defense Authorization Act of 2010. At the same time, Choi believes the commander-in-chief must immediately issue a "stop-loss" order, thereby putting in place a *de facto* moratorium on all discharges from the armed forces.

The 28-year-old West Point alumnus served "under don't ask, don't tell (DADT)" for 10 years before self-identifying as gay on the Rachel Maddow Show in March 2009. For saying out loud three words, "I am gay," Choi faces a very real possibility any day now, of being discharged.

New guidelines recently announced by Defense Secretary Robert Gates and designed to make implementation of DADT more humane, don't ap-

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Event co-organizer Pat McCombs (above) attended Saturday's "Four Months Until Michfest" party. See page 17.

Photo by Con Buckley



Windy City Times talked with out comedian Judy Gold. See page 19.

Photo by Dan Dion

Photos on left side of cover (from top): Photo of Shawn at the Gender JUST rally by Micki Leventhal; Image of the Chicago Red Stars' Julianne Sitch at the team's 2010 home opener by Tracy Baim; Mario Cantone photo by Peter Lau

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USING YOUR NOODLE

This week's Amuse Bouche column looks at beef stroganoff (right).



Photo by Greg Perrine

SEMI TOUGH



Windy City Times talks with Justin Tranter, the lead singer of the band Semi Precious Weapons.

Photo by Giuliano Bekor

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MINDING THE STARR

Windy City Times photographer Steve Starr recently received an award for his work. Find out more online.



Photo by Steven A. Richards

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Supreme court candidates: What the short list is like

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The White House has begun floating trial balloons for candidates President Obama might appoint to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace retiring Justice John Paul Stevens. It's a well-known ritual—played by anonymous White House sources; a willing and competitive media; and even justice wannabes who know how to capitalize on the power of the rumor mill.

The Associated Press is, thus far, winning: claiming that it has “confirmed” the names of seven potential nominees on a list of candidates it says is 10 people long.

The seven include nominees that are generally friendly to the LGBT community, based on what little is known of them right now. They include Solicitor General Elena Kagan, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. The other four include three circuit court judges with brief, but friendly, records on gay civil rights, and a former Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court who is at least liberal enough to be disliked by anti-abortion groups because—they say—she protects constitutional rights to privacy against efforts to legislate morality.

Not on the list—at least not confirmed by AP—are two openly gay candidates mentioned last time around: Stanford University professors Kathleen Sullivan and Pam Karlan. The likelihood of their being considered, given the hostile partisan climate of the Senate right now, seems nil.

The seven who are reportedly under consideration include:

—Former Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice **Leah Ward Sears** was the first African-American woman to serve as chief justice of any state supreme court—and she did so in Georgia. During that time, she twice sided decisions overturning the state's laws against sodomy. “The individual's right to freely exercise his or her liberty is not dependent upon whether the majority believes such exercise to be moral, dishonorable, or wrong,” wrote Sears in a concurring opinion in *Powell v. State* in 1998. She is also friends with conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, who would likely be an asset in persuading conservative senators to give her their support.

—**Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Sidney Thomas**, appointed by President Clinton in 1995, dissented from a decision that said it was permissible for San Francisco police to do strip searches and body cavity searches of all arrested persons—even those arrested for non-vi-



Janet Napolitano.

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NATIONAL NEWS

—Gainesville, Fla., elects gay mayor

—Univ. of Penn. OKs insurance for reassignment operations

—Pro-gay GOP man (left) to run for governor of Mass.

olent acts of vandalism during a gay pride event. He also agreed with the full circuit's refusal to hear a school district's appeal of a decision that found it unconstitutional for a school to bar a gay student from wearing a gay pride T-shirt.

—Then there is **Solicitor General Elena Kagan**. The solicitor general's position is sometimes referred to as the “10th justice” because of the importance of the role before the nation's highest court. From the moment President Obama nominated Kagan to the position, speculation began that she would eventually be his nominee to the court. She was a clerk for liberal Justice Thurgood Marshall and, as dean of Harvard Law School, defended a non-discrimination policy that barred military recruiters because of their discrimination against gays. That, coupled with her status as single and having served as a research assistant for the great defender of gay rights, Laurence Tribe, will no doubt sound an alarm for right-wing conservatives.

—**7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Diane Wood** clerked for liberal Justice Harry Blackmun and was appointed by President Bill Clinton. She has a mixed record on gay-related cases—something that probably bodes well for her prospects for confirmation. In 2000, she joined a panel decision against a gay man, Robert Mueller, who violated the terms of his release from prison for having refused to file his taxes because he could not file a joint return with his partner. But two years later, she dissented from a panel decision that found no fault in a school district's failure to prevent harassment of a teacher for being gay. She also dissented from a 1998 panel decision that allowed students to object to their student fees going to gay groups and other organizations of which they disapproved.

—**Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano**, appointed by Obama, was governor of Arizona and, prior to that, its attorney general. As governor, she said she opposed an amendment to the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage but her reasoning was not that such a ban would be unconstitutional—rather it was because the state already had a statute that banned marriage equality. Like Kagan, she is unmarried and subject to frequent speculation about her sexual orientation even though, according to the Arizona Republic, she has described herself as “just a straight, single workaholic.”

—Clinton appointed **D.C. Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Merrick Garland** to the appeals bench, and Garland clerked for one of the high court's liberal icons, William Brennan. However, he is the most conservative of the seven nominee candidates. He joined a decision that upheld a gay Navy man's discharge even though two discharge boards said there was insufficient evidence to merit discharge. He joined a decision that upheld a Federal Communications Commission action against the operator of a low-power

radio broadcaster serving the gay community. And he joined then D.C. Circuit Judge John Roberts, Jr., in a decision rejecting police liability for misconduct by officers who sprayed a chemical deterrent on members of a pro-gay protest group during President George W. Bush's first inaugural parade.

—**Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm** is labeled a “long shot” by her home state newspaper, the Free Press, but her name keeps coming up. She opposed an amendment to the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage and, following that, sent a letter to constituents assuring them she was not ending benefits for domestic partners. She riled right-wing conservatives recently by issuing a statement calling on state legislators to pass an anti-bullying bill, which the American Family Association sees as part of the gay agenda.

Obama is meeting with several members of the Senate next week to hear their thoughts on filling Stevens' seat.

Richard Socarides, who worked in the Clinton White House, said he thinks all the potential candidates mentioned thus far would be “pretty outstanding” and “pretty reliable” when it comes

to gay-rights cases. But he said the president's chief considerations now are “who he connects with best on a visceral level” and “who is most likely to be confirmed.”

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Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

CHOI from cover

ply in Choi's case. In fact, 80 percent of all gay-related discharges are for telling—not because of jilted lovers or third parties, snitching on ex-partners or buddies. The decorated Army infantryman, an Iraq War veteran and Arabic language specialist, has indeed laid it all on the line, including his career. And no one, he says, will silence Choi, who holds place as a national poster man for repeal-the-ban efforts on Capitol Hill.

In Boston recently, Choi discussed his one-man advocacy. “Some people were pretty nervous,” Choi told a packed ballroom at a black-tie gala fundraiser. “Nervous when I returned to serve with my unit. They thought maybe the Army is trying to get [me] to shut up.”

“Some people were nervous,” he continued, “when I found myself in prison for protesting ‘don't ask, don't tell,’ in front of the White House.” Nervous, Choi continued, “because they thought maybe the federal government was trying to prevent me from coming to such a wonderful event.”

“Well, for those of you are nervous—look around,” Choi said, referring to the 1,300 (mostly) males in attendance at Fenway Health's annual Men's Event.

“I am still standing in front of you today. I am still speaking up, still telling the truth. I am still proud of who I am and still serving my country. And yes, I am still gay.”

The audience roared with approval.

Choi traveled to Boston April 10 to receive the prestigious Congressman Gerry Studds Visibility Award from LGBT medical center Fenway Health for Choi's outspoken leadership on the national level.

During an interview afterwards, Choi discussed what he calls “pernicious” the nearly 17-year-old federal law and Defense Department policy that boots gay soldiers who tell the truth about themselves.

Choi has grown impatient, he said, explaining his activism. “Any civil disobedience has to be tied to strategy,” he said, referring to his peaceful White House protest on March 18. “As I understand it, the president is the only person right now who can take the lead this year,” Choi said.

That's why Choi refuses to let Obama off the hook. The president, he insists, has to include repeal language in the defense bill. It's a strategy that Democrats employed successfully last year to enact hate crimes legislation.

And yet Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, can also slip repeal language into the defense bill. But, “if Sen. Levi does not have cover through

executive action with the defense authorization bill,” Choi believes, “it's going to be very difficult for him, particularly this year” to lift the ban.

Because it is federal law, as well as Pentagon policy, repeal of DADT must come legislatively. “Of course, Congress has to repeal the law,” Choi said. “We know that.” Meanwhile, President Obama could put an end to discharges of gay soldiers by issuing a “stop-loss” order, Choi insists.

Under federal law (specifically, 10 U.S.C. Sec. 12305), the president, as the commander-in-chief, fact holds power to issue a “stop-loss” an order that would halt, at least temporarily, all pending DADT discharges, including Choi's. As a May 2009 Palm Center report explains, “Congress grants the president authority to suspend the separation of military members during any period of national emergency,” such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the time clock for congressional action to repeal DADT this year keeps on ticking. Accordingly, Choi's activism gains heightened urgency.

Sure enough, Choi has his critics. In fact, one gay activist called the White House protest “politically unsophisticated beyond belief,” adding “It's a shame that our community needs to be educated about the political process and they don't get it,” Phil Attey told local gay media in Washington, D.C., “They don't understand that Congress needs to be moved on this issue and that people across the country have the power to do that. And if they're going to get them to yell and scream at the president, we're going to fail, we're going to lose.”

But Choi takes exception. “The president said it's our responsibility to keep the pressure on leaders like him,” he said, adding that is why “I've got to keep talking and educating people.”

Other critics admonish Choi for being arrested in combat fatigues. “The [military] uniform is for a purpose,” he said. “If we are not using it to stand up to those who are oppressing us, the we are desecrating it.”

And yet Choi has strong defenders. Richard Socarides, former White House advisor to President Bill Clinton, offered this perspective: “The president has been slow to act despite his promise to the contrary. To those who complain about Dan's actions, I would say, put yourself in his shoes. He has been misled by his commander-in-chief, treated as a second class citizen by the country he was willing to give his life for, then told to wait indefinitely for justice, while he faces the loss of his job. I'd say his actions were quite measured under the circumstances.”

Anti-bullying actions face uncertain path

BY DANA RUDOLPH
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

It doesn't always pay off to have a seat at the table.

Case in point: The Obama administration's proposal to reform the nation's educational system includes no specific call for anti-bullying programs in schools, and no mention of protections for students from harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This is despite the fact that an openly gay man with considerable experience in combating such bullying heads the Department of Education (DOE) Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. And it comes despite having a push by the authors of two bills that would give schools strong incentives to enact LGBT-inclusive anti-bullying measures for similar language in any educational reform bill.

Several bullying-related suicides in the past year have brought the issue of school bullying into a prominent media spotlight. Victims in the first three months of 2010 include 15-year-old Phoebe Prince of Massachusetts, 12-year-old Kimberly Linczeski of Michigan, and 13-year-old Jon Carmichael of Texas. And nearly two-thirds of middle and high school students report being harassed or assaulted during the past year, according to the most recent report (2005) commissioned by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

LGBT students are particularly vulnerable. A 2007 survey by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education found that high school students who identified as LGBT were almost five times more likely to attempt suicide than others. And in two high-profile cases just last year, two children committed suicide after being subjected to bullying based on the perception of other students that they were gay. Both children were 11 years old: Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover of Massachusetts and Jaheem Herrera of Georgia.

According to GLSEN, the vast majority of LGBT students surveyed (86 percent) said they experience harassment at school because of their sexual orientation, and most (61 percent) said they feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation.

Transgender students face even higher levels of harassment, a 2009 GLSEN study found.

President Obama last month released a



Kevin Jennings. Photo by Patsy Lynch

41-page "Blueprint for Reform" of the nation's educational system—a reform he hopes can begin when Congress reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as "No Child Left Behind." The "Blueprint" includes one mention of bullying—in the context of discussing a proposed new "Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students" program to replace the existing "Safe and Drug Free Schools" program. Under the existing program, about \$191 million is divided up among the states; but under the new program, schools, districts, and their community-based "partners" can compete for grants to address issues specific to making schools safe and healthy for students. It will require schools to assess needs for safe school program funding through surveys of students, parents, and teachers, among others.

Both the current and proposed incarnations of the safe schools program come under the purview of DOE's Assistant Deputy Secretary Kevin Jennings. Jennings, head of DOE's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, is a former teacher who co-founded GLSEN to help promote safe and healthy environments in schools for LGBT youth. His appointment in July of last year was both hailed by the LGBT community and criticized by right-wing opponents who claimed he would promote a "homosexual agenda."

A spokesperson for Jennings said he has a "hectic schedule" and "will not be able to accommodate" a request for an interview "at this

time." The office did not respond to subsequent requests for responses to questions by e-mail.

Spokespeople for GLSEN and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) say they have been among more than 100 groups of all types that have attended open forums sponsored by Jennings' Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools to discuss the proposed new program. They say they have also offered advice to the office about the program.

Ellen Kahn, director of the HRC Family Project, says the plans for a survey to assess school needs concerning successful, safe, and healthy students will include the physical environment of the school, respect for diversity, wellness, harassment, and more. At one place on the survey, Kahn says, students will be able to indicate whether they are experiencing bullying or harassment based on any of several factors, including sexual orientation and gender.

"There's a real interest in including all kinds of voices and getting input from experts and a real respect for people who are in the field," said Kahn.

Two pending House bills, however, want more.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) introduced by Rep. Linda Sánchez, D-Calif., last May, seeks to require schools that receive any federal funds to implement and report on anti-bullying programs. The bill, HR 2262, would define bullying as hostile conduct that is directed at a student based on his or her actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, among other attributes.

The Sánchez bill has 101 co-sponsors (including four Republicans) and is structured as a set of revisions to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools

and Communities Act. The Act is a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), better known as "No Child Left Behind." No Child Left Behind was the major educational policy implemented by Congress at the behest of President George W. Bush and it is the policy that President Obama's "Blueprint" seeks to reform.

The second bill currently pending in Congress is the Student Nondiscrimination Act (SNDA), introduced by openly gay Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.). HR 4530 seeks to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in any program or activity receiving federal funds. It includes "harassment" in its definition of discrimination and has 82 co-sponsors (including one Republican). A spokesperson for Rep. Polis said the Congressman hopes the bill will also become part of ESEA, but will push for it as a standalone bill if necessary.

Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., will be introducing a Senate companion bill to SNDA in the coming weeks, his office said.

The provisions of these bills are not mentioned in President Obama's "Blueprint," and there is no indication yet as to whether the provisions will be included in the larger educational reform bill that Congress will eventually consider.

Next week: The Obama administration has shown signs that it takes bullying—including bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity—more seriously than its predecessors. So, how important is it that LGBT-related bullying be enumerated in the president's reform legislation?

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Sens. Jared Polis (left) and Al Franken.

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Janice Langbehn and three of her four adopted children the day they spread some of Lisa Pond's ashes at Mt. Rainer in Washington, on what would have been Pond's 40th birthday.



Actress Jamie Lee Curtis was honored in 2007, the same event where Janice Langbehn shared her story. They are pictured here with three of Langbehn's children.

HOSPITAL from cover

federal Medicare and Medicaid funding, which is almost every hospital, to allow patients to designate who may visit them. It also calls for help for hospitals in complying with healthcare directives and other documents, and it asks HHS to conduct a study of healthcare barriers facing LGBTs.

It was just a coincidence that earlier that week Jackson Health System and Jackson Memorial Hospital issued a statement changing their policies to be more responsive to the needs of LGBT families, but Jackson stopped short of saying they did anything wrong in the Langbehn-Pond case, and they did not apologize to Lang-

behn and their three adopted children (Danielle, David and Katie). The family has another son, Michael, who was not with them at the time.

While her partner was dying, this is what Langbehn encountered: "A social worker appeared to inform me that I was 'in an anti-gay city and state.' He explained that this meant I would not be allowed to see Lisa or make decisions about her care without a Health Care Proxy. I asked for his name and fax number and within 20 minutes I had contacted close friends in Olympia, Wash., who raced to our house, found all our legal documents including our Durable Power of Attorney, Living Wills and Advance Directives and faxed them to the hospital." But the hospital still denied Langbehn access and Pond died without her

family at her side.

Langbehn and her attorneys from Lambda Legal lost their federal lawsuit last year against Jackson, but the hospital did change their policy after meeting with LGBT organizations and individuals. The meetings began in May of 2009, and were possibly timed as a result of The New York Times running a report on the case. Obama told Langbehn April 15 that he, too, was motivated by the story about her family in The Times last May.

Langbehn, speaking April 17 with Windy City Times, said she was shocked to learn that the White House would be calling her. About two hours ahead of the call, she had the heads up, and one hour later an aide called and said stay off the line, that Obama would be calling.

"He said, 'Hello Janice, this is Barack Obama,' like he was my neighbor," Langbehn said. "He apologized for the loss of Lisa, and how we were treated, and called it outrageous. He talked about what his memo meant. I thanked him. I told him I was very honored and humbled that our family would be known to him. I thanked him on behalf of all families impacted by this change."

Langbehn said the president's getting involved "really hit home for the kids." She said her youngest, David, said it now means that "any other kids like me that have two moms, and one of the moms is dying, they get to see her."

She said the outpouring of support has been amazing, including appearances on national talk shows. The response had been universally supportive until late Friday night, April 16, when Jackson Memorial was trying to push back, saying that Langbehn's allegations of discrimination were false.

"But they won't say why I wasn't allowed to see her for eight hours," Langbehn countered. "Or why she was not moved to a room where her family could see her. So apologize for something, if it was not a gay issue. They let her die with her partner of 18 years and their children right outside."

"Last night, I was counting all the people I had contact with during those eight hours," Langbehn said. It totaled about 20 minutes of conversations, with different people for a few minutes each. "There was no continuum of care, no compassion," she said.

"Lambda Legal applauds Jackson Memorial's work with the coalition to review and expand policies and training materials to help address the needs of same-sex couples and their families, but we urge the hospital to finish the job," said Beth Littrell, senior staff attorney in Lambda Legal's Southern Regional Office based in Atlanta, who was lead counsel on Langbehn v. Jackson Memorial. "The hospital should issue

an official apology to the Langbehn-Pond family and JHS should have a grievance procedure in the case of visitation denial that can be acted on quickly in an emergency situation."

Last September, the Court rejected Lambda Legal's lawsuit filed against Jackson on behalf of Langbehn, ruling that no law required the hospital to allow her and their children to see Pond.

The subject listed on Obama's April 15 memo is: "Respecting the Rights of Hospital Patients to Receive Visitors and to Designate Surrogate Decision Makers for Medical Emergencies."

"The steps that President Obama outlined are a great leap forward in addressing discrimination affecting LGBT patients and their families," said Kevin Cathcart, Lambda Legal executive director. "These measures are intended to ensure that no family will have to experience what the Langbehn-Pond family did that night at Jackson Memorial Hospital. We are so proud of Janice and her family—she stood up and told her story and it made a difference."

Some saw the memo as only a partial solution to larger problems.

"The President's directive is a small, but welcome step forward," said Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry. "The President's memo is particularly noteworthy in its acknowledgment of how same-sex couples are uniquely affected by marriage discrimination and are thus in need of this kind of remedial presidential directive. Of course, the real cure is to end exclusion from marriage, pass the federal Respective for Marriage Act, and provide all families the full measure of protections. Piecemeal steps, addressing one protection at a time, will take up a lot more time than either the Administration or American families can afford."

What follows is the Obama memo in full: "There are few moments in our lives that call for greater compassion and companionship than when a loved one is admitted to the hospital. In these hours of need and moments of pain and anxiety, all of us would hope to have a hand to hold, a shoulder on which to lean—a loved one to be there for us, as we would be there for them.

"Yet every day, all across America, patients are denied the kindnesses and caring of a loved one at their sides—whether in a sudden medical emergency or a prolonged hospital stay. Often, a widow or widower with no children is denied the support and comfort of a good friend. Members of religious orders are sometimes unable to choose someone other than an immediate family member to visit them and make medical decisions on their behalf. Also uniquely affected are gay and lesbian Americans who are often barred

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see pg. 7

HOSPITAL from pg. 6

from the bedsides of the partners with whom they may have spent decades of their lives—unable to be there for the person they love, and unable to act as a legal surrogate if their partner is incapacitated.

“For all of these Americans, the failure to have their wishes respected concerning who may visit them or make medical decisions on their behalf has real consequences. It means that doctors and nurses do not always have the best information about patients’ medications and medical histories and that friends and certain family members are unable to serve as intermediaries to help communicate patients’ needs. It means that a stressful and at times terrifying experience for patients is senselessly compounded by indignity and unfairness. And it means that all too often, people are made to suffer or even to pass away alone, denied the comfort of companionship in their final moments while a loved one is left worrying and pacing down the hall.

“Many States have taken steps to try to put an end to these problems. North Carolina recently amended its Patients’ Bill of Rights to give each patient “the right to designate visitors who shall receive the same visitation privileges as the patient’s immediate family members, regardless of whether the visitors are legally related to the patient”—a right that applies in every hospital in the State. Delaware, Nebraska and Minnesota have adopted similar laws.

“My Administration can expand on these important steps to ensure that patients can receive compassionate care and equal treatment during their hospital stays. By this memorandum, I request that you take the following steps:

“1. Initiate appropriate rulemaking, pursuant to your authority under 42 U.S.C. 1395x and other relevant provisions of law, to ensure that

hospitals that participate in Medicare or Medicaid respect the rights of patients to designate visitors. It should be made clear that designated visitors, including individuals designated by legally valid advance directives (such as durable powers of attorney and health care proxies), should enjoy visitation privileges that are no more restrictive than those that immediate family members enjoy. You should also provide that participating hospitals may not deny visitation privileges on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. The rulemaking should take into account the need for hospitals to restrict visitation in medically appropriate circumstances as well as the clinical decisions that medical professionals make about a patient’s care or treatment.

“2. Ensure that all hospitals participating in Medicare or Medicaid are in full compliance with regulations, codified at 42 CFR 482.13 and 42 CFR 489.102(a), promulgated to guarantee that all patients’ advance directives, such as durable powers of attorney and health care proxies, are respected, and that patients’ representatives otherwise have the right to make informed decisions regarding patients’ care. Additionally, I request that you issue new guidelines, pursuant to your authority under 42 U.S.C. 1395cc and other relevant provisions of law, and provide technical assistance on how hospitals participating in Medicare or Medicaid can best comply with the regulations and take any additional appropriate measures to fully enforce the regulations.

“3. Provide additional recommendations to me, within 180 days of the date of this memorandum, on actions the Department of Health and Human Services can take to address hospital visitation, medical decisionmaking, or other health care issues that affect LGBT patients and their families.”

Janice Langbehn posted comments on her blog (www.thelpkids.com) about the day’s events: “For the past three years I have been speaking at large and small events, posting here on the blog, and have been saying over and over: that holding someone’s hand as they die is NOT a GAY right, it’s a HUMAN right; and today President Barack Obama agreed with me. He knew Lisa’s name, and he knew our story, and he knew the long-awaited apology, that Jackson Memorial STILL refuses to give, why is that? The President could.”

She continued: “Thank you to Lambda Legal for so bravely taking our case, and in our loss and dismissal more has come than winning the largest jury settlement could have made the changes that happened today. I said at the time of Lisa’s death with one stroke of a pen, the coroner in Florida took away our 18 years by listing Lisa as single, never married, but today with a stroke of the pen, the President recognized we were a couple deserving of all the same rights of straight Americans.”

In a speech to the Family Equality Council later the same year Pond died, Langbehn spoke eloquently of her late partner: “Lisa Pond was a wonderful caring person who gave endlessly to others. She took care of countless children when they were abused or neglected. She nurtured even more through her community service and as a Girl Scout Leader. Through organ donation,



The last family portrait: Lisa Pond (left) and Janice Langbehn with three of their four adopted children, boarding the R Family Cruise Feb. 18, 2007. Pond, 39, suffered a brain aneurysm and died soon after.

four people received another chance at life when they received her kidneys, liver and heart. As for me, and our wonderful children, we are left with a hole in our hearts that will never be filled.”

Lisa Pond, and Janice Langbehn, continue to give: They inspired a president to change regulations, and to change history.

SIDEBAR

Case points out why marriage matters

Just as Obama issued his health memo pushing for LGBT access in hospital settings, activists pointed out how anything short of full marriage may not be enough to stop institutional bias. And even marriage may not be enough.

Harold Scull and Clay Green, together 20 years, suffered a horrible indignity, despite having all of their legal paperwork in order.

The National Coalition for Lesbian Rights, in *Greene v. County of Sonoma et al*, is fighting for Greene, whose partner died.

“In the 33 years of our organization’s history, this case is perhaps among the most tragic NCLR has ever been involved in,” said NCLR Executive Director Kate Kendell. “Clay and Harold had taken all of the necessary precautions, including living wills and powers of attorneys, to protect them in a time of crisis. Not only were their relationship and legal documents ignored, Clay and Harold literally lost everything. These appalling events demonstrate how urgently same-sex couples need full equality rather than a patchwork of rights that can be dismissed and ignored in a culture that still treats LGBT people as second-class citizens. This never should have happened to Clay and Harold.”

“We can no longer watch in silence as our community endures such inhumanity,” said GetEQUAL in a statement. “Join us and our friends at the National Center for Lesbian Rights in sending a letter to President Obama, asking him to fulfill the American promise of ‘liberty and justice for all’ by immediately calling Congress to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT), and to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).”

Here is a summary from NCLR’s Web site:

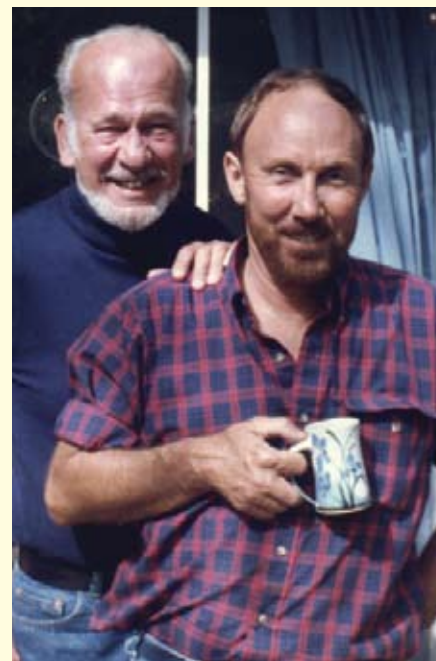
“One evening, Harold fell down the front

steps of their home and was taken to the hospital. Based on their medical directives alone, Clay should have been consulted in Harold’s care from the first moment. Tragically, county and health care workers instead refused to allow Clay to see Harold in the hospital. The county then ultimately went one step further by isolating the couple from each other, placing the men in separate nursing homes.

“Ignoring Clay’s significant role in Harold’s life, the county continued to treat Harold like he had no family and went to court seeking the power to make financial decisions on his behalf. Outrageously, the county represented to the judge that Clay was merely Harold’s ‘roommate.’ The court denied their efforts, but did grant the county limited access to one of Harold’s bank accounts to pay for his care.

“What happened next is even more chilling: without authority, without determining the value of Clay and Harold’s possessions accumulated over the course of their 20 years together or making any effort to determine which items belonged to whom, the county took everything Harold and Clay owned and auctioned off all of their belongings. Adding further insult to grave injury, the county removed Clay from his home and confined him to a nursing home against his will. The county workers then terminated Clay and Harold’s lease and surrendered the home they had shared for many years to the landlord.

“Three months after he was hospitalized, Harold died in the nursing home. Because of the county’s actions, Clay missed the final months he should have had with his partner of 20 years. Compounding this tragedy, Clay has literally nothing left of the home he had shared with Harold or the life he was living up until the day that Harold fell, because he has been



Harold Scull (left) and Clay Greene.

unable to recover any of his property. The only memento Clay has is a photo album that Harold painstakingly put together for Clay during the last three months of his life.

“With the help of a dedicated and persistent court-appointed attorney, Anne Dennis of Santa Rosa, Clay was finally released from the nursing home. Ms. Dennis, along with Stephen O’Neill and Margaret Flynn of Tarkington, O’Neill, Barrack & Chong, now represent Clay in a lawsuit against the county, the auction company, and the nursing home, with technical assistance from NCLR. A trial date has been set for July 16, 2010 in the Superior Court for the County of Sonoma.”

See www.nclrights.org

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Jennifer Brier and John D'Emilio at Out at CHM. Photo by Tracy Baim

LOCAL NEWS

D'Emilio talks Nixon and gay liberation

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Chicago History Museum's (CHM's) ongoing series, Out at CHM, featured local gay historian John D'Emilio April 15. D'Emilio, a professor of history and gender and women's studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, presented a piece entitled "Richard Nixon, Gay Liberationist?" Speaking to a packed auditorium, D'Emilio discussed the implications of his research for scholars of queer history. He argued that while it was tempting to read the virtual end of the harassment of gay bars in the 1970s as a sign of the success of queer resistance to the Daley machine, the truth might be more prosaic and linked to wider national political changes of the time.

For much of its relatively short life as a field of study, gay history has been seen as the uncovering of the hitherto invisible lives and events surrounding gays and lesbians. In the 1970s in particular, a "few women and men ... decided that their contribution to this liberation project was that they'd help break the silence, shatter the invisibility, and end the isolation by uncovering a 'hidden history' of same-gender-loving and gender-crossing people," D'Emilio said. As examples of the research emerging from this period, D'Emilio discussed his own work as well as that of pioneers like Alan Berube, who wrote *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women During World War II*, which focuses on how "the war years proved decisive in helping to forge a collective lesbian and gay identity, and in helping to build urban communities." The '70s also saw the publication of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, by Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis, about the world of working-class lesbians in Buffalo, New York between the 1930 and the 1960s. This was a departure from the standard gay history of urban areas.

While such works were different in their subjects and scope, they were similar in that they are stories of resistance in which "The key actors and movers are gay men, lesbians, and gender-crossers." His research on Chicago at first seemed to affirm previous gay histories. Queer Chicago during the 1960s was witness to a tremendous amount of repression. For instance, "[c]ity law prohibited wearing clothing for the purpose of concealing one's sex," which meant that women who wore short hair and trousers with zippers down the front could be arrested. Gay and lesbian bars were targets of harassment by the police.

But, according to D'Emilio, "by the second half of the 1960s, signs of organized political resistance by lesbians and gay men were grow-

ing" and Chicago became one of the earliest homes of the gay liberation movement. In the early 1970s, gays and lesbians were refusing to remain silent, he said: "They publicly identified and named Chicago police officers who made it a practice to go after queers." By the mid-1970s, police harassment of gay bars had virtually ceased and the resulting increase in gay ownership of bars and businesses led to the creation of the Lakeview neighborhood.

Seen in the light of typical gay-history narratives, it would appear that the police harassment ended as a direct result of queer resistance but, in fact, "The harassment of gay bars was just one piece in a larger story of bribery and corruption, of police and organized crime, and of the political machine of Mayor Richard Daley," D'Emilio said. D'Emilio went on to explain that the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 was the most significant factor in ending the systematic raids on the gay bars.

Richard Daley was "described in the 1960s as the second most powerful Democratic party politician after the President" and was credited with having delivered the 1960 election to Kennedy. The election of a Republican President enabled what had seemed impossible: an investigation of corruption in Daley's Chicago. In 1970, the U.S. attorney investigated the killings of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and the resulting report led to 14 indictments. As D'Emilio pointed out, "If the idea of Richard Nixon and his attorney general supporting justice for black power militants seems to stretch credibility, then you can appreciate how intent this new administration was on discrediting Daley and undermining his political power."

In a tightly knit system of extortion and bribery, where police officers loyal to the Daley machine could extract payoffs from bar owners without fear of punishment, it was unlikely that protests by "a few dozen gay liberationists and lesbian feminists" had any effect on police corruption. But in 1969, the FBI and the Justice Department began investigating a tavern shake-down by the police.

Between 1972 and 1974, D'Emilio said, "56 police officers—including the Captain of the district that had the largest concentration of gay bars in the city—were indicted on corruption charges ... 34 police officers were found guilty, and the scandal forced the resignation of Chicago's police superintendent" and "[i]n the wake of almost two years of relentless publicity exposing police extortion of tavern owners, it was no longer possible for the police to harass and intimidate gay bars—their owners, their workers, their patrons—at will." The result, he said, was the end of "systematic and pervasive police harassment of bars," which did not mean that there were not sporadic instances of the same by individual homophobic cops. Yet, he added, "queer resistance is barely a piece of this story, and anything 'queer' is quite marginal to the narrative."

D'Emilio pointed out that this particular history

did not mean that the earlier historical work by him and other scholars, which centralized queer resistance, was no longer true. Rather, he said, his hope was that "by embedding queer stories in a larger political economy, a larger national political history, they become less separated and less self-contained, less ghettoized, less inside a 'lavender bubble,' and instead be seen as more integral to, more connected to broader narratives of U.S. history."

Students and allies rally for safe schools

BY MICKI LEVENTHAL

Demanding that the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) immediately implement a grievance procedure for "students experiencing violence at the hands of the school system," protesters marched and chanted in front of the offices of CPS CEO Ron Huberman April 13. The action was part of the youth-led Safe and Affirming Education Campaign developed by Gender JUST (Justice United for Society Transformation), a grassroots social-justice organization.

Huberman and Renae Ogletree, CPS director of student development, first met with the activists June 15, 2009 at the Gender JUST-sponsored Safe and Affirming Education Community Forum. At the forum, the two openly gay CPS administrators heard testimony from students about harassment, bullying and discriminatory behavior toward LGBT and NGC (non-gender-conforming) students. Members of Gender JUST and several ally organizations presented demands that included: gender identity and expression be added to CPS's non-discrimination policy; creation of a district-wide accountability officer; additional training for teachers and other CPS employees on LGBT issues; and implementation of a student-developed grievance procedure (detailed in the June 17, 2009 issue of *Windy City Times*).

Ahkia Daniels, a recent graduate of South Shore High School and lesbian member of Gender JUST, explained that the group is tired of waiting for the grievance procedure to be implemented. "We're just sick of CPS not cooperating with us," she said. "We were supposed to have a meeting with them and they canceled. So we said we've got to go stand outside. We've met with Huberman about three times. We talk to him and we talk to him, but we're a direct action group and we're sick of just talking about it. Our point person was Renae Ogletree, but she has been sick. We were promised a new point person, but it never happened. We are sick of walking around in circles."

"If you're harassed by a teacher you can report it, but how far will it go?" Daniels said. "We are trying to get a misconduct report for teachers and staff." She emphasized that the

grievance process they are seeking is not only about LGBTQ issues of safety. "We want to make it safe for everybody." The grievance process would provide a protocol for students to file complaints against CPS employees and have the report tracked through to higher levels if necessary, until the complaint is resolved.

Activists at the rally included current CPS high school students and recent graduates as well as what Sam Finkelstein, youth organizer for Gender JUST, described as "adult allies." The rally began at 4 p.m. with a group of about 15 and swelled to close to 50 within an hour. The protestors, who represented every aspect of the diverse LGBT community, conducted a loud but orderly sidewalk march and then gathered for individual "testimonies" about the unsafe environment in the schools and the need for safe and affirming education for all students.

"I'm here because I'm tired of it not being okay to be me," said Skitzl, a genderqueer student at Clemente. "I get it all the time [harassed] in school because it's not taught. It's not educated that it's okay to be like this, that it's okay to just be yourself. If they did [educate about gender identity and presentation] there wouldn't be such a violence problem. A lot of people in the school system are taught this narrowness. Society teaches that you have to fit in a box. And most of us don't, as you can see."

"Personally I've never had anything happen to me at school, because I'm in touch with all these wonderful people who have voice, but unfortunately not everyone has voice and the reason we are here today is to help everybody be heard," said Adrian, a gay man who recently graduated from Kelly High School and is planning on attending Harold Washington College in the fall. "If we want reform at CPS if we want that grievance process, let's hear it," leading the crowd in a chant.

Several other students and CPS alumni spoke including Kokumo, a transgender woman of color who sang a song and called for accountability in the schools.

"Even if it was just the 20 youth who are part of Gender JUST, we would consider this a success," said Finkelstein. "It's amazing that other organizations and other folks have come down here to support us. We're really happy about it."

During the rally a number of cars honked in support and quite a few passersby stopped to learn about the issues, accept literature and congratulate the students. Police officers were on duty; they ensured that the sidewalk remained accessible for pedestrians but did not otherwise interfere with the rally. Bill Greaves, director/community liaison of the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues of the Commission on Human Relations, was on hand to see that things went smoothly. No CPS representatives came out during the rally to speak with the students, and the crowd disbursed shortly after 5 p.m.



Protesters at the Gender JUST rally. Photo by Micki Leventhal



Michal Kwiecien. Photo by M. Alejos, UIC

UIC showcases new sexuality studies

BY YASMIN NAIR

The University of Illinois at Chicago hosted its third annual Lavender Forum April 15, an event co-sponsored by the Gender and Sexuality Center and the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues. The forum began in 2008 as a daylong series of presentations by faculty and students. This year, it focused on student work that included the winners of a paper competition and the recipients of the Gender and Sexuality Center's Kellogg Rainbow Merit Scholarship.

The afternoon faculty presentation was by Jennifer Brier, assistant professor of history and gender and women's studies. Brier recently gained tenure and published her first book, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis*. She spoke of how her book changed significantly from its roots in her earlier dissertation project. Brier's focus and targeted audience were the students and scholars about to start their research or mired in the difficulty of getting beyond writing bottlenecks. In a larger context, she also spoke of how scholars in sexuality studies have an especially difficult time in academia because their work is too often not considered legitimate enough and of what it means, "to write about topics outside the mainstream."

As an example of the issues sexuality scholars might run into, Brier gave an example from her own book. She said that the original version included images from an activist organization that featured male frontal nudity. At the last minute, the publisher decided these could not be published. As a compromise, Brier reached an agreement that the book would include the url to a website where the images could be found (after contacting the organization and arranging for them to be put up in perpetuity). Brier used this instance of an example of the still-rigid norms and discomfort around sexuality that exists even in the supposedly liberal world of academic publishing. She went on to discuss the kinds of discipline and structure required to get a large project finished, and that aspect of her talk appeared to particularly resonate with students and faculty alike.

The afternoon session featured graduate students presenting their future research projects. Milka Ramirez, a 2009 Kellogg Rainbow Merit scholar, gave a talk titled "An examination of homophobia and social work practice among a sample of school social workers." Ramirez said she began the project after hearing the news about Lawrence King, the eighth-grade California student who was killed by a classmate. She pointed out that the "reports never mentioned the social worker" even though he or she would have been the school official most in touch with the students.

Ramirez's study will examine social workers' attitudes with such leading questions as: what is the degree of homophobia among school social workers, and how might this be affected by race, age and other variables? Citing the statistic that their peers harass 80 percent of LGBT students and that 30 percent are likely to skip school regularly, Ramirez stressed the importance of such

research that might help reduce incidents such as the killing of King.

Michal Kwiecien, a graduate student in the department of history, presented on "Homosexuality and the construction of sexual deviance in communist Poland." According to him, post-1945 Communist Poland rarely discussed issues of sexuality and the communist regime generally "viewed alternative sexuality as deviant" and as a "legacy of the bourgeois past." From 1940-1989, Poland was engaged in configuring a national identity that was simultaneously communist and Polish even as the conservative Church continued to exert tremendous influence in daily life.

Modernization, according to Kwiecien, has brought about "competing understandings of gender and sexuality." In 1985, around the time of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic and the peak of the Solidarity movement, the regime instituted a program named Operation Hyacinth, which criminalized gays by linking "homosexual environments to transmission sites of AIDS" and maintained "pink files" to keep track of those known or understood to be gay. The long-term implication of this was that it created a homosexual resistance to the regime and created what could be termed a modern gay-rights movement in Poland.

Additional presentations included research on married bisexual women, violence against LGBT and men who have sex with men in India and a presentation by Affinity Community Services.

AFC's Munar to receive award

The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) has announced the recipients of its 2010 Positive Leadership Awards, and AIDS Foundation of Chicago's David Munar is among them.

Munar, Rebecca Haag of AIDS Action Council and AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, Naina Khanna of WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease) and Chris Collins of amFAR will receive the Positive Leadership Award for their work as leaders of the Coalition for a national AIDS strategy, according to an organizational press release.

Among the other recipients are U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and the late activist Dennis deLeon. The awards will be presented Monday, April 26, at NAPWA's annual AIDSWatch event in Washington, D.C.

Hearty Boys invite Huckabee

In light of a controversial talk former (and possibly future) GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee gave to New Jersey college students in which he compared legalizing same-sex marriage to polygamy, incest and drug use, local celebrity chefs the Hearty Boys (Dan Smith and Steve McDonagh, who are life and business partners) have invited him to dinner.

In a blog entry posted on Natespop.wordpress.com, McDonagh wrote, "Dan and I have been in a stable, monogamous, loving, positive, nurturing and healthy relationship for 13 years. We were blessed to adopt our son, Nate, at his birth 4 1/2 years ago.

"Sir, your comments likening my parenting my son to adopting a pet are beyond hurtful and dangerous. My love, passion and commitment to Nate is not one iota different than what you have for John Mark, David and Sarah. Our son is loved and cared for just as much. He feels just as loved and cared for. He is a happy, well adjusted little guy whom I fiercely love.

"Mr. Huckabee, I invite you to spend the evening with us at our home in Chicago next time you come through. You need to understand and see firsthand what a family like ours is like. We are no less a family than yours, and in fact, we are healthier and more stable than most."

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"GLAAD IS A FUNNY LITTLE ORGANIZATION, on the one hand these self-appointed sentries for positive representation of gays in media, on the other a kind of nutless institution reluctant to get their Pradas dirty on the way to the awards show by, say, recognizing important but confrontational work like Kirby Dick's *Outrage*. It's baffling, really, when you



(A)ll queer studies is gobbledygook.

—Larry Kramer



Photo by Andres Duque



"WHEN I HEARD KATHY GRIFFIN WAS GOING TO BE A SPOKESWOMAN FOR Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I wondered about that. I have great respect for her as an advocate. But if (the Human Rights Campaign) thinks that having a rally at Freedom Plaza (March 18) with a comedienne is the right approach, I have to wonder. Don't Ask, Don't Tell is not a joking matter to me. To be at Freedom Plaza and not at the White House or Congress? Who are they trying to influence? I felt like they were just trying to speak to themselves. If that's the best the lobbying groups and HRC can do, then I don't know how these powerful groups are supposed to represent our community. Kathy Griffin and (HRC president) Joe Solmonese said they would march with me to the White House (March 18) but didn't. I feel so betrayed by them." — *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* activist Lt. Dan Choi to *Newsweek*, March 22.

"(SARAH PALIN) IS CAPABLE OF GENERATING A PERSONALITY CULT—much, much more so than Obama, because she can harness Christianity to her divine destiny. The power of this kind of appeal—of a charismatic, beautiful woman, an icon of the pro-life cause, persecuted by the evil elites, demonized by liberals, and commanding the biggest military on earth—should not in my view be underestimated. Know fear." — *Gay* writer Andrew Sullivan on his blog, Feb. 6.

"FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, I HAVE STOOD WITH MY COLLEAGUES each morning of the session, placed my hand over my heart and pledged 'liberty and justice for all,' and yet repeatedly witnessed blatant disregard of those so in need of equal protections in the name of 'family values.'" — *Openly lesbian Utah state Rep. Christine Johnson* announcing March 4 that she won't seek re-election.

"MOST OF THESE TEA-BAGGERS WOULD HAVE BEEN WEARING white robes and hoods in the 1950s. But at least back then, no self-respecting politician would be in bed with them." — *National Center for Lesbian Rights Executive Director Kate Kendell* on her Facebook page, March 22.

"(A)LL QUEER STUDIES (IS) GOBBLEDYGOOK. You people do seem to find unlimited ways to obfuscate the obvious." — *ACT UP* founder Larry Kramer in a letter to the queer academics who read *The Gay & Lesbian Review*. See tinyurl.com/yz64yrz.

"IF SOMEONE ASKED ME TODAY, 'RICKY, WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?' I would answer 'the blood that runs through the streets of countries at war, child slavery, terrorism, the cynicism of some people in positions of power, the misinterpretation of faith.' But fear of my truth? Not at all! On the contrary, it fills me with strength and courage. This is just what I need especially now that I am the father of two beautiful boys that are so full of light and who with their outlook teach me new things every day. To keep living as I did up until today would be to indirectly diminish the glow that my kids were born with. Enough is enough. This has to change. This was not supposed to happen 5 or 10 years ago, it is supposed to happen now. Today is my day, this is my time, and this is my moment." — *Singer Ricky Martin* in a coming-out post on his Web site, March 29.

"WHATS GOING ON GANG? I'M DOING GREAT! Stronger than ever! I'm here relaxing @ home enjoying ur messages! I feel the love! Thanx for all! peace." — *Singer Ricky Martin* in a March 30 tweet, the day after he came out on his Web site.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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**SYLVIA
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'Snatching our humanity out of the fire of human cruelty'

It began organically—in the wee hours of a June morning in 1969, in the Greenwich Village section of New York City—with several brave men and women who'd grown tired of the government-sponsored persecution of them because of who they were.

It was a revolution. At the Stonewall Inn, our brothers and sisters fought for their lives and their dignity while igniting a movement for LGBT rights. Today we are humbled by our roots, and honored to be part of this movement that has evolved over the past 40 years.

Police raids were common for gay bars in the 1960s, but this one was different. The Black drag queens that join the fray alongside white gay men and lesbians at New York's Stonewall Inn didn't realize that they were the flash point for a movement. They were too busy fighting back marauding police, undeniably fighting for their lives and for their dignity, to realize what they had started.

It was a revolution. The very idea—the audacity—that gay men, lesbians, transgender and bisexual people could assert their humanity in the public arena and demand equal rights and justice under the law was unheard of in an America that said we were a diseased class of less-than-humans. They argued we were hell-bound and so psychiatrically impaired that we needed shock treatment, castration or, quite possibly, annihilation.

I remember being in Sabbath school, in my church on a Saturday morning in 1970 when it was announced that there had been something called a "gay pride parade" in Hollywood. This first gay pride parade so incensed my Sabbath School teacher, she spit out the following words, "Look at them walking down the street just like they were real people!" The next year I was out of the church, out of the closet and present at the 2nd Annual Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade.

Sydney Brinkley writes in *BlackLight* about that heady time in the early '70s:

"The 1970's were exciting years for the Gay movement. In the decade following the 1969 Stonewall riot, Lesbians and Gay men were organizing in increasing numbers, demanding freedom and equal rights, culminating in the first National Gay March on Washington in October 1979. For much of that time the public face of the Gay movement was white."

We began to see that this LGBT community touched all races, genders, ethnicities, class lines, income levels, religions and political affiliations.

Longtime activist Cary Alan Johnson speaks to the exhilarating energy of this time:

"In 1979, as a 19-year-old college student, I attended the first Black Gay Conference hosted by NCBG. It was an amazing experience, sitting in meetings and workshops with other Black LGBT talking about our lives and our priorities. The conference, which was even important because it was held at the Harambee House on the campus of Howard University, culminated in what was perhaps the first Black gay pride march, down Georgia Avenue, as we joined the hundreds of thousands who were participating in the National March on Washington. As a young man, just developing an identity in the midst of the shocking racism and homophobia of the

period, the Conference and the March filled me with hope for my future."

This energy needed to be harnessed and organized for the good of all.

Rev. Darlene Garner of Metropolitan Community Church was there from the beginning. According to her recollection, she relates that ABilly S. Jones was reading an article in *Ebony* magazine that contained derogatory or dismissive statements about LGBT people. Jones responded to the article, which became a rallying cry towards creating an organization for Black LGBT people. He placed ads in papers in the Washington, D.C., area and people responded.

Garner describes how it was in the beginning: "ABilly was the brainchild. We worked cooperatively together on the first national conference. At that point in LGBT history, the needs and points of view of African Americans were not reflected in the agendas of other national organizations. We created the National Coalition of Black Gays and Lesbians (NCBGL, originally NCBG), organizing several chapters and transforming those chapters into a national organization. We knew that we were making history..."

Sidney Brinkley, writing for *BlackLight*, sets the stage with the following:

"NCBG's emergence on the scene as a voice for Black Gays was perfectly timed and in 1979, during events leading up to and following the March on Washington, they would get the opportunity to test their growing clout."

Gil Gerald became the first director, and in 1979 they arranged to have a historic meeting at the White House. Sidney Brinkley describes the scene, and how to Mr. Jones, that meeting 30 years ago stands out as a particularly proud moment:

"I wore a white suit to go to the White House and meet with the White folks! Perhaps this doesn't sound like much now, but to the founders, all of whom were in that room, it was a high point of our activism."

Gerald left in 1986 and Renee McCoy became the director. Throughout the years of struggle, NCBGL was plagued by money problems, cash flow and staff burnout, and eventually had to close its doors 10 years after it had begun. Nonetheless, they set the stage for a foundation of dedicated activism on a national scale and the bravery and ramifications of those actions cannot be underestimated.

Continuing the momentum of a movement, Phill Wilson took up the mantle in 1987.

Wilson and Ruth Waters decided that there was a need for another national Black LGBT organization. This was fitting since much of LGBT activism was becoming more west coast centered and, after all, the great state of California is named after a Black lesbian—Queen Califia.

I remember walking up the steps to the apartment of Phill Wilson in Silver Lake. It was the headquarters for this new organization called the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum. The Forum, as it was fondly called, had its first national conference in Los Angeles in 1988.

It was exciting. It was exhausting. In 1989, Wilson had asked me to create a slide show for the second conference, also held in LA. I produced "We Have A Legacy," which chronicled a history of Black LGBT people. We realized that we couldn't be a national movement if we stayed in Los Angeles, so we went to Atlanta, Ga., for the third annual conference. Along the way, we were joined by luminaries like Angela Davis (before she came out), Cornel West, Michael Eric Dyson, Alice Walker, June Jordan, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, Iyanla Vanzant, Meshell Ndegeocello and many other bright lights and allies.

Alice Walker told us that it is "lethal to love a god who doesn't love you." We took that to heart.

West told us that the discrimination we faced was unearned, undeserved, unfair, unfounded, unwarranted, unjust and uncalled for. We believed him.

Keith Boykin was the executive director from September 1995 to February 1998. Writing in

The Gully, Boykin relates the following highlights of the forum:

"In October 1995, the Forum organized an historic Black gay contingent in the Million Man March and the following year it led the media effort against anti-gay gospel recording artists Angie and Debbie Winans. At the 20th Anniversary March in 1983, Black gay activists had to lobby march organizers to allow Black lesbian author Audre Lorde to address the crowd. At the 30th Anniversary March in 1993, Phill Wilson of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum spoke."

For 15 years, the forum held national conferences, hosted prominent and public intellectual speakers, put on workshops for self empowerment, and celebrated with awards and music to love ourselves. Money was a continuing struggle. The forum had to close its doors in 2003.

The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) began in December 2003 when African-American activist Keith Boykin decided that there needed to be a countervailing voice to Black clergy who were uniting with the religious right to work against LGBT rights. There needed to be a national organization that had as its core absolute equal rights and equal justice for same-gender loving people and transgender folk.

When things were heating up for a constitutional amendment prohibiting same sex marriage, many prominent Black clergy began meeting and organizing, flying to Washington D.C. to lobby the Congressional Black Caucus against any and all LGBT rights. Keith Boykin called together some activist friends and called a press conference stating we were here as open and proud Black LGBT people standing for our rights and standing against injustice. A reporter asked, "What is the name of your organization?" and Keith, thinking quickly on his feet said "the National Black Justice Coalition."

NBJC has been blessed with two dedicated, hard-working leaders: Our first CEO, H. Alexander Robinson, laid the foundation. Our new CEO, Sharon J. Lettman, has remarkable vision and will fight until the last drop of injustice is drained. NBJC will emphasize coalition as we go forward. That is the key word—forward. NBJC is at the beginning of a new era.

Today, Sharon J. Lettman, the new executive director of NBJC, states, "For more than five years, NBJC has provided leadership at the intersection of mainstream civil rights groups and mainstream LGBT organizations, advocating for the unique challenges and needs of the African American LGBT community that are often relegated to the sidelines.

The need for NBJC's mission is stronger than ever in the greater movement for justice and equality for all. Without authentic, meaningful representation and active participation from the African American community, it is not possible to effectively position LGBT equality within the broader civil rights context that it deserves."

Many of us still have the fire in the belly and work tirelessly to bring a little comfort to the broken hearted, the abandoned and the abused ... through the laws we helped change, through the attitudes we helped transform, through the religions we claimed as affirming, and in the families we love. We're here, we're queer, and it's not a coincidence. Not a happenstance. It has been a protracted march towards justice. Many have fallen along the way. We remember them. We honor them. We have snatched our humanity out of the fires of human cruelty and continue. We continue. And in the long journey of continuing, we have managed to radically change the aria of human cruelty to soliloquies of human equality.

For more information, please visit www.blacklightonline.com, www.thegully.com, www.nbjc.org and the Rainbow Project. The title is a quote from the writings of James Baldwin.

Dr. Sylvia Rhue is the director of religious affairs for the National Black Justice Coalition.

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GOINGS-ON

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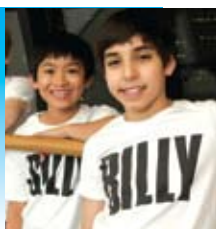
CHEST IMPRESSION

Alex O'Loughlin presents a compelling reason to see the movie *The Back-Up Plan*—but is it truly worth your money? See page 14.

THEATER

Billy, dancers.
Page 12.

Image by
Amy Boyle Photography



SPORTS

Sky hopes.
Page 22.

Photo courtesy of
the Chicago Sky



MUSIC

Nice to Sia.
Page 17.

PR photo



World and Chicago premieres

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

World premieres

From Chicago's major stages to tiny storefront theaters, the Windy City is awash with original works that have never been seen before. See them first here:

—**Hey! Dancin'!** Factory Theater at PROP Thtr, now through April 24. Mike Beyer's comedy about two friends who scheme to get on a popular Chicago cable-access TV dance show, circa 1986.

—**The Good Harvest**, Polarity Ensemble Theatre at Josephinum Academy Keyhole Theatre, now through May 2. Lisa Rosenthal's drama explores one family's drive an ultimate obsession to conceive through in-vitro fertilization.

—**A Gulag Mouse**, Babes With Blades at Trap Door Theatre, now through May 1. Expect plenty of woman-on-woman stage combat in Arthur M. Joly's drama focusing on prisoners in a Soviet gulag in the late 1940s.

—**Ozma & Harriet**, Tympanic Theatre Company at The Side Project Theatre, March 25-April 18. Daniel Caffrey offers up a comic sci-fi play about a scientist who creates an android who bonds with his wife over television.

—**After, Life**, Three Legged Race at Apollo Studio Theatre, through May 1. How awkward! See how a couple try to figure out their new roles in the afterlife following a deadly car accident when both are, in part, responsible in Tim Fyalkowski and Doug Albers' dark comedy.

—**Will Rogers: An American Original**, First Folio Theatre at Mayslake Peabody Estate, Oak Brook, through May 2. Oklahoma's most famous 20th-century celebrity comes to life in Kevin McKillip's own play about the acclaimed humor-



Kevin McKillip in *Will Rogers: An American Original*. Photo by D. Rice

ist who entertained the American public with his jokes and cowboy rope tricks.

—**The Literati**, Chicago dell'Arte at Zoo Studio, April 8-May 2. This comic mash-up mixes modern-day humor with classical literature, all in a 90-minute show.

—**The Hiding Place**, Provision Theater Company, through May 23. Tim Gregory adapts Corrie Ten Boon's novel about a Dutch family who joins an underground resistance to save Jewish families during the Nazi occupation of World War II.

—**Girls vs. Boys**, The House Theatre of Chicago at Chopin Theatre, through May 28. After a developmental run at Northwestern University, this new musical by Chris Mathews, Jake Minton, Nathan Allen and composer Kevin O'Donnell brings a hard-rock edge to this story of young love turning violent and deadly.

—**Welcome to Arroyo's**, American Theater Company, through May 16. See what happens when two siblings try to transform their family bar into a New York cultural and media sensation in Kristoffer Diaz's new play.

—**Jade Heart**, Chicago Dramatists, April 22-May 30. How does a Chinese orphan piece together her identity in America? Find out in Will Cooper's new drama that explores notions of race and cultural heritage.

—**Neverwhere**, Lifeline Theatre, April 30-June

20. Neil Gaiman's bestselling 1996 urban fantasy novel about a shadow world beneath the city of London gets adapted to the stage by Robert Kauzlaric.

—**Aftermath**, Signal Ensemble Theatre at Raven Studio Theatre, May 8-June 6. Ronan Marra's world drama explores the influential and tragically short life of Brian Jones, the founder and original leader of The Rolling Stones.

—**People We Know**, The Side Project Theatre, May 4-June 6. Robert Tenges' drama zeroes in on a group of friends dealing with a myriad of uncomfortable issues after they graduate from college.

—**The Meatlocker**, The Mammals Theatre Company at Zoo Studio, April 16-May 14. This is Bob Fisher's drama of a boxer haunted by demons as he gets pressured by a bookie into a fixed fight that will likely end in death.

—**Chaste**, Trap Door Theatre, May 13-June 19. It's philosophers versus religious zealots in Ken Prestininzi dark comedy about Nietzsche's bet to triumph over a virginal young woman.

Chicago premieres

You may have caught these shows elsewhere. But see how Chicago theater artists approach the material from their own distinctive perspectives (or in the case national tours and transfers, see how Chicago audiences react to shows that have been hits elsewhere).

—**Medea with Child**, Sideshow Theatre Company at La Costa Theatre, now through April 25. Playwright Janet Burroway serves a madcap and magical retelling of the classical Greek myth about a woman who enacts the worst possible revenge when her husband leaves her for another woman.

—**Point Break Live!** New Rock Theater Productions at La Costa Theatre, now in an open run. This West Coast transfer is an immersive and absurdist stage adaptation of the 1991 Keanu Reeves/Patrick Swayze extreme-sport blockbuster about an FBI agent pursuing a stunt-loving bank robber. Watch out for those homoerotic undertones!

—**The Lost Boys of Sudan**, Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, through April 25. Broadway veteran Jim Corti directs Lonnie Carter's based-upon-a-true-story play about three teens from Sudan's Dinka tribe and their journey from their war-torn country to the suburbs of Fargo, N.D.

—**Resurrection Blues**, Eclipse Theatre Company at Greenhouse Theater Center, through May 9. Expect plenty of critical jibes at reality TV in Arthur Miller's penultimate play about a U.S. TV-production company that bids to televise the death by crucifixion of a rebel leader in an unnamed dictatorship.

—**The Farnsworth Invention**, TimeLine Theatre, through June 13. After collecting a boatload of Emmy Awards for *The West Wing*, playwright Aaron Sorkin returned to Broadway with this epic drama about the battle over the rights to television at its inception in the United States.

—**The Good Negro**, Goodman Theatre, May 1-June 6. Chuck Smith directs Tracey Scott Wilson's critically acclaimed drama about three civil-rights leaders in the 1960s facing death threats from the Ku Klux Klan.

—**Sizwe Banzi is Dead**, Court Theatre, May 13-June 13. The mini-festival of Athol Fugard plays in Chicago wraps up this spring with director Ron OJ Parson helming this co-written drama by Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona about a South African man who pretends to be dead in order to ultimately survive.

—**Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps**, Bank of America Theatre, May 19-30. Hitchcock's thrilling spy-thriller film comes comically to life in an internationally acclaimed stage adaptation performed by just four actors.

—**Fuerza Bruta: Look Up**, Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, Performances begin May 21 for a summer run. After scoring an off-Broadway hit with *De La Guarda*, its creators created an overhead spectacle involving aerialists, dancers, pop musicians and more, but this time with a suspended swimming pool over the heads of the audience. See it to believe it.



From left: J.P. Viernes, Cesar Corrales, Giuseppe Bausilio and Tommy Batchelor all portray Billy Elliot. Image by Amy Boyle Photography

THEATER REVIEW

Billy Elliot the Musical

Playwright: music by Elton John,
book & lyrics by Lee Hall
At: Broadway in Chicago at
the Ford Oriental, 24 W. Randolph
Phone: 800-775-2000; \$30-\$100
Runs through: Oct. 24

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The tap-dance step called a “nerve” is made by the dancer’s toe beating a swift tattoo on the floor while the rest of his body remains motionless. The climax in the first act of Billy Elliot the Musical begins with this minimal movement and swells until the tempo is echoed by the smack of police batons against a wall of riot shields. And in this sound is encapsulated the show’s central image. We have earlier witnessed masculine sport’s terpsichorean elements—boxing footwork and military drills—so what could be more natural than spectacle melding these manly motifs with the pastime once dubbed “the fairy’s baseball?”

This connection is not apparent to the miners of Durham, whose unions waged a yearlong strike in 1984 against the conservative policies of prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Amid the economic tension, the strikers’ children seek solace in the kinetic fantasies provided by the local dance-mistress, who discerns exceptional talent in the boy who sheds his pugilist’s gloves for ballet shoes. As Billy’s technical expertise progresses from spotting turns to multiple pirouettes and, finally, to the bravura one-foot fougues, we cheer him on (often literally), as we do his later Swan Lake duet with the adult he will become and the Las Vegas-style extravaganza that emerges when Billy and his friend, Michael, play at cross-dressing.

Much care has obviously been lavished on this poor-boy-makes-good tale by scriptwriter/lyricist Lee Hall, composer Elton John, director Stephen Daldry and choreographer Peter Darling, all of whom admit to sharing some aspect of Billy’s experience. But it’s not necessary to have grown up in a provincial blue-collar environment to understand our young hero’s hunger for escape from his bleak destiny: Doesn’t every youth facing uncertain adulthood suffer crippling alienation? And is not the duty of every good parent to acknowledge this fear and encourage their offspring in pursuit of individual excellence?

Billy Elliot the Musical is, for boys, what Wicked was for girls—reassurance that the path to happiness may be hard, but rewards come to those who persevere. This wisdom may be a heavy burden to lay on the shoulders of actors barely past puberty, even with the lead role divided among four of them. But despite a few inevitable traces of Broadway bloat—musicals demand textual room for the music, after all—the hope its lesson proffers is a timely gift to audiences of all ages and livelihoods.

THEATER REVIEW

Endgame

Playwright: Samuel Beckett
At: Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted
Phone: 312-335-1650; \$20-\$77
Runs through: June 6

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

“Finished,” mutters Hamm at the onset of Endgame. So begins one of the most elliptical and poetic meditations around on being and nothingness. Samuel Beckett’s drama of profound displacement leaves itself open for all manner of bleak interpretations. It’s about nihilism. It’s about the futility and pointlessness of existence. It’s about how life is a bitch and then, if you’re lucky, you die. Hamm is stuck, a blind man who can’t stand, ordering about Clov, a seeing man he treats as if he can’t stand, in a room as dour and inescapable as a massive trash can, gunmetal walls reaching to infinity.

What to make of Steppenwolf’s masterful staging of Samuel Beckett’s terse, playful tragic-comedy? (“Nothing is funnier than unhappiness,” notes Hamm’s mother, Nell notes in one of the piece’s many tragic-comic profundities.) At just over 70 minutes, it will be bearable even to those who find absurdism to be one of the Circles of Hell that Dante left out. For those who can succumb to the seemingly pointless apocalyptic jabbering, Endgame is as riveting as the final moments in a chess match between masters. In this world of no-exit bleakness there are dramatic riches. And enough food for thought (never mind that Clov’s off-stage kitchen seems to be the domain of rats and fleas and ancient biscuits.) to keep one gnawing for hours.

Director Frank Galati and his all-star cast convey Endgame’s hidden-picture of a story (You must let your figurative eyes de-focus and relax. Only then, as in hidden picture images within images, does the drama make itself obvious.)



Christina Hall and Robert Whorton in Hello Again. Photo by Brandon Dahlquist

with grace, depth and intelligence. And – all importantly – a level of humanity that allows the audience to truly feel for these trapped souls even when it can’t figure out precisely what in hell (are they in hell?) talking about.

So much of that all-important empathy stems from the performances. As Clov, the slow staggering servant and sole subject of the blind king, Ian Barford depicts wells of sorrow, anger, frustration and dogged, stubborn hopefulness. It’s the human experience all rolled into one concise bundle of fragmented sentences. As the king of nothing, William Petersen radiates a domineering, tattered majesty. He’s at once wholly impotent and all-powerful, endlessly needy and coldly autonomous: A paradox of a figure within a paradox of a story. Filling out the cast as Hamm’s parents are Martha Lavey (Nell) and Francis Guinan (Nag), bodiless beings stuck in trash barrels and visible only from the shoulders up. One of Endgame’s sweetest moments comes as they try to kiss, but can’t reach each other. Surely they know that the attempt is hopeless – presumably, Nell and Nag have been stuck in these trash cans for days unknown. But that doesn’t stop them from trying. Human contact. If not today, maybe tomorrow. Such are the hopes that keep people alive, even under circumstances of unbearable cruelty.

“Let us pray to God,” intones Hamm and then: “Bastard. He doesn’t exist.” Yet somehow, like that kiss, you get the sense that Hamm will keep trying to pray anyway. Because just maybe, He/She/It does exist. Such are the beliefs that distinguish humans from dumb, everlasting rocks. Even under circumstances that would try the patience of a stone.

THEATER REVIEW

Hello Again

Playwright: Braden LuBell
At: SINNERMAN (sic) Ensemble
at Viaduct Theater, 3111 N. Western
Tickets: 773-296-6024;
www.viaducttheatre.com; \$20 (plus fees)
Runs through: May 22

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

When a playwright directs the world premiere of his own play, the result usually is disastrous. The author should focus on making the script as effective as possible, allowing others to interpret his/her creation. The director should focus on staging responsibilities, and the author’s intentions. Even Noel Coward was not as good as he thought at writing and directing his own plays (which he also produced and starred in).

Ignoring the failures of similar productions, SINNERMAN Ensemble allowed Braden LuBell to direct his own play. Shockingly, Days of Late defies conventional wisdom. Mr. LuBell has devised a well-developed, character-driven script which he’s directed with snappy pace and aplomb. That doesn’t mean it’s perfect. It’s not boring, but it’s

CRITICS’ PICKS

A Life, Northlight Theatre, through May 2. John Mahoney brings a bittersweet depth to Hugh Leonard’s 1970s Irish drama of an exacting curmudgeon who ruefully looks back at key decisions he made as an idealistic youth. SCM

Street Scene, National Pastime Theater, through April 25. Poverty and ignorance turn their victims scary after a time—if you acknowledge that grim truth, the expressionist dimension lurking beneath Elmer Rice’s classic of American naturalism in this controversial production is but a reflection of the real world. MSB

Trust, Lookingglass Theatre through May 9. Swiftly moving and strongly acted, this tale of a teen girl and an internet predator goes far deeper than a TV movie. It’s focus isn’t the deed but the aftermath, especially the father-daughter relationship in a family crucible. JA

Will Rogers: An American Original, First Folio Theatre, Oak Brook, through May 2. Kevin McKillip radiates low-key charisma and easy-on-the-eyes genial charm in his one-man homage to country’s “Poet Lariat” Speaking of which: The rope tricks are as delightful as the homespun, slice-of-Americana storytelling.

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge,
Morgan and Sullivan

still too long at two hours and 40 minutes. LuBell takes plenty of time to establish characters and storylines, but some of the exposition is too obviously laid out.

Intentionally or not, the script borrows freely from Friends and from Arthur Schnitzler’s 1897 play, La Ronde, about overlapping couplings. LuBell’s eight big-city characters are late 20s-early 30s, mostly unwed and all childless. They navigate relationship and sexual identity issues primarily, and career issues secondarily. Three of the men are gay/bisexual and a couple of the women could be bent. They long for love, for sex, for commitment, for no commitment. LuBell makes the point that men/women of his age may not know who/what they are, or if who/what they are is good. “The days of meeting a guy in the supermarket are long gone,” one woman complains, as meeting/mating rituals are made and consummated quickly via chat rooms, Craigslist, no-strings-attached hook-ups and instant messaging. Eventually most people want something better-made and longer-lasting but don’t know how to achieve it.

LuBell’s play explores many permutations of the basic situation in a series of swiftly-moving scenes in which the dialogue rings true. The two characters drawing the most time and attention are freelance journalist Max (handsomely husky Douglas Tyler) and gallery owner Nina (Ebony Williams, stylish in looks and delivery). In a classic Dan Savage conundrum, she accepts his bisexuality but he won’t accommodate her taste for kink. Their love is genuine but doomed.

William Anderson’s simple, gray-toned scenic design provides a raised platform furnished only with a parson’s table and two parson’s benches, and backed by four opaque wall panels. Jess Harpenau miraculously illuminates everything with only 20 lighting instruments, effectively employing too-rarely-used back lighting. The eight-person cast does LuBell proud (and vice versa): the aforementioned Tyler and Williams, plus Shane Kenyon (brilliant nerd), Brian Kavanaugh (brilliant asshole), Christine Lin (almost too exotic), Sue Redman, Brett Lee and Arianne Ellison.

Playwright/director LuBell beats the odds. He and this production deserve our attention.

THEATER REVIEW

The Taming of the Shrew

Playwright: William Shakespeare, with additional material by Neil LaBute
 At: Chicago Shakespeare Theatre at Navy Pier, 800 W. Grand
 Phone: 312-595-5600; \$55-\$75
 Runs through: June 6

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

What do you do when your indispensable classic violates the principles that your audiences hold dear (publicly, anyhow)? Why, you *frame* it in a juicy contemporary scenario—a stratagem that not only forestalls spectators becoming seriously involved in the problematic dynamics, but fosters their patience with assurance that the offensive parts will soon give way to more engaging themes. Hey, it rescued *The Comedy of Errors* two years ago, so why shouldn't Chicago Shakespeare Theatre once again rely on the same device?

The frame, this time around, is contributed by playwright Neil LaBute—the antichrist of the feminists, but here seeming to be having fun for the first time in his contentious career. It proposes the meltdown of a lesbian marriage during tech rehearsals of *The Taming of the Shrew*. One of the sapphites, you see, is the director whose “concept” for her project is to revel in the story’s sexism, and the other is the lead actress, who suspects that this stylistic choice is a response to her own refusal to adopt a monogamous rings-and-babies lifestyle.

Thusly are Shakespeare’s observations on marital accord rendered subordinate to the backstage drama—did I mention the scheming brat playing Bianca and the surprisingly sensitive bear-boy taking the role of Petruchio?—supplying our *primary* subtext. Having been safely absolved of its political agenda, the play-within-the-play can



Bianca Amato and Ian Bedford in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Photo by Liz Lauren

then plunge into full cartoon mode, replete with circle-chases, a groom in peekaboo bridal drag, an ingenue gowned in Disney princess froufrou (with matching dog), codpieces in the Aristophanean fashion (i.e., big and elaborate), off-stage cries and crashes, giddy Neapolitan tunes bridging the scenes and a marble nude that inevitably loses its arms in the course of Matthew Hawkins’ slapstick skirmishes.

Ian Bedford and Bianca Amato’s Pete and Kate salvage an astonishing measure of dignity despite their looney-tunes universe (even as Mary Beth Fisher’s *faux* director forfeits hers with every whining spousal entreaty), flanked by a team of seasoned troupers—among them, the venerable Mike Nussbaum, still well-shaped in tights—displaying the clearest enunciation ever heard on the ChicagoShakes stage. And if discerning ears in the “invited audience” detect occasional stumbles or slow spots (that old incognito-suitor gag gets quickly tedious)—well, isn’t that to be expected at what real-life director Josie Rourke’s conceit proclaims to be only a practice session?

SPOTLIGHT

You don’t see too many regional productions of Carol Hall’s 1978 musical *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (perhaps the title shocks respectable communities). So head out to Circle Theatre to see the rise and fall of Miss Mona’s chicken ranch while you can. *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* sets up shop at Circle Theatre, 7300 W. Madison, Forest Park. Performances continue through June 20 at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$12-\$20; call 708-771-0700 or visit www.circle-theatre.org. Photo by Bob Knuth

Streisand event to benefit BEHIV

Three Cat Productions will mark the birthday of gay icon Barbra Streisand with the third annual “Bab Fab: The Barbra Streisand Birthday Celebration”. It starts April 23 with Streisand connoisseur Matt Howe, and then continues with two performances of Streisand’s work April 24-25.

All performances can be found at the Skokie Theatre Music Foundation, 7924 N. Lincoln, Skokie. A portion of the proceeds benefit BEHIV and Three Cat Education.

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Call 847-677-7761 or visit www.skokie-theatre.com.

‘Simply Barbra’ at Michigan’s Acorn

Actor/singer Steven Brinberg is performing his Barbra Streisand tribute, “Simply Barbra,” to the Acorn Theater, 107 Generations, Three Oaks, Mich., Thursday, April 22, at 8 p.m. ET.

Brinberg has appeared as Streisand alongside Marvin Hamlisch and has performed as Streisand at a birthday party for Donna Karan. Tickets are \$15; see www.acorntheater.com or call 269-756-3879.

ONLY SUBSCRIBERS AND GROUPS OF 10 OR MORE CAN BUY TICKETS NOW TO THIS FALL’S BLOCKBUSTER MUSICAL!

Candide

MUSIC BY LEONARD BERNSTEIN
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 LYRICS BY RICHARD WILBUR
 ADDITIONAL LYRICS BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM, JOHN LATOUCHE,
 LILLIAN HELLMAN, DOROTHY PARKER AND LEONARD BERNSTEIN
 DIRECTED BY MARY ZIMMERMAN

SEPTEMBER 17 – OCTOBER 24

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

Ladies with an attitude; film note

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

After years of memorable supporting roles in just about every film genre, commencing with her portrayal of the lesbian dog trainer in Christopher Guest's improv comedy *Best In Show*, how lovely is it that out actor **Jane Lynch** is suddenly, finally at the epicenter of the cultural buzz thanks to her portrayal of Glee's archvillain, Sue Sylvester? And hand it to savvy out series creator-writer-director-producer Ryan Murphy to fuel the gay buzz focused on the show with an all Madonna-themed episode this week, topped off by a spot on parody of the *Material Girl*'s "Vogue" featuring Lynch and cast in full-on diva mode.

Lynch's character—surely the most unapologetic narcissist since Madonna's appearance in her own self-financed documentary *Truth or Dare* is a cogent reminder that audiences, straight and gay alike, love their divas. The movies this week—both in theatres and on DVD—offer their share of actresses who, in their time and place, more than qualified for the once disdained and troublesome, but now-coveted title.

Jennifer Lopez, the movie's first breakthrough Latina diva since Rita Moreno, is attempting to re-ignite her once red-hot film career with **The Back-Up Plan**, a romantic comedy helmed by out director Alan Poul that so closely resembles her past hits in the genre—*The Wedding Planner*, *et al.*—that it seems to have been filmed and hermetically sealed years ago. As in most J.Lo comedies, her character is an emotionally damaged workaholic loner—and this one wants a baby and is being artificially inseminated to get her wish. But she doesn't count on falling for hottie Alex O'Loughlin (the TV hunk who is often seen shirtless) just as she discovers that she's pregnant with twins.

"Hilarity" ensues as the smitten duo attempt to deal with their complicated situation. Stale and humorous rather than funny and comforting like the phony Hallmark movies it resembles, the most telling thing about *The Back-Up Plan* is what it reveals about the diva-like power its star apparently still wields. It's Diana Ross determined to make the public love her in *The Wiz*, come hell or high water, all over again. Admittedly, there's a much more benign result in store for those who still want a dose of J.Lo on the big screen.

Catherine Deneuve, the ultimate French diva—which in her case has come to mean that she's willing to downplay her unforgettable beauty in service to projects that challenge her as an actor—plays a supporting role in out director Andre Techine's beautifully observed character drama **The Girl on the Train**. Deneuve, who was fascinating as the complicated matriarch of a wealthy French family in *A Christmas Tale*, plays a much plainer character this time around, a widow who runs a children's day care in the suburbs of Paris. She frets over her only daughter, Jeanne (Emile Dequenne), the seemingly benign but ultimately enigmatic title character. The passive Jeanne falls for a swaggering bad boy who leads her into trouble and, then—for reasons that slowly become clear as the film deepens—pretends to have been the victim of an anti-Semitic attack. Techine (who co-wrote the script with Odile Barski) once again displays a masterful control of all aspects of his movie, a typically rich character study in which the pieces slowly fall into place, and he elicits uniformly excellent performances from his cast.

For a final dose of divas in action this week I heartily recommend two DVD sets. Warner Archives, the DVD on-demand service, has just released **Classics Starring Joan Crawford**, a five-disc set that offers the star in a nice cross-section of her MGM career—*Paid*, *This Modern Age* and *No More Ladies* give us Crawford in early ascent playing the tough shoppgirl who makes good, while *Above Suspicion* and, especially, *Susan and God* find Joan in full on glamour mode in her waning days at MGM. The quality of these five movies varies widely but the star of them is never for a second in doubt.

The same can be said for Barbara Stanwyck, represented in **The Barbara Stanwyck Collection**, out from Universal, which features the movie's most versatile actress (a title she retains to this day) in six new to DVD films from the '30s, '40s and '50s. Stanwyck could play anything from the tawdriest tramp to the airiest airhead, and she shines in these lesser-known vehicles which include the rarely seen Douglas Sirk-directed melodramas *All I Desire* (1953) and *There's Always Tomorrow* (1956, her fourth teaming with Fred MacMurray). William Wellman's overlooked western classic, 1942's *The*

Great Man's Lady (a Stanwyck favorite), *Internes Can't Take Money* (the first Dr. Kildare picture), the fluffy comedy *The Bride Wore Boots* and the terse character drama *The Lady Gambles* round out the set.

Film note:

—The 26th Annual **Chicago Latino Film Festival** continues with a wide assortment of cinematic offerings from Mexico, South America, Portugal and Spain. The queer themed *Undertow* (*Contracorriente*) from Peru is a standout entry in this week's line-up. The film follows a hunky fisherman in a tiny village awaiting the birth of his first child with his anxious wife while carrying on a simultaneous affair with a male painter who sketches him in the nude. When the artist mysteriously drowns the fisherman is literally haunted by him and finds himself forced to confront his true feelings—just as the sketches are found by his gossipy, homophobic neighbors. A cross between a gay variation on *Truly, Madly*

Deeply and any number of "on the down low" queer-themed indies, *Undertow* is a complicated, sexy relationship drama beautifully filmed and acted by its fetching cast. The film plays April 27 and 29 at 6 p.m. and 6:15 p.m., respectively, at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark).

This is also a heads-up that the fest's closing-night selection, the gay-themed *La Mission*, starring Benjamin Bratt (and written, directed and co-produced by his older brother, Peter), will be playing its only Chicago date Thursday, April 29, at 6 p.m. at AMC River East, 322 E. Illinois. The Bratt brothers are expected to attend the screening. I'll review the film in next week's issue. Complete information on the festival is available by calling 312-431-1330 or visiting www.latinoculturalcenter.org

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

Gless to get gay police award; Hannah Free DVD release party in Chicago

CHICAGO—Multi-award-winning actress Sharon Gless (*Burn Notice*, *Queer As Folk*, *Cagney & Lacey*) will be in Chicago for two events Saturday, June 26, Pride Weekend. She will be honored by international LGBT law enforcement members, and attend a special Chicago DVD release party for *Hannah Free*.

Hannah Free, an award-winning feature film starring Gless, was produced in Chicago. The story of an independent spirit and the woman she calls home, *Hannah Free* has played in more than 60 cities around the world and will be released by Wolfe Video in North America.

The DVD party will be Saturday, June 26, noon-2 p.m. at the Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe. Tickets are \$50 and include a copy of the DVD; a copy of the new *Hannah Free* novel from Bella Books, with photos from the film; a chance to meet the cast and crew; and hors d'oeuvres. *Hannah Free* was written by Claudia Allen and based on her stage play. It was directed by Wendy Jo Carlton and also stars Maureen Gallagher, Ann Hagemann, Kelli Strickland, Taylor Miller and Jacqui Jackson.

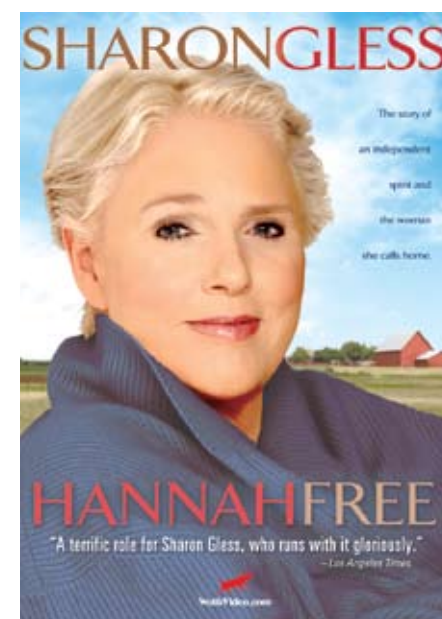
Purchase tickets online at www.hannahfree.com, under the tickets button.

The Lesbian and Gay Police Association-Gay Officers Action League of Chicago will present Gless with their "Bridge to Unity" Award Saturday, June 26, also at the Palmer House Hilton. This first annual "Bridge to Unity" award is named for the theme and mission of the 14th Annual International LGBT Conference for Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Professionals, hosted this year in Chicago by LGPA/GOAL Chicago during Pride Week.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to give this inaugural award to such a shining example of what we intend it to stand for," said LGPA-GOAL Chicago President Jamie Richardson. "Ms. Gless has been outstanding in her support of the LGBT community and, in her role as Debbie Novotny in *Queer as Folk*, became an iconic representation of a supportive and loving family member in the LGBT community."

The award will be presented at the Closing Banquet Ceremony of the conference, Saturday, June 26, 6-10 p.m. The public can purchase tickets for \$100. Tables of 10 are available for \$1,000. The banquet will also have a variety of informative and entertaining speakers, a silent auction, a drawing and a musical performance.

Information on *Hannah Free* is available at www.HannahFree.com or email info@hannah-free.com.



Further information on the conference is available at www.goalchicago.info/2010. Further information on the banquet is available at www.goalchicago.info/banquet.

About Hannah Free

Hannah Free tells the moving story of the lifelong love affair between an independent spirit and the woman she calls home. Hannah and Rachel grow up in the same Midwest town, where traditional gender expectations eventually challenge their deep love for one another. Hannah becomes an adventurous, unapologetic lesbian and Rachel a strong but reserved homemaker. Weaving between past and present, *Hannah Free* reveals how these two passionate women maintain their love affair despite a marriage, a world war, infidelity, and family denial.

Hannah Free has played at 60+ film festivals in North America, including San Francisco's Frameline Fest and Los Angeles's OUTFEST, and has won multiple prestigious awards, including Best Feature Film at Philadelphia's Q-Fest, Austin's Gay & Lesbian Film Fest and Montreal's International LGBT Film Festival. The San Francisco Chronicle said of Sharon Gless's performance, "She commands the screen," and Kevin Thomas of the Los Angeles Times calls this "A terrific role for Sharon Gless, who runs with it gloriously." The Chicago Tribune gave the film three stars.

The DVD will come loaded with features including interviews with Sharon Gless, writer Claudia Allen, director Wendy Jo Carlton and the cast and crew; bloopers; Behind the Scenes featurette, WTTW-Television Chicago Tonight segment, and more. *Hannah Free* was produced by Ripe Fruit Films and also stars Taylor Miller (*All My Children*), Maureen Gallagher, Ann Hagemann, Kelli Strickland and Jacqui Jackson.

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PHOTO: PHILIP THOMAS



BY DAVID BYRNE WITH TONY PEREGRIN

I was a little surprised, when I found out that **Shelby Lynne** will be performing at Martyr's, 3855 N. Lincoln, on Tuesday, May 4. The Nashville Now veteran filled up the larger Park West quite well when she was here promoting her 2008 Dusty Springfield tribute *Just a Little Lovin'*.

Lynne's latest, *Tears, Lies and Alibis*, has the Alabama native dwelling on love's complications. "Like a Fool," "Alibi" and "Something to Be Said" are the heart of the album. Does the Grammy winner have *Swamp Ophelia*? The charmingly repetitive "Loser Dreamer" recalls bits of Kermit the Frog's "Rainbow Connection." These intimate pieces are meant to be heard up close and personal, making Martyr's an ideal spot to have Lynne share these tunes. *Tears, Lies and Alibis* is out now on Lynne's own label Everso Records.

Lynne's younger sister, **Allison Moorer**, takes to flight on *Crows*. Just listen to the Fleetwood Mac inspired "Goodbye to the Ground" or the radio-worthy "The Broken Girl." But it's on the downtempo, beautiful numbers "The Stars & I (Mama's Song)" and "Still This Side of Gone" where the singer-songwriter truly finds her footing. Moorer shows off her vocal chops on the pleading "Sorrow (Don't Come Around)." Out now on Rykodisc, *Crows* finely balances itself between the alternative, folk and country genres.

Moorer, a new mom, also appears on the new David Byrne and Fatboy Slim collaboration, *Here Lies Love*.

On Wed., April 28, **Ladies of the Canyon** will cover the catalog of Melissa Etheridge at Fitzgerald's, 6615 Roosevelt, Berwyn. The breast-cancer survivor is due for such an honor, considering her remarkable career highlights like "Like the Way I Do," "Bring Me Some Water" and "I'm the Only One." Etheridge has the new album *Fearless Love* due out Tuesday, April 27.

Ladies of the Canyon really is Chicago's best-kept secret. Over the years, I have seen the outfit performing flawless tributes to great women of music, including Annie Lennox, Tori Amos, Sheryl Crow, Blondie and Pat Benatar. Now, why haven't these gals landed a secure spot on the summer street festival circuit with our city's fellow cover bands? For more on *Ladies of the Canyon*, please visit www.lotclive.com.

Are you still on a high from *The Runaways* movie? Cherie Currie joined **Girl in a Coma**, who is signed to Joan Jett's Blackhearts Records, for

a version of *The Runaways'* signature "Cherry Bomb" at this year's South by Southwest. Video clips of this have surfaced on YouTube.

Girl in a Coma will be returning to the Windy City to open for Sia Sunday, April 25, at The Vic Theatre, 3145 N. Sheffield. In 2007 *Girl in a Coma* debuted with *Both* before *I'm Gone*, which contains the rocking "Clumsy Sky" and "The Photographer." The trio's 2009 sophomore effort *Trio B.C.* shows how the act's heavy tour schedule paid off, as heard on the impressive "Baby Boy" and "Joannie in the City."

Now *Girl in a Coma* is releasing a series of 7" and digital singles as part of the *Adventures in Coverland*. Here, the San Antonio based band redoes the likes of Selena's "Si Una Vez," The Beatles' "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," David Bowie's "As the World Falls Down" and The Velvet Underground's "Femme Fatale."

After leaving *Shalamar*, **Jody Watley** emerged as a solo sensation. Thanks to sleek hits like "Looking for a New Love," Watley became a multi-platinum selling success. In 2006 she released *The Makeover*, which has a stripped-down take on Madonna's "Borderline." The Soulcast Icon Mix of her remake of Le Chic's "I Want Your Love" is one of the best remixes of the decade. Her much anticipated follow up, *Chameleon*, is due out this year.

Last summer's performance at Northalsted Market Days was a much overdue return to Chicago for the former Soul Train dancer. On Friday, April 30, Watley returns with a concert at Harold Washington Cultural Center, 4701 S. King. For tickets, please visit www.amusicexperience.com.

Swedes seem to have a knack for making the sweetest pop music. **Roxette** scored more chart-topping hits stateside than fellow Scandinavian exports ABBA and Ace of Base combined. The duo's popularity is captured at its peak on the concert album and companion DVD, *Live in Sydney 1991*, recorded during *The Joyride* Tour.

The lovely Marie Fredriksson's voice sounds rough and abrasive as she muscled through the opener "Hotblooded." But she is in fine form on the should have been single "Things Will Never Be the Same." The audience goes into a hysteria upon hearing the opening guitar licks to the breakout hit "The Look." The always dynamic "Joyride" and the massive "It Must Have Been Love" both have the obligatory sing-along moments.

This *Immortal* release includes the bonus track "How Do You Do," the lead single from the band's 1992 outing *Tourism*. One would figure that radio staples "Fading Like a Flower" or "Listen to Your Heart" would have found its way onto the set instead, but this is actually a track by track re-recording of the previously released *Live-Ism*, which is only out on VHS. Regardless, *Live in Sydney 1991* is a great time capsule.

Roxette reissued remastered versions of its seven studio albums with bonus tracks last year and has new material due out soon.

NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Girl in a Coma comes alive

BY JERRY NUNN

Girl in a Coma is made up of three women—two of them lesbians—who rock to their own beat on Joan Jett's Blackheart label. Windy City Times called Jenn Alva, the bass player, to discuss life on the road.

Windy City Times: Hello, Jenn. You are from Texas?

Jenn Alva: Yes, from San Antonio.

WCT: The name *Girl in a Coma* is in reference to a song. Did you all start off as Smiths fans?

JA: Phanie and I have been best friends since 1992. That is one of the things we bonded over in middle school.

WCT: You were able to eventually open for Morrissey.

JA: That was incredible. We were doing our own East Coast tour at the time, then we got the phone call that we could open for Morrissey for his East Coast dates. Our fan base was a little weak back then so once we got on that we tried to not be fans of his and just do a good job. We stayed out of his way.

WCT: I have heard crazy stories about him, actually.

JA: He was really sweet to us but we didn't ask him any questions.

WCT: I interviewed Sara from Tegan and Sara, whom you opened up for after that.

JA: They are great. They are so down to earth and intelligent. It was totally different because we went from opening up for Morrissey, which we like to call boot camp, to Tegan and Sara who asked us to hang out after the shows with them. They are sweet.

WCT: I met with Sara after their show. They have a strong fan following.

JA: They sure do. That worked out for us too

because we were able to steal some of their fans over to us.

WCT: And now you are opening for Sia. Have you done any shows with her yet?

JA: No, we met her at The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Everyone camps out there. We had a sound check at eight in the morning, which was ridiculously early. We ended up waking her up. But she loved it and we have stayed in touch since then.

WCT: She's a character. You have a new EP that just came out.

JA: Yeah, we have three. One was just released April 13 called *Adventures in Coverland Volume 1*. There is a Selena cover "Si Una Vez" and a Beatles cover "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." On the 20 we [had] another release of "Transmission" by Joy Division and "As the World Falls Down" by David Bowie. Our last one is on the April 27, with three songs: "Walking After Midnight" by Patsy Cline, Ritchie Valens "Come On, Let's Go" and "Femme Fatale" by The Velvet Underground.

WCT: So, quite a mix!

JA: Yes, definitely a random mix that we wanted to do. If you buy all three vinyls the album cover folds out and it makes a board game.

WCT: What kind of game is it?

JA: It's called *Adventures in Coverland*. You and friends can follow us to different states. You have to make it back to our hometown, which is San Antonio.

WCT: That brings us back full circle. You are openly lesbian. Do you have a girlfriend?

JA: No, I am single. I like saying that.

WCT: I will get some girls to come out to the Chicago show. Then, afterwards they can follow you back to Texas.

JA: Sounds good. See ya then!

Girl in a Coma opens for Sia this Sunday, April 25, at the Vic, 3145 N. Sheffield. Visit www.Jamusa.com or www.girlinacoma.com more information.



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BENT NIGHTS

OK Go and Samba Bamba

OK Go @ the Metro, April 17, 2010

Of the Blue Colour

of the Sky (Paracade Records)

Samba Bamba @ Martyrs', April 12, 2010

BY VERN HESTER

Ten fun facts about Damian Kulash, Jr., and his band, **OK Go**;

1. Kulash once got arrested at Disney World and spent a night in the clink (he was signing autographs after a show and got busted for obstructing traffic and resisting arrest).

2. He and his band started dressing like Carnaby St. dandies because they got sick of performing in t-shirts and jeans.

3. Kulash's grandfather invented fish sticks.

4. The video of OK Go's "Here It Goes Again" has been viewed 50 million times online as of this writing.

5. Kulash wrote a 'how to guide' called "How Your Band Can Fire Bush" for rock bands hoping to unseat George W. Bush.

6. Kulash's favorite curse word is the "c" word because "it still has impact when you say it."

7. Just after the release of OK Go's latest album, *Of the Blue Colour of the Sky*, the band split with its major label (Capitol/EMI) and started their own (Paracade Recordings). Both sides insist that the split was benign with no ill feelings.

8. Kulash met bassist Tim Nordwind at summer camp when they were kids.

9. OK Go had a cameo as Paul Rudd's wedding band at the end of *I Love You Man*.

10. Kulash, Nordwind, guitarist Andy Ross, and drummer Dan Konopka (OK Go) care deeply about you and your happiness.

That last one I can't verify but from the vibe I get from them it's probably true. Though OK Go had left Chicago years ago they're so intellectually engaging, artistically inventive, amicably embraceable, cuttngly stylish and so damn nice that their local fans won't even consider them as L.A. transplants.

Even before 2006's stellar *Oh No* (Capitol Records) and the "Here It Goes Again" video phenomenon it was obvious that this band was about something unheard of in current rock and roll, namely fun. The evidence is on the tour video for "You're So Damn Hot." There, they are chowing down on barbecue, playfully slinging their guitars, bowling, playing with little kids, hanging out with fans and grinning ear to ear through all of it. It takes an awful lot of work not to like them or *Oh No's* pure perfect pop. Which is what makes their latest, *Of the Blue Colour of the Sky* (Paracade Recordings) such an unexpected mind twister. The bass line of the opener, "WTF," is a blunt heads up that this isn't merely intelligent, smart pop but something entirely different.

The word is that Kulash has found his inner Prince, specifically his "Around the World In A Day-paisley-print-Prince" circa 1985, but that's not all that I'm hearing here. More like the Beatles *Magical Mystery Tour* (1968) with a blast of Bootsy Collins and Electric Light Orchestra running around in the mix. If anything Kulash has run wild with his own twist on P-funk and it sounds like something nutty, new, adventurous, lush and dreamy. This ain't y'mama's funk that's for sure.

"WTF" with its squirrely bass line and squiggly guitars is appropriate as a stopping point for the Prince comparisons and as a start for this album. Kulash spends the majority of the album pursuing a damsel (or damsels) who is every bit as feral as the one in Prince's "Irresistible Bitch" and just as fetching as the one in "Raspberry Beret." But Prince always fought to keep his lust in check knowing at all times where he was coming from and that he could deliver. Kulash sounds like a slave to his muse and his desire seems to confuse and confound him. "Are you some kinda



Damian Kulash, Jr., of OK Go. Photo by Vern Hester

dark sorcerer or am I under some kinda spell?" he burps and it's hard to tell if he's terrified or eroticized, or both. For most of the CD Kulash sings in a falsetto that's both off putting and alluring while Nordwind snakes his bass lines up and down and all around with a positively filthy dexterity. This is some wicked shit all right—homemade funk designed not for dance floors of chrome and glass discos but for hot grinding in the kitchen at summer house parties.

The entirety of the CD follows the scariness of "falling in love" in the dangerous sense. If on "WTF" Kulash is a little timid to go all the way, the rest of the album mirrors his emotional cyclone ride. "White Knuckles" is the closest that *Blue Colour* gets to a straight-up pop tune, which is fine by me. "I Want You So Bad I Can't Breathe" is an hallucinatory funk strut of psychosomatic lust—I swear it sounds like Kulash is crying through clenched teeth, he wants this woman so bad. "Needing/Getting" is a note of rationality that almost puts a stop to all that exasperating desire ("... it don't get much dumber then trying to forget a girl when you love her") but "End Love" starts it right back up again. "Last Leaf" brings to mind Jacques Demy's "I Will Wait for You" with its clear-eyed declaration of eternal love, but "While You Were Asleep" punctuates that pipedream and breaks Kulash's heart (and ours) with the exhausted question that's at the end of all broken romances; "Can't you love me how I want, please ...?"

I was surprised that I felt a little sad for Kulash at the end of "While You Were Asleep" because it made him sound not only vulnerable, but defeated and deeply wounded. But OK Go's sold-out gig Saturday, April 17 put a stop to any of that boo-hooing.

As a band that's always celebrated the indie spirit, this Metro show was a giddy, blow-out of hard rock, big laughs, harder funk, and non-stop blasts of confetti. The confetti started five songs into the set but the opener, "Invincible" with its pummeling drum parts (thank you Dan) and its over-the-top assault put the show in high gear from the start. The big question that nagged me was how *Blue Colour's* intimate feel would translate onstage. The answer: in a



Samba Bamba. Photo by Vern Hester

sweaty, snarling, ragged way that actually improved on the studio recording. Whereas the CD has a mouth-to-ear intimacy to it, the live show was far harder, more abrasive, far funkier. This show was all beat and breath with tons of musical surprises that topped the original. "Needing/Getting" was set on fire by Ross's searing guitar parts (granted he was the only band member to dress in the OK Go style; for this show he wore a flaming orange three-piece suit) while "I Want You So Bad I Can't Breathe" was far from tortured but belligerent and fiercely in your face.

As for Kulash, he didn't disappoint; ever the wise ass he came out smirking not so much out of self-confidence but with an expectation to have the time of his life. Exalting in OK Go's now true indie status without major label support he got snarkier by the minute; observations on walking around Wrigley Field that day and checking out Cubs fans (they lost, he was amused), the wrath of God, Chicago's near-certain apocalypse (according to him), performing in Utah and having to be polite, and making a show out of picking confetti out of his glass of whiskey, Kulash's jolliness infected the band and the Metro. "Don't Ask Me How I Am" (one of the best F.U. anthems...ever), "Get Over It," "WTF," the Pixies' "Debaser," and "Do What You Want" were loopy and off the rails. OK Go may very well be the indie darlings of the moment, but from the looks of that show I suspect that that moment will last for a very long time.

For an entirely different kind of loopiness, **Samba Bamba's** one-off reunion gig at Martyrs' the week before was just as ferocious if not nutty.

I do remember seeing them at the now-closed Vinyl bar on Clybourn Avenue back in the '90s and having the lead singer, er "personality," one Monty "Sugarloaf" Mattachine try to force feed me a chunk of the most vulgar grocery store created birthday cake (my fillings are still rattling with the threat of all that sugar). What I didn't entirely remember was how over-the-top, talented, and—gasp—refreshing Samba Bamba really is.

Mattachine, who stands damn near seven feet tall and was dressed in a jacket and ruffled shirt that looked like he knicked it from a fourth-rate suburban taco joint, was the ringleader for vocalist Lupe Lowenstein (who is both Mexican and Jewish, or as Mattachine said, "She's got a lot of holidays") and co-vocalist, cut-up and valet Lindo McCartney.

The ironic thing of course is that they gave their cover songs more respect than they deserved. The opener, "Sambacabamba" (a mash-up of "Could It Be Magic" and "Copacabana" that would make Barry Manilow proud) was just the tip off. Suzanne Vega ("Tom's Diner"), Al Green ("Let's Stay Together"), and the Doors ("Light My Fire") got tumbled and twirled with Samba Bamba originals like "Cha Cha Heels," "Lust for Samba," and "Chica." Nuttier still were the audience participation parts: Mattachine leading a conga line through Martyrs', a karaoke contest where the prize was a copy of *Forrest Gump*, and the drawing of a matching pencil-thin mustache just like Mattachine's on the winner's kisser,

and McCartney's deep-funked deadpan take on War's "Low Rider" (to the quartet of lovely lesbians step-dancing to that one, thank you very much...).

What ultimately did come back to me was Mattachine's passionate cooing about the power of Samba Bamba as the ultimate aphrodisiac and spiritual enhancer with that insistent disco beat rumpa-thumping behind him. According to Mattachine, Samba Bamba is the nectar of the gods, the spirit of the angels, and the fire that burns from below. Of course he said this with his ever-quivering lips and that Joel Cairo 'stache wiggling around and the constant thrust of his hips ... and of course the man was serious.

Melissa Etheridge, Tammy split

Melissa and Tammy Etheridge have decided to split after almost nine years together, according to a CNN.com item.

In a statement, the Etheridges said, "We ask for consideration and respect for our family as we go through this difficult period."

Melissa, 48, and Tammy (formerly known as Tammy Lynn Michaels), 35, were united in a ceremony in California in 2003.

Tammy had their children—son Miller and daughter Johnnie Rose—four years ago, after Melissa was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004. Melissa also has two children with former partner Julie Cypher.

Rihanna in Chicago Aug. 25

Rihanna—who is enjoying the success of her most recent album, *Rated R*; a smash #1 single with "Rude Boy," and an upcoming international tour—has confirmed dates for her 2010 North American tour, *Last Girl On Earth*. She will perform locally Wed., Aug. 25, at the United Center.

The multi-platinum and Grammy Award-winning superstar has become the only female artist of the past decade to have six number-one singles on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart in the United States, and she will be joined by rising star Ke\$ha and female rapper Nicki Minaj.

For tickets, visit www.LiveNation.com.

Gaga heading Lollapalooza

The Lollapalooza music festival will take place Aug. 6-8 in Grant Park—and dance-pop sensation Lady Gaga is among the headliners.

According to the event's Web site, Gaga, The Strokes, the Canadian group Arcade Fire, a reunited Soundgarden and Green Day are among the biggest acts slated to perform.

As indicated by the big names, there will be a wide range of performers to suit almost every musical taste. Other scheduled acts include Erykah Badu (in the news now for her controversial "Window Seat" video), Mavis Staples, Metric, Cymbals Eat Guitars, Devo, The Black Keys, Jamie Lidell, Grizzly Bear, Blues Traveler, Social Distortion, Freelance Whales, The New Pornographers and Raphael Saadiq.

Three-day passes are \$215 and VIP tickets are \$850; see www.lollapalooza.com.



Lady Gaga.



"Four Months to Michfest" party attendees. (Left to right, front row: Nikki Cutler, Pat McCombs, Brenda Schumacher, Sherry Wright and Jenae Williams; left to right, back row: Suzanne Blum-Grundyson and Alma Izquierdo) Photo by Con Buckley; more images online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

Women rock at 'Four Months to Michfest' party

BY MICKI LEVENTHAL

Lesbians, gay ladies, queer gals and assorted and diverse other friends rocked out at the "Four Months to Michfest" party April 17 at the Holiday Club. DJ All the Way Kay provided tunes for the packed room while partiers danced; enjoyed free hors d'oeuvres; swapped Michfest stories; networked for rideshares and gear exchanges; and flirted.

They also enthusiastically participated in a raffle designed to raise funds for at least five full scholarships to send low-income women to the festival in August. Raffle items included Michigan swag donated by the festival, concert tickets, massage services, goods from Dykes in the City (DITC) and toys from The Pleasure Chest.

A multigenerational and multicultural group of women who are encouraging women to attend the 35th anniversary of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival planned Saturday's event.

Suzanne Blum-Grundyson, Nikki Cutler, Alma Izquierdo, Pat McCombs, Brenda Schumacher, Jenae Williams and Sherry Wright want lapsed veterans, FestiVirgins and everyone in between to gather on the land Aug. 3-8 outside Walhala, Mich.

Blum-Grundyson travels to the festival for "the community that refreshes and restores my balance and keeps me sustained throughout the year." The special education teacher really enjoys the feeling of safety while on the land.

Izquierdo is a FestiVirgin who will finally succumb this year to the many Michigan stories she's heard. The massage therapist is "very excited and hoping to get a few more FestiVirgins to go."

Sherry Wright was expecting more of a "meat-marketish" atmosphere when she attended for the first time in 2008. However, the union organizer loved the feeling of safety and spirituality in addition to "the amazing food, the artist/vendors, the family friendliness" and of course, the music.

"I will come back every year of my life because Michfest is the most magical, life affirming, recharging, epic fun spiritual and creatively charged place I have ever been," said Schumacher, a marketer and music producer who has been attending since she was in her 20s.

Nikki Cutler doesn't just attend to sell her DITC clothing among the craftswomyn, but for the sense of possibility. It's "a land where you can forget about your life for a week and be any person you want. Any self, any fantasy can be lived."

Activist and retired school teacher McCombs, who organizes Womyn of Color, has gone for 32 years for "a sense of freedom I have never ex-

perienced as a lesbian. The lesbian culture, the music, the spiritual land, the womyn, the womyn, the womyn...."

Despite her supercharged modern lifestyle and initial concern regarding the Michigan staples of vegetarian meals, camping and Port-A-Janes, nightclub promoter Jenae Williams will "never look back" from her maiden voyage to Michigan in 2009. "This kind of energy, these kind of womyn, this is what gives me hope for the future and solace with my community," she said.

Ticket information and details on workshops and music performances for the 2010 festival are at www.michfest.com.

NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Singer Sia on her CD and Christina Aguilera

BY JERRY NUNN

Sia Furler, or simply Sia, is an Australia pop singer best known for her song "Breathe Me" from the ending sequence of the HBO series Six Feet Under. With a Chicago stop on her tour and a new album, *We Are Born*, Sia sings and dances to the beat of her own drum.

Windy City Times: Hello, Sia. Where are you calling from right now?

S: New York. You don't want to be in New York today because it is rainy as fuck. I just went out for a walk and I am saturated. I even had my rain boots on, just like any good 5-year-old. It was still putrid and I am completely damp.

WCT: Well, if you were in Chicago you would get all the snow.

S: I love the snow. That's a whole other kettle of fish. There is nothing like putting on a garbage bag and throwing yourself down a hill when it's snowing!

WCT: That's true. You are originally from warm Australia.

S: That's true. I grew up in Adelaide, Australia. When I was 21 I went to London for eight years. Then I went to L.A. for three years. Now I have been on and off in New York, L.A. and Australia for the last three years.

WCT: So, you are all over the place.

S: I am all over the place, Jerry! [Laughs]

WCT: Did you always want to be a singer?

S: Actually, no. I always wanted to be the center of attention as a kid. I thought I would be an actor for some reason. But both my parents were musicians. My mom was a visual artist, an art teacher, as well as playing the bass. My dad played the guitar. My mom brought home the money to pay the bills and my dad brought home the money to the groceries.

I hated going to all these art exhibitions as a kid. I didn't mind going to their gigs every Saturday night. I would sleep underneath a table in my sleeping bag. I was devastated when I didn't get the lead in the school play when I was 12; I

knew I deserved it. Now I can see I was tyrant. I think I wanted attention and that was how this beast was created.

WCT: So you started young.

S: As a 10-year-old I just wanted to be famous and loved. I tried out for acting school and got in. I took off a year and started singing. I got up in a karaoke bar in Italy. I didn't know the songs because they were in Italian so I had everyone clap their hands and I sang Bill Withers "Lean On Me." A guy who was a DJ in the audience offered 50 pounds for me to make a record, which sounded amazing because I was, like, 17. I wrote some words over a house track and he gave me fifty pounds and samples to make a song of my own. It was a really sad kind of Jamiroquai like song saying hello in a bunch of languages. I gave it to my friends in London who were in a covers band. They asked me to sing with them and that was the beginning for me.

WCT: I have been listening to you for a while. The song "Breathe Me" brought you to my attention.

S: It didn't just bring me a lot of attention; it resuscitated my dying career. There was really nothing going on in my solo career around that time. When they used it on the show, I was scrambling to get over here to cash in on that success! Thank you, God.

WCT: You have been working with Christina Aguilera, correct?

S: Yeah, how exciting. I nearly pooped my pants when I got the call to set up a meeting with her. I took my friend Sammy, who used to be my bass player for 17 years. We were nervy because she has a reputation of being hardcore. She wasn't. She was such a softie bum and a real sweetie. She was easy to work with and we ended up with four songs on the record. They flew us back to write another song for her movie *Burlesque* with Cher.

WCT: Oh, really?

S: Yes, this album can do absolutely fuck all but I can do fine, thanks to Christina. It takes a

lot of the pressure off. [Electronica band] Zero 7 did that to me. They made me enough money originally to sabotage my solo career over and over again.

WCT: Well, you are free to do what you want now. Christina has lots of guest artists on her new album, I heard.

S: Yeah, Santogold, M.I.A. and Le Tigre. She works with lots of people. Her new record is fucking amazing. You are gonna die, it's so good.

Don't forget your friends to see Sia live at the Vic Theatre, 3145 N. Sheffield, Sunday, April 24, at 7:30 p.m. To learn more about the birthing of *We Are Born* visit www.siamusic.net.

Find out more about Sia—including who her famous girlfriend is—online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



Sia.

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Cocktail-ing



Raise your glasses in a toast to Cocktail for its 14th anniversary, which took place Wed., April 14. Cocktail owner Geno announced from the small stage that the bar will, in fact, begin expansion plans. Photos by Kirk Williamson



Judy Gold. Photo by Dan Dion

NUNN ON ONE: COMEDY

Judy's comedy: As good as Gold

BY JERRY NUNN

Judy Gold is a comedian, actress, mom and a lesbian. On her way to Zanies, this openly lesbian jokester is not to be missed.

Windy City Times: Hi, Judy. So what are you up to today?

Judy Gold: I am in a show, Delia and Nora Ephron's Love, Loss and What I Wore. It is great. I am doing it with Shirley Knight, Lucy Devito and Melissa Joan Hart.

WCT: You are busy with a show and two kids that keep you running around.

JG: [Sarcastically] Yeah, they are annoying.

WCT: Did your mother come see your hit off-Broadway show 25 Questions for a Jewish Mother?

JG: Yes, of course. She saw it twice, actually.

WCT: She was cool with it?

JG: Yes, she was.

WCT: Do people ever get upset with you putting them in your act?

JG: That's a great question. No one really has except for my aunt that I written a joke about because she had turned her husband's belt buckle into a necklace. She would turn all this crap into jewelry. She was the only rich relative that we really had. She took my brother, sister and me out of her will.

WCT: That is harsh.

JG: Yes, pretty bad and we are the next of kin. So my four cousins got all the money.

WCT: You are coming to Zanies in Chicago. What is your show like?

JG: It is my stand-up. It is what I do. I talk a lot about my family, my mother and politics. But it is what I love to do.

WCT: I have interviewed a slew of female comedians. Who do you admire?

JG: I love Joan Rivers.

WCT: I love her, too! I just interviewed her. I brought her chocolate after her show.

JG: Oh, she is such a class act. She is so smart.

She would be my all-time favorite. Then we have Joy Behar, Paula Poundstone and Kathleen Madigan.

WCT: You won two Emmy Awards for writing and producing *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*. Was it strange to you for her not to be out of the closet?

JG: You know, she wasn't in the closet with all of us. It was just on TV. It was a job. In the office everyone knew and she didn't hide anything.

WCT: I look forward to seeing your show.

JG: You better get your ass there. Are you bringing me chocolate?

WCT: I should. What kind do you like?

JG: I like dark chocolate. I will be very insulted that you brought Joan chocolate and you didn't bring me anything.

WCT: [Laughs] Okay, I will!

Judy Gold has three shows at Zanies, 1548 N. Wells, April 29-30. For more information on Judy's life, check out www.judygold.com.

NUNN ON ONE: COMEDY

Mario Cantone's hilarious book club

BY JERRY NUNN

Mario Cantone, along with a variety of performers, will be reciting excerpts from celebrity autobiographies at the Royal George Theatre this month. This *Sex and the City* star spoke with *Windy City Times*.

Windy City Times: Hi, Mario. You are coming to Chicago soon!

Mario Cantone: Yes, I am doing *Celebrity Autobiographies*, which is not really my show. It is much easier. With my standup I have not been to Chicago. I regret it. It is the one city that I want to play.

WCT: Well, you have to come back with your own show.

MC: Yeah, I have to find the right theater for it.

WCT: Who came up with the idea for *Celebrity Autobiography*?

MC: Eugene Pack. [He suddenly notices action near where he lives.] What the fuck is going on down here? Jesus Christ, this city is so crazy. I am on my roof and I am looking down and there are cops. There is always someone getting hit by a car down here or a murder. I live in the projects, I do. I have lived here for 26 years because I don't like change. I don't like to put things in boxes and move. I have moved around in the building like three times because I don't want to leave. [Laughs]

WCT: You live in New York?

MC: Yes, I had a studio in this building one time and now I have a corner duplex with an outdoor deck that is all mine.

WCT: Your partner's named Jerry also?

MC: Yes; Jerry Dixon. I don't talk about it and celebrate it because once you do then they leave you for tattooed hookers. They have asked me how long I have been with him on *The View* many times and I say, "Shut up! I do not celebrate it." Once you thank them in speeches or talk about how great the relationship is, it's over.

WCT: It's a jinx.

MC: It's a sure nail in the coffin of the relationship. It really is.

WCT: You are the only male to actually do the round table at the *View*, correct?

MC: I believe I was the first male co-host. Joy [Behar], who is my buddy, says it's Tom Sell-eck, but I don't think so! I have done it three times as a co-host. I have been a guest about 50 times.

WCT: You are so funny on the show.

MC: I love it on there. I enjoy it and have a good time.

WCT: Do you have any behind-the-scenes stories about *The View*?

MC: I have been there through all of it, from the beginning. I have seen all the changes. I have never had a problem with anybody. It started with Joy because she always comes to get me no matter what show she is on with her career. Barbara Walters and Bill Geddie really really like me, and that's why I have been on so many times. If they didn't like me it wouldn't happen.

WCT: How do you get along with Elizabeth Hasselbeck?

MC: She will come over to the dark side soon enough. She railed on the Republicans the other day, I heard. She went off on what she thought about them leaving coffins on people's lawns.

WCT: Really?

MC: Good for her. She is not a stupid girl. I think she is idealistic and, for some reason, conservative. When you are young like that I think you eventually see the truth. I believe it will happen sometime. Well, then again I could be wrong. She might end up like [gay-rights opponent] Anita Bryant, you never know.

WCT: Speaking of celebrities, what do you think of Ricky Martin coming out?

MC: He is still at the height of his beauty. He is the first American sex symbol—I know he is Puerto Rican—to come out of the closet. He came out at the peak of his beauty. That is major. His music career is not what it once was but this is going to kill it. This will cut it in half. That is the way of the world, unfortunately. We knew he was gay but Middle America didn't know, I am telling you. There are a lot of people surprised by this. His Puerto Rican fan base did not know and did not want to know. This is not good for him but great for him. Do you know what I mean?

WCT: Kind of.

MC: It is not great for his career. It is great what he did. He sacrificed a lot more work and good for him. He had people around him saying don't do it. He didn't lie about it. He was not lying like a lot of leading men in Hollywood are. When Barbara Walters asked him about it, he never said no. You gotta give him credit for that, too. You have to look at the whole picture. This boy is okay.

WCT: Well, Sean Hayes came out a few weeks ago, too.

MC: That was really not a surprise. Even Middle America knew about that one. They can take it much more because he was playing gay. He was also never in the closet with his friends and people. In the press though he would not talk about it.

WCT: I am going to see *Promises, Promises* [a musical that Hayes and Kristin Chenoweth



Mario Cantone. Photo by Peter Lau

are in] while in New York.

MC: You are? I did that musical in high school.

WCT: Do you want to do more Broadway?

MC: Yes, I do. I did five of them. I was supposed to costar in a show with Harry Connick, Jr., but unfortunately it fell apart. There have been a few things that haven't happened but it is one of my favorite things to do. I am very picky about it because once you are in it then you are in it for eight shows a week.

WCT: It is a big commitment.

MC: Yeah, and you better love it. Even if it is a great piece you are going to get bored now and again.

WCT: Are you excited about *Sex and the City 2*, which comes out next month?

MC: Yes, I am. I am very thrilled to be in it and looking forward to it.

WCT: How did you get involved in *Sex and the City*, the series?

MC: Michael Patrick King I have known since I was 23 years old—since I was doing comedy clubs. He was a stand-up and we became friendly. He always loved what I did and was always the director. He went off to Hollywood and worked for *Murphy Brown* and a few other shows. After the third year of *Sex and the City*, he said he had written a part for me. It was just one scene—a wedding thing to help [Kristin Davis' character, Charlotte] pick out her dress. They got a lot of calls and then they brought me back again and again. But I only did 12 episodes.

WCT: I loved the storyline with the straight people trying to set up the two gay guys. It was so true because I hate when the straights try to set me up with someone.

MC: Oh, I know. It's ridiculous. That's what so

great about that. That all is changing now.

WCT: Can you tell us which celebrity autobiography you will be reading or is it excerpts from different ones?

MC: I will tell you the ones that I read in the past but I don't know which ones I am going to be doing. I have read Zsa Zsa Gabor, Carrie Pre-jean, the former Miss California, Melissa Gilbert, Faye Dunaway, I have also read one of the Jonas Brothers, Loni Anderson. Yeah. I have read some fun stuff.

WCT: Do you do them in your funny voices?

MC: No, I don't. Well, Faye Dunaway I kinda do. I don't even know what Carrie Prejean sounds like. I just kind of imagine what she is like. I try to stay on the book and not comment on it.

WCT: It is funny on its own, right?

MC: Yeah, I try to keep it pure. When you are doing the group ones like the Jonas Brothers, or Loni Anderson and Burt Reynolds, if someone goes off book then I am ready to go toe to toe with them. If I am alone I stay on book. I think that is the way it should be, actually.

WCT: Would you write a book about your life?

MC: No, God, no. It would just be pissed off and angry. People don't want to hear that. I complain a lot.

WCT: Well, I am excited about seeing your show.

MC: I love your city and Jerry, my partner, is from there. I asked him, "Why don't we come there more?" It is my favorite place in the world next to New York. We are going to make a nice weekend of it when we come up there.

Celebrity Autobiography is slated for two shows at The Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted, Friday-Saturday, April 30-May 1, at 8 p.m. A limited amount of meet-and-greet-tickets is available at www.ticketmaster.com.

Ellen part of comedy festival

Talk-show host/American Idol judge/comedian Ellen DeGeneres will be one of the comedians featured at "TBS PRESENTS A 'VERY FUNNY' FESTIVAL: JUST FOR LAUGHS," June 15-19 throughout Chicago.

DeGeneres' show is called "Ellen's Somewhat Special," and will be taped Wed., June 16, at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State. Other comedians slated for the festival include Cedric The Entertainer, Denis Leary, Aziz Ansari, Bob Odenkirk and Russell Peters.

Tickets are available at all Ticketmaster locations, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by phone at 800-745-3000. The full schedule and festival information is available at www.justforlaughschicago.com.

calendar

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WINDY CITY TIMES



Wed., April 21

Ride for AIDS Fundraiser - Richard's Riders

\$30 unlimited Well Drinks & Beer 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and more; 6:30 p.m., (773) 989-9400, Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway Ave, www.tinyurl.com/richardsriders

Nerds at Heart's Earth Date Show your love for the planet and each other during the third annual two-day bash for smart gay singles. Includes rounds of board games and themed trivia, a Rain Organic Vodka eco-tini, an organic chocolate tasting, a green fashion show, giveaways and more. 7pm, 312-265-6085, Holiday Club, 4000 N. Sheridan, <http://nerdsatheart.com>

SAGE Art as Advocacy The Center on Halsted's SAGE (Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders) Art as Advocacy group. 4pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted

Thursday, April 22

Civil Union Lobby Day in Springfield Free, sponsored by Equality Illinois. All attendees must RSVP. www.eqfed.org/equality_illinois/events/lobbyday_april_22_2010_attendees/details.tcl. Buses will depart 1) 7am, Equality Illinois office, 3318 N. Halsted St., Chicago (Note street parking metered or by permit.) 2) 7am, United Methodist Church, 405 S. Euclid Ave., Oak Park (Parking limited.) 3) 7:30-8am, Denny's Restaurant, 126 E. North Frontage Rd., Bolingbrook (Park at Denny's), 4) 7am, Church of the Good Shepherd, 515 S. Orchard Dr., Carbondale. (Parking in gravel lot by church). 5) 8:45-9:15am St. Paul's United Church of Christ, 115 W. B St. Belleville. (Pick up/drop off point at the corner of 2nd & C St. Street park-

FORMING A BON

Thursday, April 22

Lambda Legal's annual Bon Foster celebration will take place at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark.

Photo of Kevin Cathcart from 2008 by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)



ing available.) All buses will drop off attendees at The Hoogland Center for the Arts, 420 S. 6th St., Springfield, Illinois at approximately 11am. Anyone taking alternate transportation should meet us there. Lunch will be 11am-12:30pm, during which we will discuss effective talking points and lobbying your legislators. Attendees will have a chance to meet with their legislators from 1-3:30pm at the State House. A debrief, reception and dinner will be held from 3:30-5:30pm. All buses depart Springfield at 5:30pm; 7am, 773-477-7173, Various departure points; www.eqil.org

"Bon" Foster Celebration Lambda Legal's largest fundraiser in the Midwest honors the late civil rights activist and attorney who was an outspoken opponent of injustice and challenged others to demand the best for themselves. His generosity aided in the creation of Lambda Legal's Midwest Regional Office and its subsequent civil rights victories. Info Jeff Souva at jsouva@lambdalegal.org; 5:30pm, 312-663-

4413, ext. 335, Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, www.lambdalegal.com

Windy City Gay Idol 2010, now in its 8th year searches for the best amateur GLBT singers in the Chicago area. WCMGpromotions@gmail.com; 8pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave

Steven Brinberg debuts Simply Barbra For one night only, Brinberg celebrates the birth week of Barbra Streisand with her own vocal style, mannerisms and stories, creating the feel of an intimate concert with the lady herself. \$15. 8pm, 269-756-3879, Acorn Theater, 107 Generations, Three Oaks, Mich., www.acorntheater.com

Friday, April 23

The Joffrey Ballet Annual Spring Gala The Women's Board of The Joffrey Ballet invites you to an evening of transformative dancing, dinner and drinks as the Women's Board hosts a fantastic journey into the world of The Joffrey Ballet. The annual black-tie event begins at 5:30pm followed by unforgettable performance pieces by The Joffrey Ballet. Following the performances, guests will be escorted by an exclusive trolley service to Chicago's historic Union Station to enjoy an evening of dinner and dancing. Tickets for the Spring Gala are priced at \$600 each and tables range between \$6,000 and \$25,000. For more information and ticket or donation inquiries, please call 312-386-8921. Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E Congress Pkwy

Solo Art Exhibition Reception at Center on Halsted The Galleries at Center on Halsted will present artist Jun-Jun Sta.Ana in a show entitled "Bulong from Within: Motifs, Invocations and Incantations." The exhibit will run through May 31. 6:30pm, 773-472-6469, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, www.centeronhalsted.org/cohevents.cfm#1008

MORE for Gay Men Movie Night MORE for Gay Men Movie Night viewing Mysterious Skin. Admission is Door: \$7. Online: \$5; Admission includes movie, facilitated discussion and light refreshments. 6:30pm, 312-329-1200, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://moreforgaymen.com>

Circuit Girl Traffic Jam Join us for the hottest womens night in Chicago! Get a glo bracelet upon entering: Red-Taken; Yellow-Shy, but available; and Green-Single. The easiest way to meet girls. 9pm, Circuit Night Club, 3641 N Halsted

Saturday, April 24

TrueChild Hosts Celebrity Cook-Off

TrueChild, a national organization that helps children break through stereotypes so they can be true to themselves and reach their full potential, will host the annual TrueFlavors Celebrity Cook-Off with Casey Thompson and Sunny Anderson. 1 p.m., 202-462-6610, The Chopping Block. Merchandise Mark, 107, Chicago, <http://www.truechild.org>

Kim Zolciak at Spin Join Kim Zolciak from Bravo's Real Housewives of Atlanta from 11pm to 2am at Spin. She will perform her hit single "Don't Be Tardy For The Party" at Midnight. \$15 Pre-Sale Tickets available. Call 773-327-7711 to purchase by phone. 11pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont, <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

Windy City Performing Arts Night of Broadway An Evening of Broadway, a cabaret of favorite Broadway tunes performed by members of the Windy City Gay Chorus. \$30 donation includes sponsored bar & cabaret of Broadway favorites. A benefit for Windy City Performing Arts. 8pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St, www.windycitysings.org

Gender Bent at Temptations Nightclub

They are back ... Chicago's Premiere Drag King Show, Gender Bent featuring Plezurr, Rico Lengua, CJ Cumlongly, Ben Dover, Duke Doiner'rite, Domino Toque, Emo Fabulous, Pisces, Italy Vuet, Kyler Bushman, Shooter and more! 8pm, Temptations Nightclub, 10235 W Grand Ave

Sunday, April 25

aChurch4Me? MCC Worship Celebration A diverse community where all are welcome, grow spiritually and find meaning in hope and love! 11am, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.achurch4me.org/>

Women of the Western Suburbs monthly meeting RSVP deecaps@netzero.net; 2pm, Streamwood.

I Am Sexy Sundays

Chicago's Hottest/Sexiest LGBT Night. I Am Sexy Sundays is the biggest cub the gay community has ever seen! Free entry; 9pm, 312 262 8761, Vain Night Club, 2354 N. Clybourn

Monday, April 26

Israeli activist Anat Hoffman Israel: Beyond the Headlines—Temple Sholom of Chicago is proud to host Anat Hoffman, Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center. She has served as a city councilwoman for 14 years in Jerusalem and has been a fierce warrior for justice and equality and is a strong advocate for social justice, religious pluralism, Jewish-Arab coexistence and equal rights for women and minorities in Israel. 7pm, Temple Sholom of Chicago, 3480 N. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, <http://www.sholom-chicago.org>

Dating & Mating Seminar for Singles Dating & Mating...A New Roadmap for Lasting Love is a 6-week interactive group for single men and women of any sexual orientation who want to create a long lasting, loving relationship. The group will meet Mondays from 7:30pm-9:30pm from April 12-May 17. The cost is \$50 per session. Registration is required. 7:30pm, 773-248-1675, 3342 N. Leavitt, www.al-anirng.com

Tuesday, April 27

Learn how to help keep Northalsted neighborhood safe Northalsted Business Alliance hosts Court Advocacy training. Representatives from The Community Justice Center and the Office of the Cook County State's Attorney will explain Court Advocacy. Sign up at jay@northalsted.com; 2pm, Circuit Night Club, 3641 N Halsted St, www.northalsted.com

The Gown Elephant The Brown Elephant in Andersonville will be transformed into The Gown Elephant, a sale of gently used and new designer eveningwear donated by many of Chicago's most stylish philan-



GRAND CANYON

Tuesday, April 20

Ladies of the Canyon will perform a tribute to Melissa Etheridge (above) at Fitzgerald's, 6615 Roosevelt, Berwyn.

PR photo

thropists. Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$50 at the door. Contact Anthony McClellan at (773) 388-8998. 6pm, Brown Elephant - Clark, 5404 N. Clark, www.howardbrown.org/hb_news.asp?id=1218

Wed., April 28

Love Won't Let Me Be Silent: An Evening with Terry Angel Mason Writer and civil rights activist, Terry Angel Mason will discuss his Pulitzer Prize-Nominated novel, a collection of writings, short stories, and poems which opens dialogue on sexuality and same-gender-loving relationships within the Black community and Black. Sponsored by Affinity Community Services, Teen Living Programs, UCAN, and the University of Chicago's Office of LGBTQ Life and Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. 6:30pm, OMSA/LGBTQ Student Life, 5710 S. Woodlawn, Chicago

Ladies of the Canyon salutes Melissa Etheridge Chicago-based female singer-songwriter tribute group. 8pm, 708-788-2118, Fitzgerald's, 6615 Roosevelt, Berwyn, <http://www.fitzgeraldsnightclub.com>

Thursday, April 29

Dining Out For Life! The 17th Anniversary of Dining Out For Life in Chicago! Chicagoand restaurants and will come together and celebrate good food, good friends and a good cause. Joined with cities across the United States and Canada, this is the single largest HIV/AIDS benefit in the country. 5pm, HB: Home Bistro, 3404 N Halsted, <http://www.edgealliance.org/pages/dol/93.php>

Men's Speed Dating at Center on Halsted Arrive between 6:45pm and 7pm. First speed dating round begins at 7:15pm. Rounds continue until everyone has had a chance to meet, or until 8:45pm, whichever comes first. \$12 at door; 6:45pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, www.centeronhalsted.org

Windy City Gay Idol Now in its 8th year searches for the best amateur GLBT singers in the Chicago area. 7pm sign up, 8pm start. WCMGpromotions@gmail.com; 7pm, Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway

Judy Gold The star of the long-running off Broadway hit "25 Questions for a Jewish Mother", will also perform Vernon Hills May 1. "25 Questions for a Jewish Mother" is a poignant portrait of what makes a Jewish mother, a Jewish mother. 8:30pm, Zanies Comedy Club, 1548 N. Wells, Chicago, <http://www.judygold.com>

Friday, April 30

Jody Watley R&B singer with a gay following will perform as part of GoSity Entertainment's concert series. Doors open at 7 pm; the show is scheduled to begin at 8 pm. Tickets \$30. Info at themusicexp@aol.com. 7pm, 773-493-0154 or 773-552-2500, Harold Washington Cultural Center, 4701 S. King, www.amusicexp.com



HAIR APPARENT

Friday, April 30

R&B singer Jody Watley (above) will sing to the masses at the Harold Washington Cultural Center, 4701 S. King.

PR photo

BILLY MASTERS

Jeffrey Sanker sure knows how to throw a party. As a White Party virgin (yes, my darlings, a virgin), I was not exactly sure what to expect. With such an ambitious and seemingly unwieldy schedule of events, chaos would undoubtedly ensue. But that was not the case at the 21st installment of this annual Palm Springs shindig. Even with new venues and expanded events, the whole experience ran like a well-oiled machine. That kind of organization has to start from the top, and the top in question (at least figuratively speaking) is Sanker himself.



Candis Cayne has gone from Dirty Sexy Money to hanging with dancing, sexy people.

My weekend duties were confined to meeting and greeting luminaries and hotties on Saturday's White Carpet alongside the snappy and sexy Candis Cayne. The big name was Kim Zolciak, from *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*. When she and fellow housewife Kandi arrived, the Bravo crew was with them. Kim was fun and nice, but appeared annoyed when I asked her about all of the hoopla surrounding her revelation about a relationship with DJ extraordinaire Tracy Young. Kim rolled her eyes, as if shocked that I'd bring up a story she made public. I said we didn't have to talk about it. Well, if there's one thing that bothered her more than my wanting to talk about it, it was my eagerness to *not* talk about it! I realized this gal knows exactly what she's doing. The eye-rolling, the feigned shock—it's all part of her shtick. I can respect that because she pulls it off (except with *moi*, of course).

At Sunday's tea dance, Kim "sang" along with her pre-recorded track of "Tardy for the Party" and brought Kandi with her. Alas, I had the misfortune to be standing right next to the only speaker that was connected directly to Kim's microphone. I got to hear her live vocals without the benefit of any mixing, AutoTuning or other audio trickery. What she lacks in vocal skill, she certainly makes up for in energy and sheer love of performing.

What would a circuit party be without a little drama? Swedish singing sensation Agnes was slated to appear on Sunday, and earlier in the day we got whispers that Britney Spears would be making the trek from L.A. You see, Brit and Ag share a manager, so Spears was to introduce Agnes from the stage. Sanker set up a separate VIP pavilion for Brit, equipped with a private entrance for her vehicle. At one point, a black

SUV showed up and sat at the entrance. That turned out to be a decoy. The real SUV containing Britney turned up about 10 minutes later. Spears and a handful of her "people" made their way up to the pavilion. Simultaneously, a dozen security people showed up to dissuade those of us with an unobstructed view from taking photos. (We still snagged a few.)

In short order, Sanker and company made their way to greet the pop star. They were stopped at the foot of the stairs by one of her goons. Sanker was then allowed in ... alone! He talked to Brit for a few minutes and then left. It appears that Spears was happy to meet the man who spent tens of thousands of dollars to give her a VIP experience, but refused to meet anyone else or allow him to take a photo with her. This is why I'm never in a position of power. Because at that point, I'd have said, "Then go home. Who needs you?" Alas, no one did that. Once patrons started realizing Spears was in the area, she retreated to her SUV, had a cigarette and drove away.

I was assured she'd return, but wasn't convinced. What were the chances she'd hang around Palm Springs for two hours? Lo and behold, when it was time for Agnes' performance, the music stopped, the lights dimmed, and out came ... local performance artiste Flava! And she introduced a special performer ... Agnes! Agnes did a great job, and then there was an incredible fireworks display—and that was that. Except, it wasn't. As I left the venue, there was Britney getting into her SUV. Apparently, she did return to watch Agnes. I suppose it's nice that she came to support a fellow artist, and it's a credit to Sanker that she was comfortable showing up at his party. But, frankly, it was much ado about nothing. Frankly, the record number of attendees didn't seem to care one way or the other.

In the midst of all the White Party revelry, we learned that Dixie Carter had passed away. I only met Dixie a few times, but I always found her fun, energetic, disarmingly direct and honest, and really dishy. In short, she was everything you'd want her to be—and more. She'll definitely be missed.

Nathan Lane is enduring some of the worst reviews of his career—and that's saying something—for *The Addams Family* musical on Broadway. And he's not taking the jabs all that well. When Kevin Sessums at *The Daily Beast* asked his

opinion on the poor notices, Lane said, "Honestly, I don't give a fuck. We've done the best we could—I think this might be my farewell to musical theater." I hope he's joking. But I can alert my Chicago fans that Lane will be returning to the boards next season in a decidedly different vehicle. He'll be starring alongside Brian Dennehy in *The Iceman Cometh* at the Goodman.

Let me slip in a quick "Ask Billy" question from John in Austin: "I know it's tragic, but I watch *'Love Games: Bad Girls Need Love Too'* on Oxygen. Has Akoni [a contestant] done porn? He looks awfully familiar."

He has. The Hawaiian native has done gay porn under the more island-sounding "Kekoa," but eventually settled on "Jarrett Rex" for the bulk of his adult work. Despite solely doing gay porn, he claims to be heterosexual. He might also claim to have two testicles, but he doesn't. Pics and videos can be found on BillyMasters.com.

When Britney not singing is news, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Phew—just under the wire. Keep checking www.BillyMasters.com for all the dishiest dirt. If you've got questions, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Akoni finds his missing ball! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Sylvia Fowles. Photo courtesy of the Chicago Sky

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Sky-high expectations

BY ROSS FORMAN

The leading scorer and leading rebounder from the 2009 Chicago Sky is gone, but optimism still reigns in the Sky.

In fact, the talk within the fifth-year WNBA team is that the blockbuster off-season trade of veteran All-Star forward Candice Dupree to the Phoenix Mercury as part of a three-team deal will be a long-term blessing for the Sky, mostly from an increased depth to the starting lineup, improved shooting range and overall defensive intensity.

The New York Liberty sent All-Star Shemeka Christon and Catherine Kraayaveld to the Sky. Chicago native Cappie Pondexter went from Phoenix to New York. The Liberty also will receive the Sky's 2010 second-round draft pick.

"We're looking good," Sky head coach Steve Key said. "We've gotten closer to [being] a play-off team each and every year, particularly this past season. I think a lot of good things are coming together for us."

Dupree started all 34 games for the '09 Sky and averaged 15.7 points per game (ppg). She also averaged 7.9 rebounds per game (rpg). Plus, Dupree was a 79-percent free-throw shooter.

Christon averaged 16.1 points and 4.9 rebounds for the Liberty, while Kraayaveld averaged 9 points and 4.6 rebounds.

"I think we have a lot of talent this season," Key said. "The big thing for us is, to keep our talent healthy. In particular, Sylvia [Fowles], who has really only played one full season out of the two that she's been here."

"A healthy Sylvia is key for us."

Fowles started 20 of the 24 games she played in last season and was third on the team in scoring (11.3 ppg) and second in rebounds (7.8 rpg).

The Sky also will rely on Kristi Toliver (7.6 ppg), Dominique Canty (6.9 ppg) and Shyra Ely (6.8 ppg), among others.

"We definitely are thinking playoffs this season, as we were last season," Key said. "We feel, if we get into the playoffs—no matter where we're ranked heading into the playoffs—that it's just a three-game series."

Only four make the playoffs, "and we know we're very capable, very confident, and we know that we can defeat anyone," Key said. "We don't just want to make it to the playoffs; we want to advance," to the WNBA Finals.

Key said his biggest worry for the 2010 campaign is the team's intensity and focus. "If we're not prepared to do all of the little things to we,

we won't succeed," he said.

Key tagged guard Toliver, in her second season out of the University of Maryland, as the team's potential breakout player.

"She's going to get the chance to really show what she can do," Key said.

Key said defending WNBA champion Phoenix is still the team to beat.

"It's a little unfortunate that we lost Detroit to Tulsa, and Sacramento altogether, but what it's done is, it's made every [other] team that much better because they're that much more talented," Key said of the WNBA, which now stands 12 teams strong. "There's even more parity this season than in past years."

"I think other teams realize that we're competitive. I don't know if other teams are worried about us, but they definitely realize that we have the potential to beat anyone on any given night."

The Sky's regular season begins Saturday, May 15, at the Connecticut Sun. See www.wnba.com/sky for more information.

GAY GAMES: SWIMMING

Stewart Hendrix is in the swim of things

BY ROSS FORMAN

Stewart Hendrix heads to Cologne, Germany, this summer for the Gay Games in hopes of besting his bronze medal-winning performance in a relay at the 2006 Games in Chicago.

"I didn't really train as hard as I should have and was amazed at how fast some of the swimmers were [in 2006], Hendrix said. "I am hoping to drop some weight and put the time in the pool to get back to my high school or college times."

Hendrix, who lives in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, will be 33 when he jumps in the pool this summer in Cologne.

"Besides the adventure of checking out a new city and meeting all the great people who are out and enjoying life, the Games are a real competition," Hendrix said. "The 2006 Games reminded me of college-level swimming. Some folks when talking about the Gay Games think it is just a small venue for us to meet and chat or do some light competition. But participating in the 2006 Games and seeing the level [of] athleticism brought to all the sports really made the Games something to keep me working out, now and hopefully for the rest of my life."

"Beside the overwhelming heat, I enjoyed the 2006 Games immensely. The Opening and Closing Ceremonies will be something I will never forget. I got to walk on the field at Soldier Field and Wrigley Field all within a week [span]. It is only as the Games wind down that you can sit back and reflect on the week. It was fast-paced, with friends all over the city competing. I remember going to work, then rushing to the



Stewart Hendrix. Photo courtesy of Hendrix

pool, swimming, and then [having] cocktails with friends, as much sleep as I could and then back at it again."

Here's more about Stewart Hendrix:

—His partner is Bill Dodds, who also is a swimmer. They have been together for 8 years.

—Graduated from Gilroy (Calif.) High School

—Earned his B.S. (in information decision systems) from San Diego State University, and then his MBA (in finance) from DePaul

—Hobbies: He studies for industry certifications: "It seems they never end."

—Superstitions: "None really, but, if I see a seagull sitting on a light pole that I'm about to walk under, I always watch [it]; the Chicago seagulls are out to get you."

—Little-known fact: He was the homecoming king during his senior year in high school.

—Greatest sporting accomplishment: "I would have to say [winning] the Bronze in the 200 Medley Relay at the 2006 Gay Games. It was not my fastest time, but I got it with my partner, and now we have the medals hanging up next to each other. It was one of those rare times you can accomplish something together."

—Favorite pro sports team: Chicago Cubs

—Favorite pro athlete: Michael Phelps or Jason Lezak, but Jason more so

SPORTS SHORTS

Aussie swimmer comes out

Australian swimmer Daniel Kowalski outed himself in an article he wrote for the April 18

issue of the Sydney Morning Herald, according to Advocate.com.

Kowalski, 34, won Olympic medals in 1996 and 2000, and now works as an advisor for athletes. Kowalski, who started coming out to family and friends four years ago, wrote, "I often think that if I had people to look up to, to read about, who were elite athletes and were easily accessible—people who had lived some of my experiences as an athlete—then it would have helped the situation. It would have made it easier. But having lived it, I do understand why so few athletes have come out. In Australia, there have been Ian Roberts and more recently Matthew Mitcham."

Mitcham, a diver, won an Olympic gold medal in the 2008 Summer Olympics. The 22-year-old came out to the Herald earlier that year.

'Male Models' event April 23

"Mingle with Male Models," presented by Muscle and Fitness Photos, will take place Friday, April 23, at Muscle And Fitness Photos, 3200 W. Carroll.

There will be a cocktail reception starting at 6:30 p.m., and a photo shoot at 8 p.m. The latter event will feature all of the models working together to create the artistic male nude photography featured in the "Men Together" sections of MuscledandFitnessPhotos.com.

Tickets are \$25, and attendees must be 21; they may be ordered online at www.muscledandfitnessphotos.com, or by calling 773-250-7881 or 800-838-3006.

Red Stars tie St. Louis



The Chicago Red Stars pro women's soccer team held its home opener Saturday against St. Louis Athletica, and the game ended in a 1-1 tie at Toyota Park in Bridgeview.

Athletica came out fighting and scored in the fourth minute against goalkeeper Jillian Loyden. The Red Stars had a much stronger second half, with several close scoring opportunities and good team hustle, including by sub Karen Carney, who always adds a great spark when she's in the game. Julianne Sitch of Oswego, Ill., also adds a great new energy to the Red Stars.

The Red Stars goal came in the 59th minute. Midfielder Casey Noguera scored her first-ever Women's Professional Soccer goal, with an assist by Katie Chapman.

See www.ChicagoRedStars.com for a season schedule. Text and photos of Red Stars General Manager Marcia McDermott and the team by Tracy Baim

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Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC
A widely published author and speaker, Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas.

He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations.

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