



TREVOR DONOVAN INTERVIEW PAGE 24

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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PHILL WILSON AT ADVOCATES' EVENT PAGE 14



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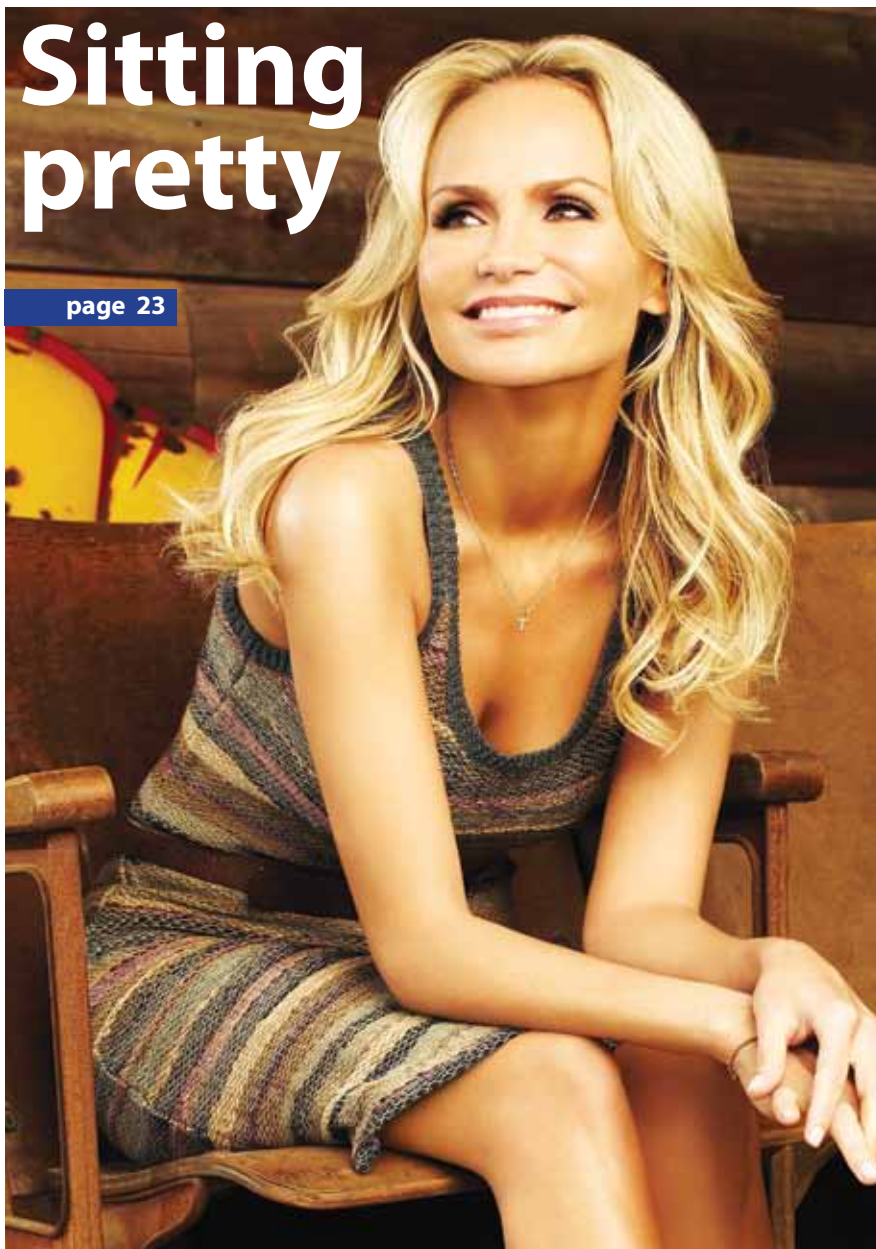


GAY MAN IN 'MOST ELIGIBLE' PAGE 24

We are the champions



The Gay Softball World Series wrapped up Sept. 3, and among the winners were the Chicago Sidetrack Classics (above), who took the Masters Division. Read more about the tournament on page 26, and about the team on page 34. Photo by Ross Forman



Sitting pretty

page 23

Kristin Chenoweth chats with Windy City Times about Glee, driving and dating gay men. Read more on page 23. Photo by Jeremy Cowart



Continental yours

page 25

The new Miss Continental, Alexis Gabrielle Sherrington, was crowned Sunday night at the Park West. She's pictured here with Miss Continental CEO Jim Flint. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald, see more page 25.

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Photos on cover (left, from top): PR photo of Trevor Donovan; photo of Jim Pickett courtesy of Pickett; photo of Phill Wilson by Erica Demarest; photo of Deb Mell and Christin Baker courtesy of the couple; photo of Drew Ginsberg from Bravo

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COAST-ING ALONG

Look at photos from the laid-back event that was the North Coast Music Festival.

Photo by Jerry Nunn



Take a trip through the Lincoln Park Conservatory via photographs.

Photo by Andrew Davis



Read WCT's talk with the musical act An Horse.

Photo by Shervin Lainez

FAMILY AFFAIR

Antigone Rising's Kristen Henderson and her partner talk family—and the book that documents their journey—with Windy City Times.

SCHOOL DAZE

Read about Dana Rudolph's LGBT-centered back-to-school resources.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

This week's entertainment round-up includes items on Deborah Harry, Liza Minnelli and Zachary Quinto.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

'BLOOD' BATH



Read Kurt Niece's take on True Blood and why people should appreciate the show's gay bent.

Photo courtesy of HBO



TAKE A QUEER LOOK AT CHICAGO

Dom Orejudos, a Chicago artist and musician who was also known as Etienne, painted this mural in 1973 for Chuck Renslow's Gold Coast Bar, the first gay leather bar in Chicago and one of the first in the country, which opened in 1958.

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Judges ponder 'activism' in DADT deliberation

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) will be off the books Sept. 20, when a 60-day review period has ticked away following certification of military readiness to implement repeal. However, there is still concern among some that the removal of that specific law barring gays from the military will not stop discrimination against gays in the military.

Log Cabin Republicans' attorney Dan Woods argued as much Sept. 1, when he urged a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to uphold a district court ruling that found DADT unconstitutional.

Woods noted that, before passage of DADT in 1993, there was a military regulation—not a federal law—that banned "homosexuals" from the military.

"That ban had existed for decades," noted Woods.

And if the 9th Circuit panel does not affirm the lower court decision, said Woods, "the government will be completely unconstrained in its ability to again ban gay service in the military."

Since the repeal was passed by Congress last December, he noted, and there is a new Congress, there has already been a House vote to de-fund implementation of repeal, and there are "multiple candidates for president promising, as part of their campaign platforms, to repeal the repeal."

One member of the panel, Judge Barry Silverman, suggested the latter concern, about presidential candidates, seemed a bit "speculative."

"Well, there's an election next year," responded Wood.

"Come back next year," the judge shot back, with a barely stifled laugh. "If any of these things come to pass, it'll be a different story. But in the meantime, this is the situation we're faced with."

The situation is that the Department of Justice is urging the panel rule the *Log Cabin Republicans v. U.S.* lawsuit moot. That lawsuit—which won a powerful decision from U.S. District Court Judge Virginia Phillips last September—was largely responsible for prompting Congress to finally pass a bill repealing DADT in December. Phillips had ordered the military to immediately stop enforcing DADT and, though the 9th Circuit put that order on hold pending appeal of the decision to the 9th Circuit, military officials began warning Congress that it seemed inevitable the courts would strike down the law. The military wanted a smooth transition to a DADT-free force, and Congress agreed.

Henry Whitaker, attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, urged the panel to declare the litigation moot Judge Phillips' decision. He said the government would submit a motion after September 20 to vacate the ruling and have the case sent back to the district court for dismissal. He said that, if the 9th Circuit does issue a ruling, the government might even consider appealing it to the U.S. Supreme Court. And he stated several times that, until repeal takes effect, the government "is defending" DADT on its merits.

"The point I'm trying to make," said Woods, "is that the government has no constraints on it if this case is determined to be moot and the judgment is vacated, as counsel for the government argues. Then we'd have to start all over again to prove again that laws banning open gay servicemembers are unconstitutional. This case took seven years to get here today. And it



Dan Woods. Photo courtesy of Joseph Marchlewski

would be inappropriate to have to have people go through that all over again."

Woods urged the panel to affirm Phillips' decision, saying it would remedy "collateral consequences" caused by DADT. Among those concerns, he said, were loss of benefits under the G.I. bill and benefits from the Veterans Administration, inability to be buried in VA cemeteries, and requirement that discharged servicemembers pay back their student loans.

Whitaker said individuals discharged under DADT could seek these remedies through individual lawsuits, but Woods urged the panel that it, "ought not be necessary for every one of the thousands of people who have been discharged under this law to have to do that."

Whitaker contended the decision in *Log Cabin v. U.S.* is needed necessary to rectify the discharges of servicemembers kicked out under DADT.

"We've made clear that [DADT] discharge codes will not be respected once repeal becomes effective," said Whitaker. "And even today, your honor, the Department of Defense is accepting and processing applications by gay and lesbian individuals to serve in the armed forces, including by gay and lesbian individuals who were previously discharged under Don't Ask Don't Tell."

He said Log Cabin's fear that a future Congress or president might re-enact DADT "does not pass the straight face test."

"This case is and always has been about ending Don't Ask Don't Tell," said Whitaker. "And so, once Don't Ask Don't Tell has been ended, in 19 days, that is the end of this case and there's nothing left for the court to do."

Silverman seemed most inclined to agree with Whitaker's argument, but for political reasons. In questioning Woods, Silverman said the public has an interest in judges overturning unconstitutional laws, "but it also seems to me the public has an interest in not having the courts reach out to decide controversial issues that have been resolved by the political branches."

"We hear a lot about judicial activism, especially in the 9th Circuit, and the virtues of judicial restraint," said Silverman. "And I just wonder if the public interest there isn't a public interest in letting this repeal run its course, take

effect, partly because it legitimizes repeal."

However, Woods reminded the judge that "the case is what prompted repeal of the statute."

"If you vacate the judgment and take away the case," said Woods, "the government is unconstrained and simply might do it again. History might repeat itself."

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NATIONAL NEWS



—Southern Decadence withstands storm

—Gay Apple CEO (left) faces first potential crisis

—Houston mayor files for re-election



Sarah Palin speaks at the Tea Party rally. Photo by Tim Carroll

Palin makes mark at Tea Party event

The Tea Party of America held its "Restoring America" event Sept. 3 in Indianola, Iowa—and public figure Sarah Palin was the keynote speaker.

According to *The New American*, the Republican (unsurprisingly) criticized President Obama as well as what she called the "permanent political class" and figures of "crony corporate capitalism" during her 40-minute speech. However, she remained mum regarding the possibility that she may run for the White House.

She said, "Barack Obama has shown us cronyism on steroids. Between bailouts for Wall Street cronies and stimulus projects for union bosses' security and green energy giveaways, he took care of his friends." However, the publication pointed out that Palin did not mention that her 2008 running mate, John McCain, also voted for the Wall Street bailout measure.

What may surprise some is that she did not spare other Republicans: "Now to be fair, some GOP candidates also raise mammoth amounts of cash and we need to ask them, too, what, if anything, do their donors expect in return for their investment?" Photo by Tim Carroll Photography; see more online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>

Mistrial in King case

In California, a jury was unable to reach a verdict in the murder trial of teenager Brandon McInerney, who is accused of shooting gay classmate Lawrence King three years ago, the L.A. Times reported.

McInerney, then 14, shot King twice in the back of the head; prosecutors claim that McInerney committed the crime because he didn't like gay people while the defense contended McInerney snapped after King allegedly sexually harassed him. The jury began deliberating

Aug. 26 after eight weeks of testimony.

GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard issued a statement in reaction to the outcome. "The mistrial declared today is hardly a surprise," Byard said.

She added, "This was always destined to be a case with little resolution and no winners, whatever the verdict. The central facts remain the same: homophobia killed Larry King and destroyed Brandon McInerney's life, and adults failed both young men because of their own inability to deal forthrightly and compassionately with the multiple challenges they each faced. The jury's indecision is a sad reflection of our collective inability to find common ground and invest in a better future for all youth and a culture of respect for all."

ABC7.com reported that the Ventura County District Attorney's Office wants to retry McInerney, 17, who was initially tried as an adult.



Eliza Byard. Photo courtesy of GLSEN

Schism forms within 'butch' group

BY KATE SOSIN

The debate over women's spaces and inclusion in LGBT communities is hardly new, but a recent controversy may be reopening old wounds.

Two California-based organizations for butch-identified people are facing off over the meaning of "butch" and safe spaces at a time when more people in their shared community are coming out as transgender.

Butch Voices, an organization for "masculine of center" women and transgender people, splintered in July when a group of organizers left to start their own organization, Butch Nation.

The split, said Butch Nation organizers, was the result of the removal of the word "butch" from the Butch Voices mission statement, among other things.

Many have since argued that the disagreement strikes to the heart of a debate about feminist spaces.

Butch Nation wants to maintain women-led spaces. Butch Voices says distinctions based solely on gender are exclusionary.

"We're trying to be more about inclusion and not about favoritism," said Joe LeBlanc, founder of Butch Voices.

LeBlanc argues that the mission of Butch Voices has remained the same from the start, and that activists who left the organization to start Butch Nation knew all along that the organization was inclusive of different genders.

In place of "butch" this year, the organization opted for "masculine of center." That phrase re-

fers mainly to women and gender-variant people, organizers said. However, the group could theoretically be open to non-transgender men as well.

Jeanne Cordova, a veteran activist who founded Butch Nation, argues that Butch Voices has abandoned the community it was created to serve in removing the word "butch" from its mission statement.

"I've heard a lot of sentiments that we don't want to be erased," Cordova said. "Butch women didn't feel we belonged under that umbrella [of masculine of center]."

The argument is fraught with negative feelings and inter-organizational disputes. Cordova, who was on the board of Butch Voices, quarreled with that organization for 18 months before she was asked to leave. Several others involved in Butch Voices also left to join her in starting the new organization.

The division between the two organizations comes at a time when college "women's studies" programs are increasingly becoming "gender studies" programs and women's organizations must revise their mission statements to include their transgender members.

Where women once created separate spaces in a male-dominated society, many must now accept that such spaces are often painted as exclusionary by trans rights groups. For some, it calls into question the very idea of what "feminist" means.

Feminist communities hit a major road bump in 1994 when a transgender woman was ejected from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. The "Womyn-born-Womyn only" policy became a point



Butch Voices. Photo courtesy of the group

of protest for transgender communities, who argued that the policy aimed to delegitimize transgender women as women.

Organizers, in turn, said the few places for "womyn-born-womyn" remained and that the distinction was important for their one event. The sides never reconciled, and transgender activists continue to camp across from the festival in protest of the policy.

However, while Cordova is clear that Butch Nation will "be leaning in the butch female direction," she said she disagrees with the Michfest policy, which some initially equated with Butch Nation's mission.

"We're not anxious to draw any sort of line here," Cordova said. "We're not anti-trans. We're pro-women-identified butch."

Still, she said, it remains to be seen if a transgender person could serve as president of Butch Nation.

The disagreement sometimes borders on "Gender 101," said Krys Freeman, president of Butch Voices.

Freeman feels that part of the issue boils down

to an association by some of the word "butch" with a "white elder perspective." In keeping the word "butch" in the organization's name but removing it from the mission statement, organizers aimed to acknowledge both gender and racial diversity, she said.

"What we were trying to do this year was to expand the language so that we could explain who we are without creating a laundry list," she said.

Cordova remains steadfast that "butch" identity be placed at the forefront of the struggle, and she believes that the birth of Butch Nation signals a revival of butch identity that has been swallowed up by other struggles.

"It signifies a historic change because butch women are speaking up and holding," she said.

Freeman may not agree, but for now at least, the two sides are opting for amicability. Both want to push past the differences and support each other.

"We share a community," Freeman said. "So there's no way we can't work together."



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Andersonville theater venture hits roadblock

BY STEVEN CHAITMAN

A proposal for a new performance venue that would bring live theatre back to Andersonville for the first time since the Calo Theatre has been buzzing among residents and business owners in the 48th Ward. However, the new venture has encountered a potentially fatal roadblock as property owner Newcastle Limited has decided to follow through with previous plans to lease the space to a restaurant operator.

About a month ago, brothers Brandon and Ashley Wright, owners of Andersonville hot spot Hamburger Mary's, proposed to turn the vacant space at 5419 N. Clark St. (formerly the Star Gaze bar) into a venue that would include a 100-plus seat main stage, 44-seat small stage and lobby with a bar and concessions.

"We know that [the space] would be a popular location for theatre companies to perform," Ashley Wright said. "There's nothing like that in the neighborhood ... and that's really the only building [on the market] that you can do all that in."

"A-Ville Theater." The statement then describes the firm's concerns with the proposal.

"The promoter of the concept was unable—in the 20 months since being informed of the property's availability—to secure written commitments from theater companies supporting the concept, nor address neighborhood concerns regarding the parking impact of the proposal," the statement says.

The Wrights had received verbal commitments from a number of theatre companies who expressed interest in renting from the proposed space as well as the support of Osterman and the League of Chicago Theaters. When the proposal was turned down, the brothers circulated a letter of support for the proposal to nearby Clark Street businesses. Wright said that 50 businesses had signed the letter, which has since been forwarded to Newcastle.

Bonnie Metzgar, artistic director for About Face Theatre, confirmed that the theatre company verbally supported the Wrights. About Face has rented Mary's Attic for a number of previous productions and would be interested in a space



Rendering of the theater building in Andersonville. Image courtesy of Ashley Wright

When it received the proposal, Newcastle had already been negotiating a contract for the space with the owner/operator of Jerry's Sandwiches. Ultimately, the real estate firm decided to go through with these plans.

Newcastle has recently released a statement outlining the sequence of events that led to its decision.

The space had been on the market since January 2010. After turning away various proposals that didn't meet the criteria of Andersonville's neighborhood organizations, discussions began with representatives of Jerry's Sandwiches in April 2011. In July, Newcastle met with 48th Ward Ald. Harry Osterman, the Andersonville Residents Council and the Andersonville Development Corporation, all of which supported the proposal.

Once final negotiations began, Newcastle received the proposal for the tentatively named

of the proposed size and location of the A-Ville Theater.

"It's a great location for the audience we are going after and assuming that they're able to build what they're describing, that's a very desirable venue," Metzgar said. "That's not only true of About Face, but I've had conversations with other friends of mine and of theatre companies of like sizes who often are in same venues as us and there's a lot of interest on the street by theatre companies to be in this venue."

Newcastle believes a theater could be an exciting addition to Andersonville's retail corridor, but intends on fulfilling its prior commitment given the aforementioned circumstances.

As a resident of Andersonville, Metzgar expressed the same opinion as Wright and other supporters of the theater: Andersonville is heavily saturated with restaurants and a theatre would help keep people's business in the

neighborhood, as it has developed a reputation as a place to stop in for dinner before going elsewhere for entertainment. She says she hopes the high visibility of this news will change the minds of either or both Newcastle and the owner of Jerry's Sandwiches.

"With the clear community support that there is for [the theater], I would fear for the success of this restaurant should it open," Metzgar said.

Wright said he feels it would be irresponsible to abandon the proposal and hopes to raise enough awareness and support to convince Newcastle to slow down the remainder of the negotiations with Jerry's Sandwiches enough to

reconsider.

"We don't want to be troublemakers and stir the pot, but we also don't want to give up on what a great concept this is," he said. "There's no other option [as far as the space], it just won't happen."

Supporters of the theater remain hopeful. Metzgar said she's been invited to further discuss the matter should all sides sit down to revisit the proposal. Osterman has gone on the record supporting a theater in Andersonville, but was unable to comment for Windy City Times by deadline.

Catholic Charities to appeal decision

BY KATE SOSIN

Four branches of Catholic Charities have announced that they will appeal a decision by a circuit court judge to allow the state to deny them foster care contracts.

Attorneys for charities in Peoria, Belleville, Springfield and Joliet have filed notice that they will appeal the ruling that upheld the state's decision to end its 40-year relationship with the charities.

A circuit court Judge ruled Aug. 18 that the charities were not entitled to the \$30 million contracts with the state, after the charities refused to place children with civil union partners and unmarried people.

The case is likely headed to appellate court. The appeal was expected, said Ed Yohnka of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois (ACLU), which intervened in the case on behalf of a lesbian couple and children who are wards of the state.

The Aug. 17 trial focused on a debate over property rights to contracts, avoiding disputes from both sides about discrimination.

Yohnka said it is possible the Appellate Court will allow for a discussion about issues of discrimination. Charities have claimed they are exempt from parts of civil union law as religious organizations. The ACLU argued that LGBT children in foster care have a right to grow up understanding that they can be parents.

"We would anticipate the [circuit court] judge's decision would be upheld," said Yohnka.

Shootings have Uptown on edge

BY KATE SOSIN

After a summer of turmoil in the city's 44th and 46th wards over a feared increase in violent crime, three separate shootings have put Uptown residents on alert in recent days.

Two shootings occurred Aug. 28, one of which resulted the fatality of a 23-year-old man. Another took place on Aug. 30 at Sunnyside and Sheridan, leaving two wounded.

According to 46th Ward Ald. James Cappleman, the increase in violence is thought to be gang-related.

"This is the time of year when gang recruitment intensifies," he said. "This is a small percentage of people committing a majority of the crimes."

Cappleman was slated to unveil his master plan for the ward on public safety at a Sept. 6 CAPS (Community Alternative Policing Strategy) meeting.

Cappleman said that he and 23rd Dist. Police Commander Kathy Boehmer have been meeting with landlords and business owners to address the issue.

The alderman wants landlords to edit their leases for business owners, requiring them to keep their front windows clear of debris and visible from the street. He is also working with police to identify specific buildings with high

crime rates and meeting with those landlords. Those initiatives are also being carried out by residents as part of a volunteer public safety taskforce in the ward.

The shootings come at a sensitive time for many living in the neighboring Lakeview and Uptown neighborhoods, after a summer of well-documented violent incidents have made many residents worry about crime in their communities.

"Residents are understandably very upset," Cappleman said. "They want more police."



Ald. James Cappleman.

OVAH! coming to TPAN

The HIV/AIDS agency Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) will soon include the "Our Voices Advocating Health" (OVAH!) project, a comprehensive program that integrates HIV and substance abuse prevention education.

OVAH! is seeking African-American men who have sex with men (MSM) between the ages of 18-24 to join in reducing substance use, decreasing risky sexual behavior, increasing HIV testing and increasing the quality of life of their lives.

Those interested in learning more about OVAH! should contact Dayna Flores (Program Coordinator) at 773-989-9400, ext. 283, or Charlotte Moore (Program Manager) at 773-989-9400, ext. 280.

GLN looks at 9/11, Afghanistan war Sept. 10

The Gay Liberation Network (GLN) will host a re-examination of the war in Afghanistan and the 9/11 tragedy that preceded it Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Merlo Public Library, 644 W. Belmont Ave., 2:30-4:30 p.m., with the event "9-11 and the Afghanistan War: Who Was Right?"

The event will feature GLN member/anti-war organizer Andy Thayer and Voices for Creative Non-Violence's Mary Dean, who recently returned from a month-long visit to Afghanistan. GLN's Bob Schwartz will moderate.

For more information, email LGBTliberation@aol.com or visit <http://www.GayLiberation.net>.

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SRO residents' hopes on last legs

BY KATE SOSIN

As their Sept. 1 deadline to vacate came and passed, a handful of 44th Ward residents remaining in two closing single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels appeared to be losing hope.

Both The Sheffield House hotel, 3834 N. Sheffield Ave., and The Belair Hotel, 424 W. Diversey

In a recent statement, 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney assured the community that he had "a commitment from the new owner that no one will be forcefully evicted from either building."

Tunney's office met with a group of residents about concerns and has been working with residents and Lakeview Action Coalition to help residents transition out of the housing since July.



The Hotel Carlos, also known as The Sheffield House hotel. Photo by Kate Sosin

Pkwy., were sold in late July, displacing an estimated 350 people.

The Belair, served notice July 13 that the hotel would close Aug. 15. The Sheffield notified residents on July 28 and 29 that the premises had been "closed effective immediately for repairs" and that residents were to leave.

Residents protested the sudden closing, and attorneys argued that the notices were illegal because they had not been addressed directly to residents. While most residents vacated, both buildings remained effectively open as a result.

However, with fewer than 30 people remaining in each of the buildings, new 30-day notices to vacate issued by landlords and pressure mounting to leave, residents expressed fears that they would be displaced before they found new homes.

On Sept. 1, several remaining residents met at Lake View Lutheran Church with an attorney from the Legal Assistance Foundation to discuss their options.

"I'm at a loss of what to do anymore," said Brian White, who has lived in the Sheffield since April of last year.

White was homeless before he moved into his \$880 room at the Sheffield. His next move, he said, would be to a co-worker's house where he had finally found a cheaper room.

However, not all residents in the two closing SROs see a way out. Some live in the buildings because they can't afford security deposits or because they have criminal records that prevent them from being approved for housing. A diminishing number of SROs exists to take them.

Others who are seniors or people with disabilities have applied for senior housing or other assistance programs, but such applications can sometimes take months to complete.

Both the buildings have reportedly been purchased by James Purcell, who owns other properties in the area.

However, despite reported commitments to Tunney, one resident claimed he was served the first eviction notice Aug. 31.

Purcell's attorney, Carey Schiff, did not return calls in time for deadline.

Residents also complained that they were told in initial notices to stop paying rent at the Sheffield, only to be billed later for staying past the deadline.

"They ask the same rent but they cut back our services," said one man.

Room phone lines, wi-fi and pest control have allegedly ceased at the Sheffield. According to Elizabeth Rosenthal, attorney at the Legal Assistance Foundation, the phones had been turned off before the building changed hands. A courtesy phone was installed in the lobby by Diversey III, LLC, which has taken over the building, she said.

Residents who have yet to move out face what Tunney called "deplorable conditions" in both buildings. "The next step from the new owner is to rehab the properties to correct the numerous building and safety violations," Tunney said.

The Sheffield has a laundry list of building code violations and notice to vacate by October if they are not corrected.

"The place is literally crumbling around me," said White, adding that he can hear plaster inside the walls tumbling at night. White said the ceiling in his bathroom has started to cave as well.

Residents say they want Purcell to return their last month's rent so that it can be used as security deposits elsewhere. Purcell has no legal obligation to do so, and some residents appeared pessimistic about their dwindling options.

"It's a moot point," said one man. "It's too late."

However, Rosenthal said residents still might have options. Residents are debating those now.

Caribou taking donations for fire victims

BY KATE SOSIN

A Caribou Coffee shop in Lakeview is collecting donations of clothing, bedding and personal items for victims of a fire that tore through an apartment building in the 800 block of West Cornelia Aug. 27.

Heather Nagey, a manager at the shop at Halsted and Aldine, said that Caribou will collect the items through the week.

"The more the better," she said, adding that leftover items will be donated to the Brown Elephant to benefit Howard Brown Health Center.

Center on Halsted will aid in the distribution of collected items. Early reports that the Salvation Army would facilitate the collection upset some people, as that organization has a history of opposing gay-rights issues. Brian Richardson, a spokesperson for the Center on Halsted, confirmed that Salvation Army was not facilitating the donation process.

Thus far, the store has collected more than 20 boxes and bags, said Nagey.

Also, furniture for fire victims was collected at Leather Sport, 3505 N. Halsted St., Sept. 3-4. Fire victims were invited to come and pick up needed furniture.

In the path of the fire was the office of Grab magazine, the LGBT publication published by Stacy Bridges. Bridges published the magazine out of his home, which was destroyed. Bridges worked at the furniture collection throughout the weekend.

"I'm so happy that I get to help the other victims," he emailed Windy City Times.

In addition, Bridges' friends have set up a Target.com registry to help him replace items lost in the fire. The registry can be found under the Target lists section on <http://www.target.com> under the registry name "Stacy Bridges Fire Rescue."

Original coverage of the fire is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=33508>.

Expungement seminar at Center

Clerk Dorothy Brown is flanked by fellow panelists and attendees at the expungement seminar held at the Center on Halsted Aug. 25.

The panelists gave a brief presentation, after which attorneys were made available to attendees to discuss individual criminal cases to determine what was expungeable in their background.

"I am elated at the great response we had at the Center on Halsted Expungement Seminar," Brown said. "We want to continue working on eliminating as many impediments as possible, for people who want to better themselves and their quality of life."



From left: Shauna Boliker; Charles Findlay, Illinois Prison Review Board; Dorothy Brown; state Rep. Kelly Cassidy; and Center on Halsted CEO Tico Valle at the expungement seminar. Photo courtesy of Enza Raineri



Billy Larkin.

PASSAGES

William 'Billy' Charles Larkin

William "Billy" Charles Larkin passed away Aug. 28 after a brief illness. He was 44.

A native of Lansing, Mich., and a lifelong Michigan State University fan, Bill found success as a small-business owner specializing in the international import/export of exotic goods.

Larkin was preceded in death by his cat, Marx, and his golden retriever, Lucy. He was the dearest friend of Blair Bogle and Ryan Marsh of Chicago; cherished son of Helene Larkin of Bowling Green, Ky., and the late Charles James "Jim" Larkin; brother of Tom Larkin, Eileen (Tom) Swanson, David Larkin, Steve Larkin and Lisa Lawson; and honorary uncle of Lily the Papillon and Chilli the toy fox terrier.

Services are being planned.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to St. Vincent DePaul Society (<http://www.svdplanning.org> or 517-484-5395).

For information, contact the Cremation Society of Illinois at 773-281-5058 or <http://www.cremation-society.com>.

PASSAGES

Michele Nichols

Michele Nichols (nicknamed "Mishka") entered this world July 25, 1955 and passed away July 8, 2011.

She spent most of her childhood growing up in Pittsfield, Mass., and moved to Chicago with her partner, Joanne Bristol. They lived for a time in Oak Park; then, Nichols moved to the North Side of Chicago.

Nichols volunteered with Mountain Moving Coffeehouse in the '70s before she moved to the Bay Area. There she worked in a psychiatric/geriatric facility and met her partner of 20 years, Laura Stern.

Nichols was active in birding, had twinkly eyes and a terrific sense of humor.

She will be very much missed by Bristol and Stern as well as her lifelong friend from Pittsfield, Cecelia Demo, along with her many friends in Chicago and in the Bay Area.

At her memorial service, a quote by Maya Angelou was included in the program:

"I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision. I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Deb Mell ties the knot



From left: Christin Baker, state Rep. Deb Mell, Carrie E. Coyal, P.C., state Rep. Kelly Cassidy and Jim Bennett. Below: Baker and Mell. Photos courtesy of the couple

BY ERICA DEMAREST

Openly lesbian state Rep. Deb Mell married long-time partner Christin Baker Aug. 24 in a judge-officiated ceremony in Davenport, Iowa. Mell is the first high-profile Illinois official to enter into a same-sex marriage.

"It was important to have the marriage certificate and say that we've been married," Mell, 43, said. "We've been through a lot, and we've been together a long time. Our union deserves the title of marriage... I don't see civil unions as being equal."

Illinois began issuing civil unions June 1, but still doesn't offer same-sex marriage; Iowa is one of just six states that does.

Mell and Baker enlisted good friends Jim Bennett—Lambda Legal's Midwest regional director—and state Rep. Kelly Cassidy to act as witnesses.

"We thought, if you have to do a road trip in a day, who would we have the most fun with?" said Baker, 36, national director of arts and humanities at the YMCA. "You don't want to have to schlep your whole family three hours for a five-minute ceremony, and three hours back. Jim and Kelly were totally game, and we just had an absolute blast."

On Sept. 8, the pair will say their vows once more—this time in front of family and friends at their North Side church. While both women wore black fitted suits in Iowa, Baker said she'd switch things up at the church ceremony and wear an off-white suit she had made on a trip with her mother. A Sept. 10 reception will follow.

Although they've only been married two weeks, both women say their relationship has already changed for the better.

"It feels totally different!" Mell said. "It's weird. I can't really explain it because we've been together seven years. ... One of [Baker's] cousins emailed me and said, 'Welcome to the family!' I was like, 'I thought I was part of the family.' But in a lot of straight people's eyes, you're not really part of the family until you're married. ... She's my wife, and I think that's a heartier term."

Mell has been a vocal proponent of civil unions and marriage equality since joining the state legislature in 2009. Many credit her impassioned 2010 plea on the state House floor (during which she announced her engagement to Baker) as a turning point in passing Illinois civil-union legislation.

"I don't think that if we didn't have a lesbian woman stand and tell her story that there would've been the response that came," Rick Garcia told Windy City Times in June.

The couple hopes making their marriage so public will make people more comfortable with the idea of same-sex marriage and show legisla-

tors how important full marriage equality is.

"I have hope for marriage in Illinois," Baker said. "[I] hope that the governor, just like Cuomo did in New York, would support something like that. He doesn't right now. We deserve marriage, and it should be called marriage."

Up next is a honeymoon in Paris. The newlyweds will rent an apartment in France's capital for an eight-day vacation, their first lengthy non-work-related trip as a couple.

"We just really want to chill out," Mell said with a laugh. "We just want to relax and sit in a café and not move."



From left: Erica and Vanessa Feliciano; The Civil Rights Agenda Executive Director Anthony Martinez; and Jayson and Roberto Rosario-Bernard. Photo by Hal Baim

TCRA celebrates civil unions

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The Civil Rights Agenda (TCRA) held the first in a series of "Civilized Celebrations" to honor those who were joined in civil unions at the Chicago History Museum on June 3, 2011. The event was held Aug. 31 at the nightclub The Joynt and featured two couples, Jayson and Roberto Rosario-Bernard and Erica and Vanessa Feliciano.

About 75 people attended the event, which featured a DJ and dancing as well as a video showcasing the two couples' stories and hopes and dreams for the future. TCRA Executive Director Anthony Martinez followed the video with a presentation about the work that they are doing and their new push for marriage equality in Illinois.

Vanessa expressed how excited she was to be honored and to be a part of the next step that TCRA is trying to accomplish. Erica said, "We don't just want to be in a civil union we want to have that option of marriage and I think it's great that they are actually pushing for that so it's great to be a part of this."

Jayson, like Vanessa and Erica, talked about how honored he was to be at the event while

Roberto said, "We've been together for so long. ... We both felt that we didn't want to go somewhere else to get a civil union we wanted to wait until it passed here so we could have our ceremony in Chicago."

Jacob Meister, founder and governing board president of TCRA, said, "This event is a part of our Families United project to break down barriers and win people's hearts and minds that LGBT people are just like them in the workplace, in the home and at the voting booth."

For more information on The Civil Rights Agenda visit <http://jointcra.org>.

'Garden of Eve' Sept. 16

"Garden of Eve"—an annual gala benefiting the Lesbian Community Care Project at Howard Brown Health Center—will take place Friday, Sept. 16, 8-11 p.m., at Carnivale, 702 W. Fulton St.

The Jeannie Tanner Quartet, Katie Todd, Diva Kai, Christina Kent, Daniela Sloan and Eileen Censotti will entertain, with DJ Gloria Alers and DJ Teri Bristol spinning dance music. The event also features a raffle, a silent auction, light hors d'oeuvres and drinks.

Tickets purchased before Aug. 31 start at \$100; see <http://www.lccp.org/events.php?ID=228>.

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ELECTIONS 2012

Ilya Sheyman: Finding common ground in a diverse district

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Proving it's never too early to start campaigning, Ilya Sheyman has thrown his hat in the ring as he challenges incumbent U.S. Rep. Robert Dold in Illinois' 10th Congressional District, which includes Lake Forest, Highland Park, Zion, Waukegan and Vernon Hills, among many other cities, villages and townships.

Young (25) and seemingly fearless, Sheyman tackled a number of questions about everything from his district to LGBT rights to his own background.

Windy City Times: For those not familiar with the 10th Congressional District, could you describe it?

Ilya Sheyman: Sure. It's a district that starts on the North Shore and goes up to Wisconsin. Then it heads west into Lake County, and the north and northwest suburbs. Seventy-five percent of the district is Lake County and 25 percent is Cook County.

It's one of the most economically diverse districts in the country, from the North Shore communities being some of the wealthiest in the country to places like Round Lake, Waukegan and North Chicago, which have up to 18 percent unemployment. It's also being pretty mixed [ethnically]. Politically, it's been a pretty mixed bag, with Republican members of Congress for 32 years but it has voted Democrat on the presidential level since Bill Clinton in 1992.

WCT: That's interesting. Why do you think that is?

IS: I think it's a district that prides itself on people who think independently instead of just party lines. It's for people who have ideals they're going to fight for instead of party affiliation.

WCT: But you're aiming for an office the district has traditionally voted Republican on, correct? What makes you think you can break the mold?

IS: I think it's two things: One, as part of re-districting, this district has gotten much more diverse. We have significant populations of new voters around Waukegan, Round Lake, Zion and Grayslake—working-class folks who have economic issues.

The other piece is the current incumbent, Bob Dold, is very much unlike his predecessors. He has voted party lines on everything from ending Medicare to defunding Planned Parenthood. So I don't think he's in the mold of what people are looking for.

WCT: So would you say that Dold is more conservative than, say, [predecessor Mark] Kirk was?

IS: I think Dold has been a party-line vote on every issue. I don't think it's a liberal or conservative issue; I just think that he's voted with his party every single time.

WCT: I know that you have quite an activist background, having been involved with MoveOn.org and other organizations. Do you ever think you may be too "edgy" for some constituents in this district?

IS: [Laughs] I grew up in this district; I grew up in Buffalo Grove. My first organizing job was working on school-funding reform to reduce some of the disparity between schools across the district. My professional background has been organizing on issues, like trying to pass healthcare reform and trying to fix the school-funding system and trying to end the war in Iraq. I think on this whole set of issues that I've worked on—I think it's what the district can expect: that I'm going to fight for them.



Ilya Sheyman. Photo courtesy of Sheyman

WCT: Seeing how divisive Congress was during the debt-ceiling crisis makes me wonder why anyone would want to be in D.C. Why do you want to be there?

IS: Yes, that's the question I get asked most often, seeing all the frustration that was magnified. The reason is—I don't know how much you know about my background: My family moved here two decades as Jewish refugees and worked their way up. They worked hard, played by the rules and made a better life for their son. I think that sense of possibility—that through hard work and support for government, you can achieve a middle-class lifestyle—is really slipping away for people all across the district. I think there's far too much at stake to just sit on the sidelines. The reality is the Republicans are busy dismantling what made middle-class life possible, and I think the Democrats aren't standing up and fighting back. I think the people in this district need someone who's going to fight for the middle class.

WCT: Could you tell me about your past political experience?

IS: Sure. I spent the past year and a half as a mobilization director at MoveOn.org, where I worked to organize 5 million members to try to pass healthcare reform. I had to leveraging abroad and networking. It meant pushing Republicans who were standing in the way of healthcare and I had to incentivize Democrats to fight things we believe in.

WCT: What do you feel is the most pressing issue for the LGBT community?

IS: That's a good question. One of the challenges we've had over the past decade is that we've tried to do this issue by issue, trying to take on ENDA and DOMA—one by one, and re-fighting the same battle. I think the reality is that it's long past time to have full equality. So I think the most pressing issue is that the political system hasn't caught up to the American people. I think the real battle is to pass a civil-rights act that includes all 1,000[-plus] benefits that come with full equality. I think if we make the case to the American people for full equality, we'll win that. There needs to be federal recognition of issues, including marriage.

WCT: Regarding HIV/AIDS, what would you do to try to further education and awareness regarding the disease?

Turn to page 10

Survey sheds light on LGBT youth in suburbs

BY KATE SOSIN

More than 10 percent of Cook County suburban youth have been bullied for being perceived as lesbian, gay or bisexual, according to new survey findings.

The information is the first of its kind on young people in suburban Cook County.

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), administered nationally but issued for the first time for suburban Cook County alone, nearly 12 percent of young males have been teased for being perceived as gay or bisexual. Just over eight percent of females surveyed reported being teased for the same reason (the study did not include transgender youth in its questions).

Those numbers exceed percentages of young people reportedly identifying as LGB. In total, less than eight percent of young people identified as LGB or questioning in the survey.

"Bullying is a big issue in our schools," said Amy Poore, a spokesperson for the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), which administered the survey.

According to the survey, just over three percent of males had same-sex sexual contact, while 8 percent of females had had a same-sex sexual encounter. Females were also far more likely to identify as LGB or questioning. Nearly 10 percent of females identified as LGB or questioning, compared to slightly more than 4 percent of males.

Poore said the findings would be used by the department's Bullying Prevention Program as well as independent organizations.

The YRBS survey, run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), polls young people grades 9-12 about their experiences with everything from exercise and sex to drugs and road safety. In the past, local municipalities have had the option of including two questions about sexual orientation. Illinois YRBS surveys include those questions currently.

The Illinois State Board of Education issues the survey every two years statewide, while Chicago Public Schools administers a survey of its own.

The CCDPH survey, made possible by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, offers new suburb-specific information on LGB youth.

That information will be helpful to LGBT youth activists, said Shannon Sullivan, Executive Director of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance which advocates for LGBTQ youth in schools.

"We're going to be able to say to parents, to educators that this data is more local to their experience," she said. "The more local, the more likely it is to move people to action." The survey also asks a new question unheard of by many youth advocates.

"During the past 12 months, have you ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought you were gay, lesbian, or bisexual?" the survey asks.

In the past, YRBS has only questioned young people about how they identify and the genders of people they have been sexually active with. The new question on bullying could give fresh context to other behaviors, experts say.

At face value, the three statistics provide scant details. But such questions are extremely useful, say LGBT youth advocates, when compared with other risk behaviors.

Past studies have found that young people who identify as LGB on YRBS tend to report higher percentages of other "risk" behaviors like drug and alcohol use. The correlation signals that queer youth might engage in such



Shannon Sullivan.

activities as coping mechanisms.

The study also tracks depression rates, cyber bullying and thoughts of suicide, all of which can be matched up against data on LGB students.

"There is a perception maybe among adults that things are getting better," said Sullivan. "These numbers just paint a totally different picture."

CCDPH is currently in the process of evaluating the LGB-specific questions against the other risk behaviors. That information is expected to be made available in the coming months. Once that study is complete, the numbers will likely be compared with state and City of Chicago findings.

Still, none of that data will include information on transgender issues. All questions on local YRBS surveys must first be approved by the CDC, which has never offered an optional transgender question.

In recent years, national LGBT organizations have lobbied the CDC to add transgender to the survey.

Alison Gill, public policy manager at the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is hopeful that the CDC will include transgender youth in the next round of surveys.

"This is especially important because it's governmental data," she said. "They're a particularly vulnerable population."

Such a change could impact future surveys in Illinois, where there is a dearth of state data on transgender people of all ages, youth especially.

YRBS data can be particularly useful for LGBT advocates as the survey is put out by the CDC, not LGBT groups. That distinction makes it hard to dispute, said Sullivan.

"It's a large, random, representative sample," she said.

LGBT college fair at Center Sept. 24

A college fair for LGBT students, family and friends will take place at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, Saturday, Sept. 24, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Students and families will have the opportunity to talk with representatives from more than 30 local and national colleges and universities.

Also, there will be a post-fair party on the rooftop deck with other LGBT high school students and allies. For more information or to RSVP, contact Jacob Kosior at jkosior@centeronhalsted.org.

Brennon to file wrongful death suit

BY KATE SOSIN

Alisha Brennon will file suit in the wrongful death of Christina Santiago, her fiancé who was killed in the Indiana State Fair stage collapse Aug. 13, her attorney confirmed.

Richard N. Rosenberg, Brennon's attorney, said that Brennon will seek "a substantial amount of money" for her own injuries as well as the death of Santiago.

Brennon sustained multiple fractures to her face and ribs, and broke her leg in the accident that left seven dead and dozens wounded. She is recovering in Chicago, according to Rosenberg.

"She is going to have a difficult time," he said.

Brennon has been in and out of the hospital since the accident, recovering from a blood clot that broke free. As of Sept. 5, she had been released and was recovering at home, according to updates from friends on <http://www.brennonsantiago.com>.

Santiago, a well-known LGBT health advocate in Chicago, was buried last month in her home state of New York next to her mother. Brennon and Santiago were among the first in Illinois to obtain a civil union license, said friends.

Brennon's suit has not yet been filed, said Rosenberg. He declined to comment on who will be named in complaint or what it will seek in damages.

The lawsuit is at least the fourth filed in the wake of the stage collapse. Three others were filed by attorney Kenneth J. Allen. One was on

behalf of a woman who lost her wife. Allen has said that he wants to use that case to challenge Indiana's lack of same-sex partner recognition.

Rosenberg said it is likely that the wrongful death suits will be connected as the cases progress.



Alisha Brennon. Photo by Tracy Baim

SHEYMAN from page 10

IS: I think there are a couple things. We need more awareness programs. There are places, like Washington, D.C., where HIV/AIDS exists at a tremendous proportion. I think we also need to give people a sense of HIV/AIDS as something that can be controlled, which is a huge achievement. We need to provide low-income folks with more access to treatment. We just need to deal with the misinformation out there. Also, there's the fact that if you're LGBT, you can't give blood to the Red Cross; that fosters some stereotypes, and that's not helpful.

So the top priority for me is access to treatment, and then there's access to accurate information about what the risks are and what the risks aren't.

WCT: Let's say you are elected. What would you like to accomplish within your first 100 days?

IS: I think the reality is that the top priority that I hear about every day in the district is passing the jobs bill. Fundamentally, there are people looking for work all across the district and the country. I think the Republican party has pushed this [other] ideology and there hasn't been a single jobs legislation introduced in this Congress. If we pass a jobs bill that uses federal money to put people to work and supports small businesses as well as provide a safety net to those who aren't working, that'd do tremendous good for the economy. To do that, I think we have to start tackling the tax system and bring some fairness back

into it. The unemployment and underemployment rates are tremendously high.

WCT: I have a general question: Who would you say has been the biggest influence on you?

IS: I would say, without a doubt, that person would be [the late] Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota. With him, politics wasn't just about money and power; it's about the improvement of people's lives. That has to be our focus; if we do that, we'll be in good shape.

See <http://www.ilyasheyman.com> for more information.

Carol Ronen tribute Sept. 25

State Sen. Heather Steans and Chicago Ald. Harry Osterman are co-hosting "Wine, Woman and Song—an evening of fine wine, great music and progressive politics in honor of Democratic Committeewoman Carol Ronen" Sunday, Sept. 25, at Broadway Cellars, 5900 N. Broadway, 5-7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$100 each; see <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?llr=nypabcab&oeidk=a07e4mvw1kw577a395f&oseq=a0239hf2we87jm>.



Carol Ronen. Photo by Hal Baim

Santiago memorial Sept. 10

An event to remember and celebrate the life of Christina Santiago will take place Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, at 1 p.m. It is open to the public.

Santiago was killed in the Indiana State Fair



stage collapse Aug. 14, and is survived by her wife, Alisha Marie Brennon, who was injured.

Santiago, a self-identified "Nuyorican" lesbian feminist, was committed to empowering queer women of color and advocating for access to healthcare in the LGBTQ community. She was a board member and programming chair for Amigas Latinas, and worked full-time as the manager of programming for the Lesbian Community Care Project (LCCP) at Howard Brown Health Centers. Amigas Latinas, LCCP, and Howard Brown have worked closely with Brennon to plan this event.

Howard Brown and LCCP are collecting donations for two funds. The first provides assistance to Santiago's relatives, while the second supports the work of the Lesbian Community Cancer Project. (See <http://www.howardbrown.org/default.asp?id=1900>.) In addition, Amigas Latinas has established a memorial fund; see <http://www.AmigasLatinas.org>.

Lastly, the Brennon & Santiago Assistance Fund will go directly to support expenses the couple incurred; visit <http://www.brennonsantiago.com/donations.html>.

Celebration of life for RJ Chaffin Sept. 10

A celebration of life for longtime community activist, volunteer and businessman RJ Chaffin will take place Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted.

A reception will be held 12-1 p.m.; the program will be 1-2 p.m.; and a closing reception will take place 2-3:30 p.m.

Inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1997, Chaffin was involved in a wide range of causes and helped raise thousands of dollars for many AIDS and gay groups. He was a well-known business activist with the Northalsted Area Merchants Association (NAMA), as owner of the now-closed RJ's Video and Rajin' Rae Jean's. He was NAMA president from 1998-2004.

Chaffin, a native of Ohio, is most associated with International Mr. Leather and its Leather Marketplace, an event he directed for 18 years, including this past Memorial Weekend in Chica-

go. He is interviewed in the new book *Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow*, about his IML and gay community work.

Chaffin also served on the boards of Strike Against AIDS, the Chicago AIDS Benefit Committee and NAMA.



RJ Chaffin.

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Slam poet

Kristen 'KrisDeLaRash' Beauford



No one is prepared when KrisDeLaRash steps up to the mic, and by the time the room has quieted and eyes are turned forward, the young poet is three verses in and you are wishing she would rewind for you. However, for the next 20 minutes, this 23-year-old South Side native takes the audience with her on a fast-paced and an excruciatingly real journey through her life.

KrisDeLaRash, whose name offstage is Kristen Beauford, is a rising luminary in the Chicago slam-poetry scene. She is also a queer activist, musician and parent. Beauford's poetry is intensely political, but she avoids the soapbox, opting for personal anecdotes over a battle cry.

"I talk about love, and love is universal," she said. "I want people to think when they walk away from my performances... You don't have to come to the same conclusions as me, but if it has you bumping up against what you know, I think I have accomplished what I set out to do."

Beauford has been singing and writing poems since she was a kid growing up in Wrightwood. She graduated from the Franklin Fine Arts Center in Old Town, and just finished a degree in Media Studies from DePaul University. Throughout college, KrisDeLaRash took the stage alongside some of the biggest performers to come out Chicago, which gave birth to slam poetry more than two decades ago.

Her poem "To My Unborn" is the story of a queer woman grappling with how she might raise a child in a homophobic world, while "Her Hands" is a nostalgic tribute to a grandmother whose garden was a "south side backyard paradise." Beauford's best-known poem, "Edict" digs into the legacies of injustice in the U.S.

KrisDeLaRash may be a stage persona, but Beauford said, she is pretty close to the real deal. "The stage persona is really just a trick for getting people prepared for how bold Kristen is as a person," she said.



the stats

Name
Kristen "KrisDeLaRash"
Beauford

Neighborhood
Pilsen

Relationship status
"Soooo taken"

Favorite Chicago restaurant
Connie's Pizza

Pets
Turtle named Kao

Favorite Chicago sports team
White Sox

Musical influences
Res, Little Dragon, Sade, Jill
Scott, Incubus, Taking Back
Sunday, Gorillaz, Lauryn Hill,
Mariah Carey

Upcoming project
Music album titled "Varsity
Wisdom: Locker Room
Chronicles," due out in July

Web site
www.krisdelarash.com

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

A photograph of a man's bare torso. On his chest, there is a tattoo in a blue, slightly distressed font that reads: "Please start HIV treatment. My T-cells are at 432." The man's face is partially visible at the top, with a red overlay covering his eyes and nose.

Please start
HIV treatment.
My T-cells are at 432.

Talk with your doctor about ways to help protect your immune system.

HIV treatment is now recommended for everyone with a T-cell count of 500 or less and should be considered when T-cells are higher than 500, according to the DHHS* and the IAS-USA†, along with other factors. Starting treatment early may help protect your immune system and vital organs. Today's medicines may have fewer, more manageable side effects. They may help you live a longer, healthier life. Receive helpful information about living with HIV that you should know. Call toll free 1-888-497-9639, or visit TREATHIVNOW.COM.



Black Treatment Advocates meet in Chicago

BY ERICA DEMAREST

Dozens of Chicago-based healthcare providers, activists and city officials gathered Sept. 1 on the Inner Circle Services Center's rooftop patio for a sunset reception hosted by the Black Treatment Advocates Network (BTAN). The topic at hand: how to unify and mobilize to stem rising HIV rates in the Black community.

While Black Americans represent only 14 percent of the total U.S. population, they accounted for 44 percent of all new HIV infections in 2009, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The HIV infection rate among Blacks was almost eight times as high as that of whites. And young Black men who have sex with men (ages 13-29) are at even greater risk: Their rates of infection nearly doubled between 2006 and 2009.

"For Black folks, this needs to be a wake-up call," said Phill Wilson, president and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute. "Now, people get pissed off when I say this, but I say it because statistically it's true—AIDS in America today is a Black disease. ... And if we don't step up, then no one else is going step up for us."

Wilson was one of the event's keynote speakers. Others included: Vanessa Smith, executive director of the South Side Help Center; Yaa Simpson, community epidemiologist and bioethicist for TACTS (Association of Clinical Trials Services); U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-Chicago); and Chris Brown, assistant commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health's STI/HIV Division.

While guests braved 90-degree heat and enjoyed complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres—courtesy of Aged 2 Perfection wine tastings and Chef Gina Worthy—speakers set to task identifying how to help Black communities.

Networking was a common theme. Louis Spraggins, a BTAN coordinator, opened the evening with a recap of BTAN's progress. An arm of the Black AIDS Institute, BTAN educates and trains Black treatment advocates across the country. About a dozen Chicago organizations partook in two free three-day sessions this summer, and similar initiatives have launched in Atlanta, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Houston and Jackson.

Pilot cities will be given one year's worth of funding to identify and address one specific pressing need in their community. The hope is that programs developed through BTAN will carry on once funding ends and be replicated across the country.

Rep. Davis said the national connectivity BTAN is fostering will be essential in addressing HIV disparities. "Power is far more effective when it's collaborative," he said. The congressman shared lessons learned from his time in Congress.

"There are things that individuals can do, but usually individuals alone don't exercise very much power," Davis said. "It really takes a team to be victorious. It takes a large number of people in our country to influence the behavior of legislators, the behavior of decision-makers, the behavior of people who control money."

Treatment and research literacy were highlighted as possible solutions; several speakers said a simple lack of HIV/AIDS education in Black communities was one of the main factors leading to higher rates.

There are 20,000 people currently living with AIDS in Chicago, and another 1,000 diagnosed each year, Simpson said. In 2009, half of all new cases were identified in Black people, and the majority of women in Chicago living with HIV/AIDS are Black.

"We've got a pandemic, an epidemic, a situation," she said. "That means we've got to get past Tuskegee. I said it. We've got to get past this phobia that Black people cannot be in research or cannot be research."

From 1932 to 1972, the U.S. Public Health Service studied the natural progression of untreated syphilis in poor, Black men in Tuskegee, Ala. Study participants were told they would receive free healthcare from the U.S. government, while in fact they were exposed to syphilis and never treated; more than 100 died. The Tuskegee experiments left long-lasting fears of scientific and health research in many Black communities. Simpson insists that educating communities about the science behind HIV and proper research procedures can alleviate these fears. She believes that tracking disease transmission, disease intervention and medication adherence can give advocates tools to stop HIV's spread.

"We need to talk about how reservoirs work in people who are positive, and more importantly, people who are positive and taking medications, so we can lower that viral load," she said. "If one of the partners is positive and the other isn't, the person that is positive and taking medication may not spread the virus. That is functional curing."

While Davis agreed that comprehensive education is key, he said it's difficult to find funding in Congress.

"A lot of people don't believe in education because they don't believe that you can change behavior," he said. "They think that you're throwing away money when you put it into educationally designed activities. But we know that we have reduced sickle cell. Sickle cell is not nearly the problem that it was 30 years ago."

The ability to treat the disease already exists, Wilson said. People can prevent exposure through proven successful methods such as condoms, dental dams, vaginal microbicides and behavior modification.

"AIDS is no longer the automatic death sentence that it once was," Wilson said. "Ask me how I know. I've been living with HIV for 30 years now and full-blown AIDS for over 20 years now. The treatments are available that can keep us alive. ... There's no reason why we should see the kinds of numbers we're seeing among young Black men who have sex with men in this country. That is absolutely unacceptable. We need to step up to the plate."

Wilson closed the evening with a call to action. He pointed out key Chicago officials, advocates and activists in the audience—making each stand up and wave—and insisted that people meet each other and begin cross-organizational projects.

"The day will come when this epidemic will be over," he said. "And when it does, it's important for them to know that we were not all modest, that we were not all cowards, that some of us dared to care in the face of it, some of us dared to fight because of it, and some of us dared to love in spite of it. Because it is in the caring and the fighting and the loving that we live forever."

Guests continued to network and exchange ideas well after the night's official programming ended and the sun had set.

To learn more about the Black AIDS Institute's BTAN initiative and how to get involved, visit: <http://www.blackaids.org/>

Rep. Davis invited guests to his free public birthday party before he left for the evening. He said there'll be catfish and blues at the Septton, Chicago Business. 11 event, to be held at Homan Square Garden, 3333 W. Arthington, 4-9 p.m.



Guests chat at BTAN's rooftop event. Photos by Erica Demarest



Phill Wilson poses with members of BTAN training



David Ernesto Munar, President/CEO, AIDS Foundation of Chicago; Chris Brown, Assistant Commissioner, STI/HIV Division, Chicago Department of Public Health



Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-IL)



Louis Spraggins, BTAN coordinator; Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-IL); Yaa Simpson, Community Epidemiologist and Bioethicist for TACTS (The Association of Clinical Trials Services)

Youth speak out about HIV/AIDS @ 30

The following are special essays written by the youth of Youth Pride Services for Windy City Times.

Marlin Pierre

Youth today have the highest percentage of contracting HIV. Today's society of youth is not educated on how harmful this disease is. Most youth are not informed or taught the fundamentals of what HIV is and how it could be prevented.

Most youth are having sex with numerous people and are not using protection. Because of this the percentage of HIV detected has risen. Most youth feel that using a condom takes away from the full feel of sex. But little do they know that it's a helpful tool, and it could prevent someone from catching an STD or HIV.

Also, they have condoms that make sex feel the same just as if there wasn't one being used. Most would argue and say that condoms are not 100% effective and I would agree but it's the initiative of being smart and playing it safe to keep yourself protected and safe.

Another leading cause of the HIV epidemic rising is people are selfish and immature. Some don't even tell if they have HIV or AIDS. This is so wrong because why put someone else's life at risk because you made a big mistake and contracted the disease. You should always have the positive concept to tell your significant other that you have HIV or AIDS. Because this can also prevent that person from spreading it and also help you from giving it to the partner you

are with.

I asked a few of my friends what they thought about HIV and why it is STILL on the rise on our demographic:

Shawn: "HIV is spread because of unprotected sex."

Kris: "Youth today spread the virus because they are sleeping with multiple partners."

Cory: "HIV can be prevented if more youth were educated about it and were using more protection and being cautious."

Jermain: "HIV is on the rise because people are not caring about themselves and are insecure with themselves and don't care who they sleep with or spread the virus to."

The epidemic can be prevented but the youth have to be willing to listen. HIV is deadly but can be prevented, but there are those out there who don't care and will spread it.

The youth today are arrogant and naive and feel that it's OK to have sex and that's true, but there are consequences to everything if you don't play it safe. If more people were to wear condoms and have a healthy relationship with their lover, the percentages of youth with HIV would decrease substantially.

Drug use is also a cause to why HIV is being spread. The sharing of needles is becoming popular amongst those who do drugs. People that do drugs are not even sure if they even have HIV



Marlin Pierre. Courtesy of Pierre

and if they do know they might not tell someone they do because it's all about that next hit to get high.

The youth need to take control of their lives and say enough is enough. And get help on how to prevent them from contacting HIV or AIDS.

Brian Williams

In society today, HIV is becoming a major problem with young gay youth. Not only is it a problem, it's becoming a major epidemic and is on the rise. Most young gay guys, or should I say youth, are not educated on the fundamentals about HIV or AIDS. The youth are not the only ones blame. We as a whole community need to take responsibility.

The youth are sleeping around with another, raping others, and even doing drugs and sharing needles. They're not informed on how serious this is and the deadly outcome it can have on one's life. These young people today only care about pleasing instead of being educated.

This epidemic of HIV is still occurring because the youth are sleeping around and having unprotected sex with each other or with a significant other.

Now in my eyes why wouldn't you want to

wear a condom? Who knows what this person has or how many people that person has been with. The youth need to control themselves and understand how this is becoming a major issue around the world.

Another cause of AIDS is being raped or molested by someone. There are unbearable numbers of rapes occurring in the U.S. Many of these rapes occur with gay youth. There are "straight" men out there who prey on gay youth and who have HIV or AIDS and feel that they can spread it. But also you have other gay youth raping each other who also have the disease and virus. Now as cruel as that sounds, you have some nasty people out here who go seeking out youth. This raping needs to stop because this virus is destroying the youth.

The disease should be feared and the youth should take precautions. However, you have those who are in a valuable relationship with someone else who may have the disease or virus

and the other one doesn't even know about it. How can you be in a relationship and not tell your significant other that you have HIV? Do you know that you are putting their life at risk of contacting it? This is a problem.

Insecurities play a part in this because you feel that you must please your partner and not use a condom. Condoms are effective and all youth should use them. Especially those who know they have the virus and will prove that they care about their lover or partner.

Lastly, drugs are another reason why HIV is spreading. Youth are out here doing crack, cocaine, heroin, etc. While doing so to get high, they sometimes share needles with whomever. You don't know if the person has HIV or not. So why use a needle after them?

A prevention plan around all these topics needs to occur to help the youth and show them and teach them a more positive approach on how to prevent the epidemic of HIV and AIDS.



Brian Williams' Courtesy of Williams



James Bibbs. Courtesy of Bibbs

James Bibbs

HIV has been a big issue since the early 1980s and has grown rapidly ever since. I never knew there were so many people in the U.S. with HIV and that it can spread in the snap of a finger.

"HIV can be deadly if you don't use protection," my sister said when I asked her what does she know about what HIV can do to a person. I honestly believe that the reason HIV is still spreading around is due to the fact that people are not telling their partners and are not getting tested for HIV.

Many people think that having HIV is cool to have and they don't care whether they have it or not. Everybody in the U.S. should get tested so they can know if they have it or not. HIV is not a good thing to have or brag about.

"Wrap it up or die" as my grandmother used

to tell me when she was telling me about HIV and AIDS. It's very much important that everybody in the world does this if they don't want to catch it.

When I think about sex I think about a condom—but then again I don't because sometimes I use it and sometimes even I don't. When I talk to people about HIV they say "I hate using condoms". I say you should use a condom because that's the right thing to do when you have sex. If not, at least use a woman's condom and insert it inside the partner and then you're good to go. Just make sure you know how to properly use a condom. If you just put the condom on and do not know what you are doing then it's like you didn't put one on to begin with and you are still at a higher risk.

I also believe that the reason HIV is still spreading is through drug usage and sharing

needles and also oral sex. Oral sex is a lower risk but at the same time you still can catch it. Sharing needles is still bad because you don't know what the other person has and what they have been doing or who they have been with.

We are African-American and society looks at us as the main target for HIV and the reason is because of the fact that the transmission rate is at the rate it is at today! But yet there are many white people suffering with HIV and AIDS as well. We are not the only people with the situation.

So as a whole we need to help spread the word and be safe as well as use condoms and protection and lube instead of lotion. Just overall be safe and live life without having to worry about if we are at the risk of having HIV OR AIDS.

"Live, Love, Laugh, Life" as my mom always said: the 4 L's is what you should focus on.

Jim Pickett: Man on an HIV/AIDS mission

BY TULLY SATRE

Jim Pickett is a man of many chapters. The walls of his downtown Chicago office are decked with paintings and photos spanning the nearly two decades-long career of a late bloomer. In one corner hangs a rainbow flag with the word "PACE" printed in bold white letters adjacent to a school globe perched atop a shelf of books and knickknacks. Photos of heroes and mentors that shed light on the advocate we know today are carefully fixated on the wall.

"I used to be the syphilis guy," said Pickett, "I was the crystal guy and now people call me the AIDS guy." These are not exactly nicknames a normal professional would boast about. But Jim Pickett has been fighting for change for years. And the names he has picked up along the way are whimsical trophies for the battles he has fought.

His family is aware of his work. They know that he does what he loves and has opportunities because of it, such as traveling, hence the globe ("I still have to be like, 'where exactly am I going?'" joked Pickett). But they remain casually aloof to the details, "I don't think they totally get it," he said, "I don't come home with the latest rectal microbicide report and say 'rectal' 20 times at the dinner table." Though his family reminds him that they are proud of his work, Pickett doubts they could describe exactly what he does. "These are topics we didn't talk about growing up," he added.

Let there be no confusion: Pickett's family in Wisconsin have been very welcoming to his partner of four years, Kevin Jack, despite their hazy understanding of Pickett's advocacy. Jack and Pickett met outside a coffeeshop in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood in an act plucked right from the silver screen of a romantic comedy. "We caught each other's eye ... did the whole eye thing ... I like to joke that he was stalking me," Pickett said.

Pickett grew up in the suburbs of Milwaukee, the eldest of two sons in an average hardworking American family. His father was an accountant, who dealt primarily with corporate finances,

while his mother was a stay-at-home mom—until he and his brother were old enough for her to pick up a part-time job.

Pickett came out at the ripe age of 18 in 1984 when the first wave of HIV/AIDS hit America. He started out as a business major at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and transferred to Marquette. "I had no direction," Pickett recalled. While at Marquette he majored in everything from communications to theatre, linguistics and English ("there might be something else in there," he added).

"Just before I got into college they asked me to take a computer survey to elicit my interests and give me career goals," said Pickett, "So I did it. It's long. It took hours. And it spit out two top things: one was a minister, and the other was a social worker."

"At the time, I was disgusted!" scoffed Pickett. "Now if I look back, I am doing something in between. There's a little bit of both in the work I do."

Pickett drifted through college, floating from one major to another. "I thought, 'I can't be in school and keep changing; I don't know what I'm doing!'" Suffice it to say, Pickett was very unsure as to what he wanted to do or where to go, but he knew that he had to leave Milwaukee.

"I was wild at that age," said Pickett. "When you're wild in a small town you end up getting kicked out everywhere and you can't go back. You burn your bridges. There are not many other bridges to cross." So he moved to Chicago with nothing and got a job waiting tables.

Pickett's expectation for a sense of direction did not surface quickly. Waiting tables had no clear path for the young college dropout, but he began advancing at work rather quickly. "I got management level jobs in hotels and restaurants, but I knew that wasn't my calling. I didn't like it," he said. "I didn't want to be worried about salt and pepper shakers and horrible mothers of brides my whole life. I didn't want to serve people in that way."

In the early 1990s, a week before Christmas, Pickett was working at a prestigious Gold Coast hotel where he managed a private dining staff of

nearly two dozen. After a heated argument with another manager at the hotel ("while we had an event," he noted) Pickett found himself without a job. "It was the best thing that happened to me because it re-calibrated me."

It was a rare moment in Pickett's life. He gained direction: "I said [to myself], 'I want to be professionally gay ... I wanted to work in the gay community.' I was going to figure out how to do that."

That was what led Pickett to GAB's doorstep ... literally. Having been a fan of the magazine and a regular reader, Pickett was aware that they had been looking for columnists. "It was a very sassy weekly," Pickett recalled.

GAB (originally called Gag and then Babble before its final name, GAB) was a weekly rag published between the eras of the zine and the blog. Poking fun at Chicago's gay nightlife, the magazine was quite successful during its time before folding in early 2001. "I was a fan of their magazine because it was a very refreshing change from what was out there ... it was funny and it was biting."

Pickett did not have a computer or a typewriter so he handwrote the first satirical column while lying at the beach. He decided to pull from his own experience as a waiter. "I had this character when I was waiting tables called Ms. Margie. It was an underneath character. I had a friend who was Brenda ... both of us guys." Pickett and his colleague happened across nametags one day with the names 'Margie' and 'Brenda' while working an event. The two threw the nametags under their tuxedos and took on another identity to get through the day.

"Margie was this fierce waitress," Pickett detailed, "she was the best waitress ever and she was also a gorgeous, glama-zon model. So I thought, 'I could make a column out of this.'"

"I snuck up to their office and I slid [the column] under their door and I ran down the stairs like a total geek. It was so queer in the wrong way of being queer," said Pickett of showing up on GAB's office doorstep. "I just thought, 'well I hope they think it's funny, I think it's funny!' I laughed when I wrote it." A couple days later



Jim Pickett. Photos courtesy of Pickett

the publisher called Pickett asking for Ms. Margie and wanting to know if she would like to write for GAB.

"It was called 'Poop Stains with Ms. Margie,' because Ms. Margie not only was a fabulous waitress—she could be a model if she wanted to be, but she followed in the family's footsteps of the service industry—but she was also obsessed with poop stains." Pickett admitted that waiters, especially, tend to be crude in their humor, noting, "It's the stupid crap to get through the kind of work you have to do. You just play these games with each other."

For every column, Pickett's hook for Ms. Margie was a run-in with her or someone else's poop stains. According to Pickett, it fit the magazine perfectly.

Writing for GAB led Pickett to selling advertising and, eventually, editing the magazine, two things he had never done before. With his ability to learn on his feet, Pickett was able to turn his work at GAB into a full-time job. "It was not a great living ... not an adult living, but a fun living. Working for GAB was not about being a serious adult. It was too much fun."

Things were looking up for Pickett after a turbulent departure from the hospitality industry. But in 1995 just after a couple of years working with GAB, Pickett was faced with life-changing news. "I tested positive [for HIV] when I was 29."

"When I found out, it was terrible. I don't think there was a worst day of my life, actually," said Pickett. He remembered being very scared. The mid-'90s were a time absent of the host of drugs available now. The options were limited for people diagnosed with HIV. And the drugs then were fairly toxic. "[The drugs] pushed people over the brink if AIDS didn't do it," said Pickett. "I was scared as hell ... and then the drama queen comes out in you and you think you have such a short time to live. The crypt keeper is going to be coming any minute with a casket! I'm out of here! So it was really tough." "GAB is an important part of my HIV story because I was a writer and I had been writing constantly," Pickett explained. "If I am a real writer I have to explore the hardest thing that I am going through. I can't just write catty nightlife gossip, I can't just do interviews with people and other people's stories. I can't just write satire. I have to write my own story. So a couple of years into my experience living with HIV, I



decided to start writing about it." Pickett began writing a column for GAB titled, "Sick: A body of work in progress."

Making the decision to write about being HIV positive was scary, Pickett recalled. He would be putting himself out there very broadly. "I was committed to writing about it in an honest way so I wasn't going to make myself look anything other than what I was ... so that means: complicated, good, bad, ugly, angry, wrong, right ... I wrote from that perspective."

Pickett's brash writing turned a sharp corner for his career, pushing him towards the advocate he did yet not know he was. "I really thought I was going to do the magazine thing. I loved it. I didn't see myself as an advocate or an activist. But I started writing about my story and it started to come back." It was not long before Pickett began receiving invitations to show up at events and speak. "I was very opinionated," he recalled, "the opportunities just started to grow, and all of a sudden I was making this my full-time career."

Pickett's column explored all of the above ("the good, the bad and the ugly") and it soon led him to writing a column called "Pickett Fences" for Positively Aware, an HIV treatment journal. He continued to write about his personal story and tie it to bigger issues. That led to other gigs. Working at the magazine during that time and testing positive merged together and within a few years Pickett realized advocacy was his calling.

AFC: Looking Forward

For more than a decade Jim Pickett has been at the forefront of Chicago's HIV/AIDS advocacy movement. In 1999 he began working with the Health Department on a project called "The Faces of AIDS: Living in the Heartland."

"I was hired to just write a few stories," said Pickett, "and it was just going to be one little book, just Chicago. And then it expanded and it became a regional thing and a photo documentary and two books and then they needed a project manager and I just fell into it." Pickett had never project managed before nor had he ever worked for the health department. Initially he was skeptical, thinking the job would be dull and that his work would be edited. But after sitting down with the department he realized they were ready to put a real face to HIV/AIDS without varnish.

"We ended up creating something I stand by today," said Pickett. "I am very proud of what we did. We had everything from a woman in prison in Topeka, Kansas, to a Native American grandma in Oklahoma City, to a gay couple in Kearney, Nebraska ... all their stories were able to be told."

During his time with the Department of Health, Pickett worked on several projects creating a bridge between the department and Chicago's gay community. He implemented and developed marketing campaigns for the city's Syphilis Elimination Task Force, which launched in 2001 answering to the rise of the disease among gay men. The campaign was considered hugely successful after reports of infections dropped over the next year.

Pickett also pioneered a social marketing campaign against crystal meth after several high-profile cases involving gay men surfaced around the city. The project, called "Crystal Breaks," was aimed at cleaning up the mess the drug had caused for the gay community.

Pickett was with the Department of Health until 2004 when he started working with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, where he is currently employed. He was originally hired as the direc-

tor of public policy, but soon morphed his job into, "the dream job I have now," Pickett said, "which is director of prevention advocacy and gay men's health." (The two things Pickett says he feels most passionate about.)

While with the AFC, Pickett helped plant and cultivate support for microbicide research (what he describes as his "baby"), which seek to offer possible alternatives to condoms as a means of HIV prevention. Microbicides are agents with anti-HIV qualities that can be applied as a gel/lubricant in the vagina or rectum to prevent infection. Noticing a lot of effort was being put solely into vaginal microbicides, Pickett was one of a handful of people in 2005 that formed the International Rectal Microbicides Advocates to focus on and promote rectal microbicides.

Pickett pointed out that rectal microbicides are much further behind in terms of research and development. "There have only been three human trials for a total of a little over a hundred people," said Pickett, "IRMA started with four members and today it is over 1,000 members spanning every continent and over 100 countries."

Pickett explained that anal sex continues to be very stigmatized, thus the lack of interest in rectal microbicides. However it was not just for gay men that he was concerned, but also for women. ("Women have anal sex, too.") Simply put: there are more women than gay men.

The benefits for microbicides are vast, Pickett pointed out. "Expecting everyone to use condoms all the time is ridiculous," said Pickett. "People don't want to use condoms their whole life. As great as they can be, there are a lot of issues with condoms."

In terms of microbicides, Pickett said that women, apart from gay men, need the option for both a vaginal and rectal microbicide. "They have both," he said. "Microbicides gives them something to have total control over. It's up to the woman if she wants to use the gel or lubricant. Female condoms often require negotiation with the other partner."

The initial stages promoting rectal microbicides were tough, but Pickett and his colleagues saw it through. Initially, IRMA sought to bring visibility to the need to advance rectal microbicide research. "Now it's legit," said Pickett who recently received a call from the National Institute of Health asking about rectal microbicides.

Aside from prevention projects, Pickett's work with the AFC is greatly concerned with gay men's health. He currently works in collaboration between the AFC, the Center on Halsted, the Howard Brown Health Center, and the Test Positive Aware Network in a series of gay men's health activities funded by the Health Department.

"I am very involved in a national/international gay men's health movement which looks at gay men's health in a holistic way," said Pickett, "For a long time we focused on gay men's health from naval to knee (HIV/STDs). But gay men have other health issues that matter ... top to toe matters, not just naval to knee. We are not just sick in need of being fixed."

Pickett's presence with the AFC has shed light on the negative outlook the mainstream tends to take with gay men's health. Since he started with the AFC he has taken steps towards the more holistic approach. "I believe you can address HIV, but never mention HIV," said Pickett.

The Jim Pickett we know today is a far cry from the person who struggled for direction. "I think my story is that I have just done things without really knowing what I am doing," Pickett laughed. "It's just funny because I look back and go wow that computer was actually right. If I had just listened to the computer when I was 18 I might have gone into this work much earlier."



Disa Johnson. Photo by Ross Forman

Disa Johnson runs for the cause

BY ROSS FORMAN

Disa Johnson knows that running the Honolulu Marathon in December will be an incredibly emotional 26.2-mile journey, starting at 5 a.m., that Sunday morning and, hours later, finishing steps from the world-famous Waikiki Beach.

Her goal is simple: to just finish.

Johnson, 43, who lives in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood and is the owner of SearchReturn LLC, is running her first-ever marathon, which will be an emotional challenge, not just a physical grind.

She is running in honor of her father, Keith Leroy Johnson, who was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in 1983 and died from the disease in 1986.

"I learned [he was sick] in 1983 and was devastated," said Johnson, a single, transgender bisexual. "My dad was gay and, at the time, I knew my dad was a little, ugh, quirky, but I didn't know he was going to die of AIDS."

"AIDS was a death sentence back then and I knew it was going to affect our whole family."

Johnson said her dad was, "one of the first to qualify for AZT treatment, but it was already too late; it was useless for him at that point."

"It's been 25 years [since my dad died] and yet it seems like yesterday. I almost want to cry now. I think the world has evolved enough to the point where people are complacent about AIDS. That's not good."

The elder Johnson's death from AIDS was among the first 10,000 documented Americans to die of AIDS, she said.

AIDS has "permanently changed" her life,

to incorporate "so much of [my] attitude and thinking," she said.

Johnson said she is both "excited and scared" for the marathon, which she is training for with the Team To End AIDS (T2), the endurance-training program of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC).

"It's exciting to run my first marathon and scary that something might stop me from finishing," she said. "I want to take part in activism now that I can; I'm less concerned about [my] career at [age] 43."

"I had physical abnormalities, which I was born with, although after my initial surgery, I led life as a straight man," Johnson said. "I switched sex and orientation at age 40 to include both sexes in life and exploration. I think, if genetics played a role in my orientation or brain gender map, it allowed me a certain freedom of thinking which others lack, or obstinately reject."

Johnson also is running her emotional marathon with the memory of her late sister, Susanna.

"Even though Susanna's death is unrelated to AIDS, as part of this run, I will be holding her memory in my thoughts as well," Johnson said. "Primarily, I am running to raise awareness about AIDS with the memory of my dad. Susanna's death by a disease that my brother and I carry was altogether different and just as devastating on a personal, familial level."

For more information about Disa, go to: <http://www.disajohnson.com>



in Windy City Times runs through December, and past articles are available on www.windycitymediagroup.com under the AIDS button.

VIEWPOINTS

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 Community Marketing, Inc.

MALIC
WHITEChaz makes a
bad impression

The recent backlash against Chaz Bono signing onto *Dancing With the Stars* (DWTS) confirms that, yes, the world is still terrified of anyone whose gender falls somewhere between Little Bo Peep and the Terminator.

Commentators on the DWTS message board don't want ABC to flaunt Bono's transgender "lifestyle choice."

Protecting children is a common theme, as with many anti-LGBT arguments. "I am not about to risk the potential for on screen dialogue about sex changes and gender confusion while my 7 and 9 year old are watching," one commentator wrote.

The public response to Bono confirms the persistent discrimination against the trans community. It's no secret that transgender people face violence, unemployment, homelessness, and high levels of incarceration.

However, while mainstream gay organizations have rushed to support DWTS' controversial con-

testant, transgender people have been less vocal in Bono's defense. I suspect this is no accident.

Cher's son is an unlikely and often unwanted hero for this highly vulnerable community.

Bono isn't exactly a glowing example of what it means to mean a man—trans or otherwise. For Bono, "being a man" requires a healthy dose of misogyny.

Throughout his documentary, *Becoming Chaz*, Bono calls his girlfriend "woman," bosses her around and insists that she make him sandwiches. On the David Letterman Show, he confessed, "I can be insensitive and be a guy in that way." Letterman responded with an "Amen, brother" and a fist bump.

If my father called my mother "woman" and told her to make him a sandwich, he'd be eating Lean Cuisines in the basement for a week.

Bono's actions reinforce all of our preconceived notions about gender—especially the negative ones. If Bono thinks that dismissing women is just part of "being a man," he's not only harming women—he's harming his own community.

Transwomen are part of Bono's community. Misogyny hurts all kinds of women, including transwomen who already face discrimination as gender-variant people.

Testosterone does not turn people into Neanderthals. However, Bono acts like taking testosterone inevitably results in dismissive behavior. "There is something in testosterone that makes talking and gossiping really grating," he told the *New York Times*. "I've noticed that [my girlfriend] can talk endlessly. I just kind of zone out."

REV. IRENE
MONROEChaz comes
out dancing

As the only child of world renowned pop duo Sonny and Cher Bono, many of us remember Chaz as their cherub-faced daughter Chastity, blowing kisses to the audience of her parents top-rated variety television show *Sonny & Cher*.

In 1995, Chaz was outed as a lesbian. However, this time Chaz is in control, and on his own volition has announced he's legally a man, and will now appear on the 13th season of *Dancing with the Stars* (DWTS), premiering Sept. 19.

However, not everyone is cheering, and ABC is catching some of the fallout.

The DWTS message board lit up with a tsunami of transphobic remarks about Chaz's upcoming appearance giving us a window into what this segment of the population confronts:

"HUGE HUGE fan of this show since season two and eagerly await each season to get my dancing/entertainment 'fix'!! But when I heard that Chaz Bono was going to be on, I was sick. Not that I have anything personally against her/him, I just don't want that lifestyle choice continually flaunted in the media esp ABC."

"There are a few women in my office that are very much against having Chaz Bono on the show because he is transgendered."

Because dance contestants are heterosexually paired with a professional dancer, some critics are concerned with which DWTS dancer Chaz is coupled:

"Chaz will have to dance with one of the girls because she/he says she/he is a man but chromosomes say different no matter how many surgeries you have."

In the film *Becoming Chaz*, a documentary about Chaz Bono's female-to-male (FTM) gender reassignment that aired in May on OWN: The

Oprah Winfrey Network, the arduous trek of coming out as transgender was captured.

And the topic of male and female genitalia, not surprisingly, is always front and center in transphobic arguments: "It's just hard for me to get my head around that cute little blonde headed girl that belonged to Sonny and Cher now has a penis."

Bono told Winfrey that he doesn't want male genitalia.

"At this point, I really don't have any plans to do bottom surgery," he said. "I feel really good, I feel like a man now, and I'm really happy."

In his recent interview with ABC about being on DWTS, Bono explained what being transgender meant to him.

"Transgendered people believe that their gender identity does not correspond to the one into which they were physically born. Many seek surgery or hormones to change their physical gender."

Although the show is about getting high rating by any means necessary the shock and awe of Bono appearing in this upcoming season will be a teaching moment for its viewers.

"With both gay and transgender contestants represented on this upcoming season, ABC will send viewers a strong message about the diversity within the LGBT community," said Herndon Graddick, senior of director of programs for GLAAD, in a statement. "At a time when transgender representation in the media is sorely lacking, Bono Bono joining the cast is a tremendous step forward for the public to recognize that transgender people are another wonderful part of the fabric of American culture. Appearing on such a high-profile show will allow millions of Americans to get to know him in a whole new light."

The general public may not be aware that people who have had sex-change surgery, cross-dressers and are gender non-conforming are often targets of violence and biases that force them to live in fear for their safety, and suffer the loss of their jobs and shelter.

The annual Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is an international event memorializing transgender people murdered because of their gender identities or gender expressions. The purpose of TDOR is to raise public awareness of hate crimes against transgendered people and to

Becoming Chaz leaves viewers with the impression that hormone therapy has turned Bono into a completely different person. That person happens to be a sandwich-eating, woman-hating stereotype of everything that we associate with testosterone, which doesn't bode well for other transmen who work to maintain their feminist ideals.

I know many transmen who become even more aware of their actions as feminists after they transition. They acknowledge that passing as men gives them access to privilege that must be handled with care. Unfortunately, Bono gives the world little hope that these men exist.

Even worse, Bono uses his experience with hormone therapy to make blanket statements about gender that are often grossly inaccurate.

"I've learned that the differences between men and women are so biological," he told the *New York Times*. "I think if people realized that, it would be easier. I would be a great relationship counselor. I know the difference that hormones really make."

Bono's participation in DWTS marks a significant yet awkward moment for the trans community. Families who watch DWTS this season might take this opportunity to talk about gender diversity. However, if Bono is the face of the trans community, we're not making our best impression.

Malic White is a student and freelance writer who aims to smash the gender binary and build community in unexpected places.

honor their lives that might otherwise be forgotten.

This event is held every November honoring Rita Hester, a 34-year-old African-American transsexual, who was mysteriously found murdered inside her first-floor apartment outside of Boston Nov. 28, 1998. The crime kicked off the "Remembering Our Dead" web project.

As a matter-of-fact, many transgender people, because of transphobia and anti-trans violence in this society, feel most comfortable moving about their lives out of the view of the general public. In urban enclaves known for their gang violence, crimes against transgender people often go unnoticed or are seen as lesser crimes.

Many parents of transgender children worry and for sound reasons.

When we see in the documentary *Cher*—gay icon nonpareil—not as celebratory about Bono's transition as his close friends and girlfriend, Jenny, are, it's unnerving. But *Cher*, in my opinion, comes across more as a frightened parent than as an insensitive transphobic. Worried about the toil it will take—physically and mentally—on Bono to endure ongoing male hormone shots for the rest of his life *Cher*, still using the female pronoun, states, "I'm afraid she's not going to be healthy, I'm afraid it's too much for her."

However, *Cher* understands Bono's courageous act to transition. "If I woke up tomorrow in the body of a man, I couldn't get to the surgeon fast enough," she stated in the documentary.

Cher is a lucky parent. Her child is alive, well and will soon be flaunting his fancy footwork on "Dancing with the Stars."

However, Hester's mother exemplifies the unknown hurt and quiet grief a myriad of parents endure, which is why we have TDOR. I won't soon forget the vigil we held for Hester in 1998, because I am still haunted by the words of Hester's mother:

"I would have gladly died for you, Rita. I would have taken the stabs and told you to run. I loved you."

With what has now amounted to a tsunami of criticism for having Bono in this season's lineup, I applaud DWTS for unwavering, and Bono for stepping out.

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION

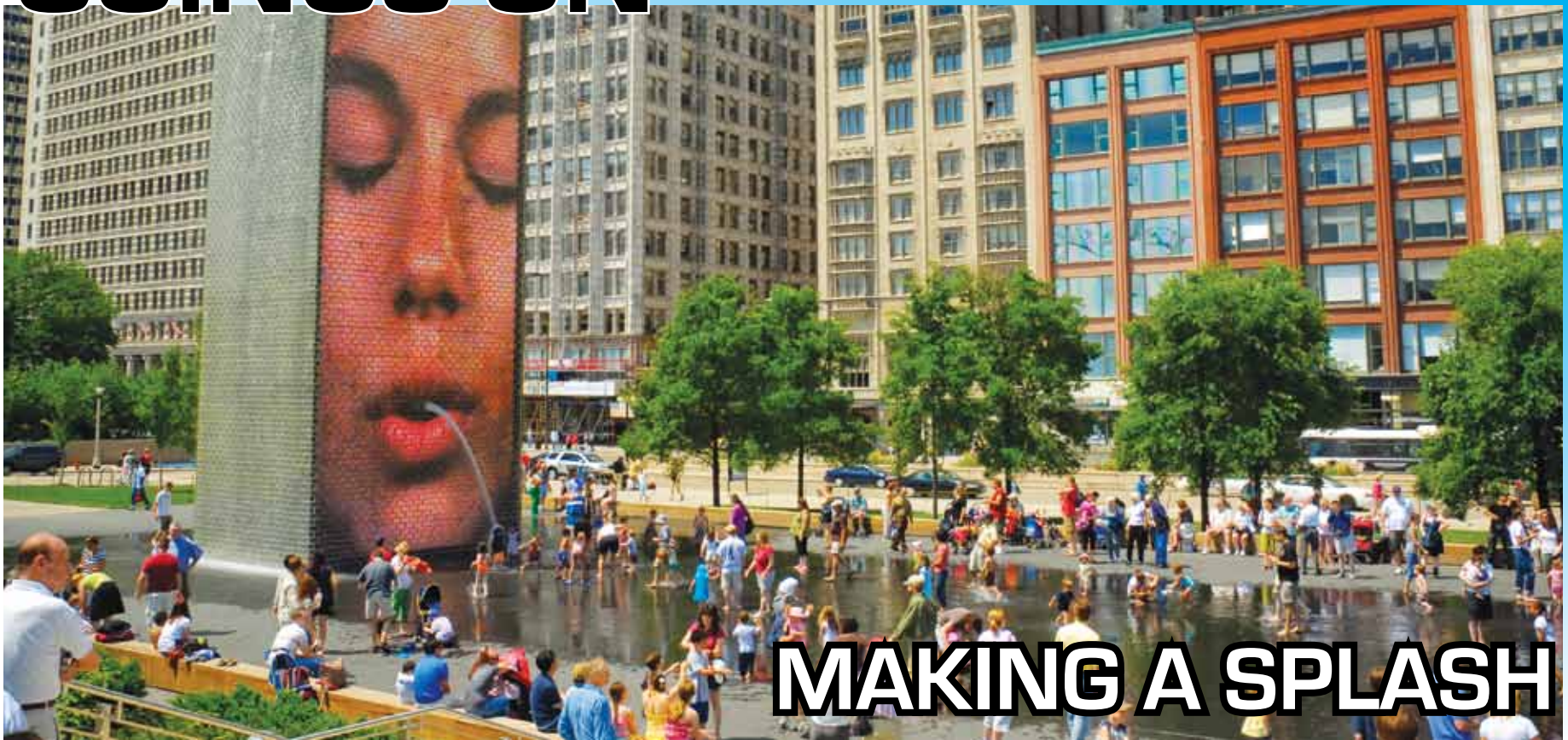


Photo courtesy of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events / the Grant Park Music Festival

MAKING A SPLASH

People will soon be able to see what happens behind the scenes at more than 100 Chicago sites, such as the Crown Fountain. See page 28.

REAL ESTATE

A view to a thrill.
Page 28.

Photo of a Sarasota, Fla., beach house from Susan Katanic



MUSIC

Pop life.
Page 25.

Melissa Ferrick PR photo



SPORTS

Hero worship.
Page 34.

Photo of Mark Bingham from Windy City Times archives



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

'Kid' stuff for Sarah Gubbins

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

If it takes a village to raise a child, then three theater companies were needed to help bring Sarah Gubbins' world-premiere lesbian drama, *The Kid Thing*, to fruition.

"It's really a 50-50 match," Gubbins said about the play's co-production between About Face Theatre (where she is an artistic associate) and Chicago Dramatists (where she is a resident playwright). "Both companies were interested and they liked each other and they decided that they wanted to do a co-pro[duction]."

Also invaluable was Steppenwolf Theatre Company, which provided Gubbins workshop hours and a reading of *The Kid Thing* as part of its 2010 First Look Repertory of New Work (Steppenwolf is also presenting Gubbins' lesbian-teen drama, *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life*, this season part of its Steppenwolf for Young Adults series.)

"For me it's all of the resources of these theaters coming together so it's a super-size production from my vantage point," Gubbins said, glad to have all these theater teams on her side.

Gubbins' play focuses on the conflict that erupts at a Chicago dinner party between two longtime lesbian couples when one pair announces an impending pregnancy. The bombshell revelation forces the couples to re-evaluate their relationships.

The notion of LGBT families raising kids is one that Gubbins wanted to explore dramatically, especially with all of the questions faced by a same-sex couple.

"Reproduction can be challenging for straight couples, let me say that," Gubbins said. "Yet

when you're dealing with gay couples, there are so many more things to think about in terms of how to have a baby—adoption or who is carrying especially with lesbian couples and then obviously where does the sperm going to come from and if that's going to be a transparent donor or an anonymous donor—just the myriad of other factors that go into that decision."

However, the whole notion of child-rearing wasn't so gay-centric when Gubbins first started thinking about writing *The Kid Thing*. Simple biology and timing were also factors.

"[It was] more an observation of my peer group around the kid question," Gubbins said about being a 30-something woman. "There's a ton of issues about being a woman and when to have kids and what that means—issues of timing and I what I was really observing was women in their 30s—early, mid and late—who just kind of wake up one morning and think 'F***! I haven't thought of this! I have to deal with this now or really, really soon!'"

That individualistic decision to reproduce, but also one made within in a lesbian partnership, is what spurred Gubbins to find the heart of her drama. In the process, Gubbins also wanted to explore butch/femme dynamics within a lesbian relationship.

"The couples are very old friends and both couples I would say have various gender presentations being enacted," Gubbins said. "More so masculine-presenting and more traditional in terms of a hetero-normative construct just boils into lesbian couples."

Gubbins says *The Kid Thing* is presented in a strictly realistic style, and is unashamedly proud of its Chicago-setting and roots. Gubbins is also



Rebekah Ward Hays (left) and Kelli Simpkins in *About Face* Theatre and Chicago Dramatists' *The Kid Thing*. Photo by Michael Brosilow

pleased to be working again with director Joanie Schultz and a cast that includes Kelli Simpkins, Halena Kays, Park Krausen and Rebekah Ward-Hayes on this dramatic play that questions the hurdles of child-rearing for LGBT families.

"It's so simple biology," Gubbins said. "The fact that we've been reproducing for a couple of eons now, but now it can be so terribly complicated in our modern psyche."

About Face Theatre and Chicago Dramatists' co-production of Sarah Gubbins' *The Kid Thing* continues in previews before officially opening on Sept. 9, at 1105 W. Chicago Ave. Performances are 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays until Oct. 16. Tickets are \$32. Call 312-633-0840 or visit <http://www.chicago-dramatists.org> or <http://www.aboutfacetheatre.com>.

Women's Work Weekend

Pride Films and Plays (PFP) shines a spotlight on the ladies with its Women's Work Weekend featuring readings of new plays and screenplays with lesbian characters. The eight works represented are the top four finalists of PFP's two recent contests titled *Sapphics on Stage* and *Sapphics on Screen*. All readings take place at the Center on Halsted's Hoover-Leppen Theater, 3656 N. Halsted.

Here's the Sapphic schedule:

Pat Branch's screenplay *Girls Out Loud* focuses on a 30-something cynic who gets pregnant just before meeting the woman of her dreams. 7:30

p.m. Sept. 7.

Jennifer Hoppe-House's play *Bad Dog* concerns an alcoholic lesbian named Molly who must deal with her dysfunctional family after a major car accident. 7:30 p.m. Sept. 8.

Dawn Marie Guernsey's screenplay *The Basement* is about a woman who must face her personal demons when trapped in the basement of a tornado-destroyed building. 7:30 p.m. Sept. 9.

Diane Edington's screenplay *'70s Shuffle* delves into the life of a straight FBI agent who comes to rely on a butch woman bartender to help her navigate the Mafia underworld. 6 p.m. Sept. 10.

Vanda's play *Patient HM* is about a lesbian neuroscientist who is haunted by her memories of a lost lover as she treats a man with major memory problems. 8 p.m. Sept. 10.

Alicia Lomas-Gross' screenplay *Leap of Faith* reveals what happens when a timid lesbian Catholic schoolteacher falls for a student's devout mother. 3:30 p.m. Sept. 11

Cassie Keet's play *Still Fighting It* shows the conflict that erupts when a college student returns home to her family with her serious girlfriend. 6 p.m. Sept. 11.

Tickets to each reading are \$12, or \$70 for all eight admissions. For more information, visit <http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com>. To purchase tickets, visit <http://Brownpapertickets.com> or call 800-838-3006.



Corazon de Manzana. Photo by John W. Sisson, Jr.

THEATER REVIEW

Corazon de Manzana

Playwright: Dana Lynn Formby
At: Mortar Theatre Company at the Storefront Theater, 66 E. Randolph St.
Tickets: 312-742-8497;
<http://www.dcatheater.org>; \$20
Runs through: Sept. 25

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Little Ariana has a new doll, but straight out of the box it has a breast burned off and a message inscribed on it in Spanish. Ariana's mom's close friend-or-lover, Denise, determines the doll was manufactured in Mexico and learns that women in Ciudad Juarez are being murdered by the thousands each year.

In Mexico itself another small girl, Mazi, plays with a simpler doll while her doting mother works long hours. And then Mazi disappears when her doll comes to life and she follows Ferdy, a charmingly sinister fantasy figure, into a threatening other reality.

Meanwhile, in Canada (maybe?) 16 year old Sara contends with self-image and school issues, and an early crush on Jake with whom she attends an academic conference against her mother's orders.

The parallel mothers and daughters obviously are meant to relate to each other in this world premiere, but nothing holds together in Dana Lynn Formby's poetical drama, which is vague and suggestive when it needs to be specific. It doesn't follow any one storyline or set of charac-

ters to a clear conclusion. The press release says *Corazon de Manzana* ("apple core" or, figuratively, "heart of the apple") concerns the ongoing femicide in Juarez, but you don't get that from the play because focus shifts too much with insufficient factual information.

Too many questions are left unanswered: Are Denise and Callie (Ariana's mom) lovers? Do Mazi and her Mom live in Juarez? Is Mazi kidnapped and murdered? If so, what's the point of disguising the action as a fairytale fantasy? Why is their no consequence to Denise's pursuit of the subject?

Instead, Formby drops exposition bombs as if the connections are obvious, which they are not. Ariana's mom lost a job when her factory moved to Juarez under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and NAFTA is raised as boogie but never connected to anything. A hint is dropped that, maybe, Juarez women will work for less than men and so are being killed, but there's no evidence or follow-up discussion. Late in Act II, the play reveals that Sara had a heart transplant and just possibly received Mazi's heart. If Formby means to suggest that Mexican women are being killed by a black-market organ-selling ring, then she needs to say so.

It's not enough for Formby to be interested in her subject or passionate about it if she can't convey information to us with force and clarity. She and director Jason Boat use visual tools of theater very well (video, choreography, lighting), and I have no complaints about the performers. But I can't see the pattern in this patchwork quilt in which poetical and political don't mix effectively, and the storyline don't solidly connect.

'vibrator' at Victory starting Sept. 9

Victory Gardens Artistic Director Chay Yew and Executive Director Jan Kallish have announced the Chicago Premiere of Sarah Ruhl's Tony-nominated play *In the Next Room* or the vibrator play, directed by Associate Artistic Director Sandy Shinner.

The production—about the history of the vibrator—runs Sept. 9-Oct. 9 at the Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave., in Lincoln Park.

In a statement, Yew said, "Sarah Ruhl's *In the Next Room* is a most remarkable achievement in that it addresses feminist and individual oppression, and societal conformity, with fierce intelligence, longing and wit."

Previews are Sept. 9-18: Tuesday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday at 3 p.m. Previews are \$20-\$40. Regular performances run through Oct. 9: Tuesday through Saturday

at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday at 4 p.m.; and Sunday at 3 p.m. Regular performances are \$20-\$50.

For tickets and information, call the Victory Gardens box office at 773-871-3000, email tickets@victorygardens.org or visit <http://www.victorygardens.org>.

Garland drama on Broadway next year

A drama about the last months of gay icon Judy Garland's life is going to Broadway next spring, Yahoo! News reported. Peter Quilter's *End of the Rainbow* will start performances March 19 at a theater to be announced. Tracie Bennett, a two-time Olivier Award winner who originated the role of Garland in London, will reprise her role on Broadway. The show will make its U.S. premiere in January at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis.

THEATER REVIEW

For the Boys

Score: various songwriters;
Book: Aaron Thielen after a screenplay by Neal Jimenez, Lindy Laub and Marshall Brickman
At: Marriott Theatre,
 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire
Phone: 847-634-0200; \$40-\$48
 (plus handling fees)
Runs through Oct. 16

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

For the Boys isn't a great film. So it's puzzling that the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire would go to such great lengths to adapt this 1991 box office bomb for the stage.

For the Boys worked best as a custom-built film vehicle for Bette Midler (who was also one of the film's co-producers). Midler sparkles when she's singing period songs and cracking wise comically, but the rest of the film is so overlong and dramatically overwrought that it becomes a tedious chore.

Marriott's stage musical of *For the Boys* is an improvement storytelling-wise over the film (no clunky flashback sequences and awful old-age prosthetic makeup). However, Aaron Thielen's stage adaptation still sticks too closely to the film, which didn't have a defined point of view as to why we should care about the ups and downs of showbiz professionals who spar on and off USO tours between World War II and the Vietnam War.

With so much plot meandering and an overabundance of jukebox songs that don't further the story, *For the Boys* soon becomes a showcase for underutilized talent. Don't be surprised if you catch yourself silently refer-

encing performers who were in other shows with better material (to name a few: Summer Smart, Bernie Yvon, Rod Thomas or Michael Aaron Linder).

As the leading comic couple of Dixie Leonard and Eddie Sparks, Michele Ragusa and Timothy Gulan respectively don't have the comic charisma to pull off one character's proclamations that they'll be bigger than George Burns and Gracie Allen. Ragusa handles the dramatic scenes better than Midler did in the film, but she won't erase memories of Midler's great vocal chops and oversize personality.

Director/choreographer Marc Robin's keeps things visually compelling with an ever-shifting cinematic staging that dazzles mostly during the musical numbers (the 1950s TV studio sequence complete with a squeaky-clean plaid-jacketed vocal quartet and an oversize dancing cigarette box was loads of campy fun).

Adding greatly to the historical sweep of the show is Sage Marie Carter's clever video montages and still photo projections (which frequently incorporates the Marriott performers into the historic settings). That's on top of the great period-piece work of costume designer Nancy Missimi, set designer Thomas M. Ryan and the sound design work of Robert E. Gilmartin (who adds in necessary soldier whoops, whistles and applause).

Marriott's *For the Boys* is technically polished and professionally produced, but it really doesn't answer the question of why it needed to be transformed from a film flop into a splashy stage musical. Also, it's also ironic that the audience only sees showbiz types stressing their importance to the troops without the soldiers themselves saying how the USO performers had an impact on them.



Michele Ragusa and Timothy Gulan in *For the Boys*. Photo by Peter Coombs and the Marriott Theatre.

SPOTLIGHT



A mature couple, a younger couple and a wacky pianist at a swanky party all tackle composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim's tricky tunes in the 1990s musical revue *Putting it Together*. The show kicks off Michael Weber's new artistic director post for Porchlight Music Theatre. *Putting it Together* continues through Oct. 16 at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Show times are at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays; 8 p.m. Saturdays; and 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$38. Call 773-506-8150 or visit <http://www.theaterwit.org> or <http://porchlightmusictheatre.org> or more information. Photo of Adam Pelty and McKinley Carter in *Putting it Together* by Jeremy Rill.

THEATER REVIEW

Women Are Crazy Because Men Are A**holes

Playwright: Brad T. Gottfred

At: Cyur Studios at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Phone: 773-404-7336; \$29.69

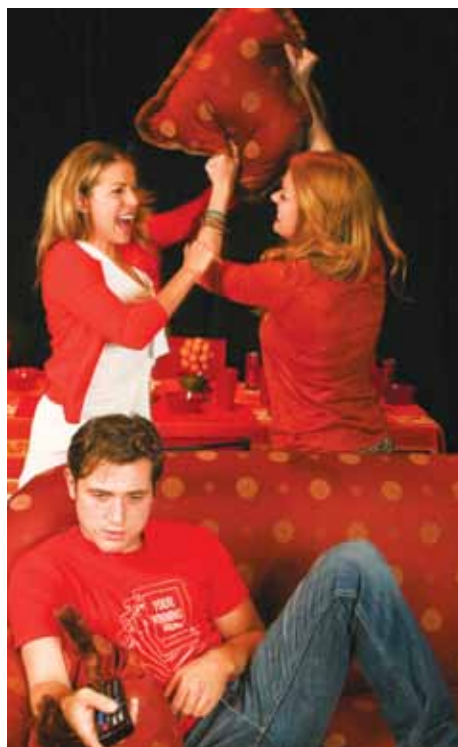
Runs through: Sept. 25

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Early in the play, the female characters announce the title as shown on the playbill, but seconds later, their male counterparts make a similar pronouncement, inverting the syntax to "Men are assholes because women are crazy," one going so far as to add "fucking crazy!"

Brad T. Gottfred's bedroom farce—making its last stop in Chicago before proceeding to New York (off-Broadway)—proves both assessments to be accurate: after two years of internet chat, Dylan has traveled from Chicago to Los Angeles for his first face-to-face with Nicole, who has invited eight of her confidantes to witness the occasion. Unknown to the hostess, however, all her guests are currently in the process of breaking up. Benny and Reynold's phallogocentric indifference to their girl friends' insecurities threaten to drive the latter into the arms of other men—or women. Then there is the smartly intuitive Phoenix, who feels stifled by her brainy consort. Finally, there are the absent Hillary and George, who squabble constantly, but just can't quit each other. Put them together with cupid firing blindly in all directions and is it any wonder that pandemonium quickly ensues?

A cursory look at the live performance scene in and around America's cinema capital—where Crazy/A**holes premiered—will reveal a preponderance of happy-ever-after romantic comedies, for reasons comprising a topic for another occasion. Certainly, no one ever lost money proposing attractive young people engaging in double entendres and sim-sex. Gottfred's scenario delivers these elements in abundance (no nudity, but some graphic under-the-covers lesbian digitation), while also exploring the limits of lust as a basis for lasting relationships. Friendship, common interests, following your bliss, stepping



Women Are Crazy... Photo by Anthony Robert La Penna

outside your comfort zone, accepting each other's imperfections and other quasi-marital issues are held up to scrutiny. Even those who ultimately choose to uphold the status quo emerge the wiser for having examined the motives for their decision.

This lesson, dating back to Plautus, is dressed up in shiny new garb by the Cyur Studios actors, many from the original production. The denouement could be pared down by a few minutes, and the introduction of a juvenile-fiction metaphor (providing an explanation for the color-scheme of the costumes and decor) borders on precocity. That said, fans of old-fashioned sentiment should enjoy this final taste of summery sweets before hunkering down for a winter of heavy drama.

CRITICS' PICKS

Colin Quinn: Long Story Short, Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place, through Sept. 10. The former Saturday Night Live funnyman is offers up a very funny wise-guy interpretation of world history filtered through the prism of today's pop culture. SCM

The Double, Babes With Blades at Lincoln Square, through Sept. 24. Its church-basement quarters may be shabby, but both the dialogue and the shiny rapiers dazzle in Barbara Lhota's gender-flexing homage to the proto-feminist screwball comedies of the 1930s and '40s. MSB

Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook, through Oct. 9. It's simple: this is the best Sweeney Todd you ever are likely to see. Don't miss it. Greg Edelman and Liz McCartney are Sweeney and Mrs. Lovett. The ensemble, band and designs are astonishing. JA

They're Playing Our Song, Fox Valley Repertory at Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, through Oct. 9. The real-life and talented husband-and-wife team of Michael Mahler and Dara Cameron both help to make this disco-era romantic musical comedy into a fun and great date-night show. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Wolf

Playwright: Paul Cosca

At: Brikenbrak Theatre Project

at the Think Tank, 1770 W. Berteau Ave.

Phone: 312-806-3506; \$10

Runs through: Sept. 17

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

You never know what will be on the quiz, so you might want to take notes: Jacob Grimm is an overworked high school teacher struggling to guide his shallow students through the mysteries of Shakespeare and poetry in a small town far from PBS and Louder Than A Bomb. Sarah Riding is a precocious, but withdrawn, adolescent who wears a scarlet hoodie. Jake goes home to an agoraphobic wife. Sarah goes home to an abusive father. After a spontaneous two-voice recitation of T.S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in a deserted classroom one night, Sarah invites Jake to a rendezvous in the woods. The next morning, Jake returns to his house reeking of liquor, just in time to hear that Sarah has been found murdered at their trysting place.

If this were a rural-noir police procedural, the dramatic question would focus on the crime: Who did it? How did it happen? Who will discover the killer? Paul Cosca's purpose is not a whodunit, however, but an existential study in

which an innocent man riddled with suppressed guilt becomes so embroiled in the uncertainty engendered by this breakdown in the social order that he loses his ability to distinguish between truth and fantasy. (Aren't you glad you took those notes?) As the speculations mount, our hero begins to see Sarah's ghost, intruding Banquo-like at inopportune moments, and to despair of his peer support until his interrogation by the local sheriff is amplified into a full-blown CIA-torture scenario. Late in the story, Mrs. Grimm introduces a clue raising the possibility of this entire odyssey being a hallucination but, by then, we cannot help but suspect yet another red herring.

Cosca's play exhibits all the hallmarks of a work still in progress, its improvisational tone heightened by the playwright also shouldering the role of the ambivalent Grimm. The production inaugurating Brikenbrak Theatre Project's loft space on Ravenswood Alley is additionally encumbered with numerous set changes mandated by the script's teleplay-ish structure, but a valiant ensemble of actors overcome their spartan surroundings to immerse us, both intellectually and emotionally, in our surrogate-Hamlet's search for answers in a disorderly universe bereft of literary tidiness, where the facts may not even matter. What would it take to persuade Cosca to make his next effort a "Cold Case"-styled drama resolving the frustrating questions that continue haunt us weeks afterward?

'Boobs of Khan' at Gorilla Tango Sept. 9

Gorilla Tango's Geek Girl Burlesque is presenting the latest in its line of burlesque-infused parodies—Boobs of Khan: A Star Trek Burlesque—Fridays at 9:30 p.m., Sept. 9-Oct. 28 at Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave.

According to a press release, "Kirk, Spock and the rest of the Enterprise crew are trans-

formed into beautiful, sexy women, a bizarre consequence of the use of the Genesis Device. Khan, ever the opportunist, seizes this moment to attempt to make the crew his harem."

Tickets to the 18-and-over show are \$20; to purchase tickets visit <http://www.gorillatan-go.com> or call 773-598-4549.

'North America Now' marks 9/11 attacks

On Sept. 7, Bailiwick Chicago and Teatro Luna will present "North America Now," a cultural event focusing on the state of North America on the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

The event, which begins at 7 p.m. with a cocktail hour, will be held Wed., Sept. 7, at The Instituto Cervantes of Chicago, 31 W. Ohio St.

Co-produced by Bailiwick Chicago Executive Director Brian LaDuca and Teatro Luna Executive Director Alex Meda, "North America Now" will explore the subject of North American borders through performances and visual art as well as a town-hall panel discussion with local politicians, cultural leaders and artists on current border issues and concerns.

Tickets start at \$30 and are available through <http://www.bailiwickchicago.com> or <http://www.brownpapertickets.com>.

'Urinetown' at Circle Theatre Sept. 14

Urinetown—a comedy about how a water shortage leads to a government-enforced ban on private toilets—will run at Circle Theatre, 1010 Madison St., Oak Park, Sept. 14-Oct. 23.

Previews are Sept. 9, 10 and 13. Tickets are \$24-\$28 each; previews are \$13 each. See <http://www.circle-theatre.org> or call 708-660-9540.

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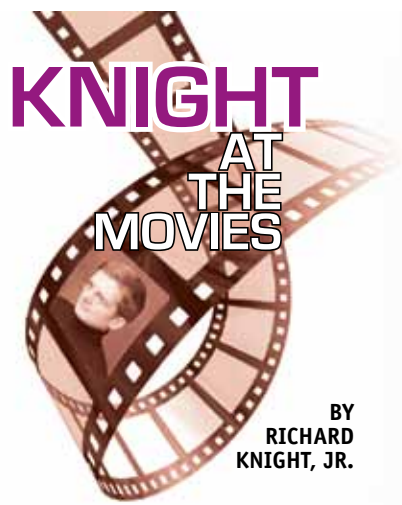
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BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT, JR.

Contagion; Circumstance

In the dark we hear a woman cough twice and the words "Day 2" appear on the screen in blood red letters. Then we see Gwyneth Paltrow as the woman coughing. She's sitting in a VIP lounge at O'Hare International Airport and looking feverish. The camera focuses on everything she's touching—peanuts in a crystal bowl in front of her, a credit card she hands to a bartender, her cell phone. On the soundtrack, threatening electronic music throbs, heightening the tension.

We're barely two minutes into director Steven Soderbergh's riveting movie **Contagion**, which tracks the course of a deadly virus *a la* SARS or H1N1 as it quickly morphs into a worldwide pandemic. Already he's stripped the focus down to the basics and you're filled with dread and delight at what's about to happen.

We're off and running in what is essentially a modern-day version of the old Irwin Allen disaster flicks playing the game of "Who will Survive?" with a name cast, each of whom will try his or her hardest to make it across the finish line before fate catches him or her. The participants include Paltrow, Matt Damon, Laurence Fishburne, Kate Winslet, Marion Cotillard, Jude Law and Demetri Martin, et al.

The difference between Allen's cheesy but beloved spectacles like *The Poseidon Adventure* and *The Towering Inferno* (which were tense as hell upon release—I know, I was there) is that instead of a microcosm of humanity banding together in order to survive against the threat, disease-related movies separate folks—safety in numbers in the face of a virus is potentially deadly in such cases. So, within five minutes of screen time Paltrow—as the unexpected Patient Zero, a corporate executive from Minneapolis with a troubled marriage—has spread the virus with her incidental contact in Hong Kong to London, Tokyo, Chicago. Within 12 days, 8 million are infected.

Scott Z. Burns' script is methodical and ultra-realistic—we don't have the usual grandstanding, the heroic leader, the hooker with the heart of gold, the monologues about "what might have been" and how things will change once the disaster has passed. Oh, no. Soderbergh doesn't waste much time on these hoary old devices although the film—which feels as cool and lethal as the deadly killer itself—has plenty of heart and it's populated with recognizable characters rather than stereotypes. Burns' script gives us scientists, politicians and military personnel going about their jobs while doing their best to stay two steps ahead and quickly lagging behind.

It's a very unglamorous, almost clinical approach that makes the frightening intensity of the subject matter that much more effective. The real time approach is the antithesis of bland and there's not a wasted shot or moment in the film (which runs a crisp 100 minutes). The documentary style of the script, direction, and acting—all which simply want you to watch in horror this "so real it scares the hell out of you" scenario and grab the edge of your seat—is that



Jude Law
in **Contagion**.
Photo by
Claudette
Barius

much more effective because of Soderbergh's level headed approach. You're filled with terror from beginning to end and even when good news comes (and there is some), suspicion lingers and it's hard to believe in a world that operates on absolutes that any such thing exists.

The parallels to the AIDS virus are striking and brought back so many painful memories—time wasted as scientists squabbled over naming and discovery rights, the slow-as-molasses process involving drug trials, etc. Then, of course, there are the paranoia and ignorance that seem to infect the healthy, who, in turn, go after the very people who need them the most—those stricken with the virus. For AIDS, there was a quasi-happy ending that, while stemming the death toll, also had the side effect of slowing the urgency to find a cure and convincing a lot of people that dealing with AIDS would be a walk in the park. No. No. No. No.

There is a certainly lust inherent in actively watching disaster porn—of which this virus genre is a difficult-to-film subset (no way to show folks catching on fire, being tossed into pits as the earth opens up during earthquakes, etc.). Odorless, colorless, tasteless—but it's all the scarier because of its invisibility and the gigantic impact it can possibly wreak on humanity. By the time we reach another of those blood-red title cards, this one reading "Day 18"—a long time after Paltrow's character has died and passed the virus on to millions—pretty much everything we take for granted has broken down and splintered and humanity is shown resorting to primitive, survival instincts. No one becomes a zombie as in *28 Days Later* but the trajectory in *Contagion* is about the same and 10 times more frightening because of its true-to-life, very probable scenario.

Best friends Atafeh (Nikohl Boosheri) and Shireen (Sarah Kazemy) are typical teenage girls from upper middle-class backgrounds who love testing the boundaries of their adolescence by indulging in all manner of typical teenage stuff that would horrify their families. However, it's not only their families that these two young women have to consider. In bisexual writer-director Maryam Keshavarz's **Circumstance**, set in Iran, with its Draconian rules for women (not to mention its incredibly harsh treatment of gays) the world that these two inhabit is filled with danger (and spy cameras), it seems, around every corner.

Keshavarz's feature, her first, is a moving but familiar coming-of-age story in which the gorgeous devil-may-care Shireen emboldens the emotionally timid Atafeh. It's enlivened by the additional complexities the ladies face as they try to carve out independence for themselves within their strict confines. However, it's first and foremost an emotionally dense lesbian love story—a love that not only dare not speak its name but one that is tested by, yes, incredibly trying circumstances.

Despite warnings from the state-run morality police and family members (Atafeh's brother, a reformed drug addict, turns to religion, becomes an informant for the morality police and has a yen for Shireen), Atafeh and Shireen continue to fearlessly test the limits of their cultural prison. Everywhere they go in public, the secu-

rity cameras track them and it's no surprise to learn that the real lives of these characters are behind closed doors. At one point, they work on dubbing an illegal copy of *Sex and the City* and Gus Van Sant's *Milk*, which they plan to sell underground to eager buyers. The instigator of the

Chaz Bono on 'Dancing with the Stars'

BY KATE SOSIN

America's most-famous transgender man will be lacing up his dance shoes this fall, much to the dismay of transphobic TV viewers.

Chaz Bono, the only child of Sonny and Cher, has signed onto the season 13 cast of *Dancing with the Stars*, set to air Sept. 19 on ABC.

The announcement has sparked national controversy and elicited anti-trans rants all over the internet as some complain that ABC is forcing trans issues on the public. Others argued that watching Chaz on the show might corrupt children and turn them transgender.

LGBT groups have hailed the news as a milestone in transgender representation on TV.

"At a time when transgender representation in the media is sorely lacking, Chaz Bono joining the cast of a series like *Dancing With the Stars* is a tremendous step forward for the public to recognize that transgender people are an important part of the fabric of American culture," said Herndon Graddick, senior director of programs at GLAAD, in a news statement.

However, others were less thrilled with the announcement.

Message boards on ABC.com quickly filled with transphobic tirades after the announcement. Some fans said that Bono's participation would discourage them from watching the show. Others simply complained this season's entire cast which includes David Arquette and *The Hills* reality star Kristin Cavallari was not star-worthy.

Fox News published an opinion piece discouraging parents from letting their kids watch the show. The piece, written by Dr. Keith Ablow, whose work includes a self-help book co-authored with Glenn Beck, asserts that transgender people are lying about their genders.

"It is a toxic and unnecessary byproduct of the tragic celebration of transgender surgery that millions of young people who do watch *"Dancing with the Stars"* will have to ponder this question: Maybe my problems really stem from the fact that I'm a girl inside a boy's body (or a boy inside a girl's body)," Ablow wrote.

LGBT groups across the country jumped up to show their support for Bono. The Human Rights Campaign asked its twitter followers to tweet their support for him, setting off a flood of support for Bono.

Bono's mother has also been vocal on the issue. Cher, whose reactions to Bono's transition have been mixed in the past, sounded off

project is a young gay activist whom the others assail because of his idealism. "Don't you want to change your circumstances?" he insists, but Atafeh and Shireen know better.

The only possible way for these young women to continue their love affair will be in secret or by escaping the country and its unrelenting conservatism. By the time Keshavarz's movie brings Atafeh and Shireen to this momentous point, *Circumstance* has achieved a level of poignancy that is deeply moving—all the more so because in making this bold lesbian love story, Keshavarz (who is Iranian-American) has had to make the choice in real life. She has admitted in several interviews that she will never be able to return to Iran. Both her film and real-life circumstances will resonate with mainstream and queer audiences alike—and no doubt, via the illegal underground, in Iran as well.

Check out my archived reviews at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com> or <http://www.knightatthemovies.com>. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.



Chaz Bono.

on her twitter account about what she called "vicious attacks" against her child.

"Mothers don't stop getting angry with stupid bigots who fk with their children!" Cher wrote.

Bono has appeared confident, publicly stating that his appearance on the show is a test of America's tolerance of transgender people.

"I am overwhelmed by the outpouring of support I received from everyone," he tweeted. "Thanks so much. I don't listen to the haters, but embrace the love."

Bono joins a cast that includes HLN's Nancy Grace and Carson Kressley, the gay stylist best known for his role on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

GLAAD praised ABC for including both a transgender and a gay man on the show this season. GLAAD also noted that ABC received a "good" rating on its annual Network Responsibility Index, which ranks television networks on their portrayals of LGBT characters.

Bono becomes the third transgender character on mainstream TV currently. Transgender fashion model Isis King will re-appear in the upcoming season of "America's Next Top Model" while Jordan Todosey continues to play a transgender boy on "Degrassi." According to GLAAD, two episodes of "Hung" will also feature a transgender character this year.

Bono will be dancing with Lacey Schwimmer, who has appeared on past seasons and was a finalist on "So You Think You Can Dance."

Twitter feeds from Bono fans and LGBT groups are abuzz with excitement over the news, congratulating Bono and commending ABC.

"Keep your chin up Chaz Bono," one person wrote. "And don't let these folks get you down."

The gospel according to Kristin Chenoweth

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

One of the most happy-go-lucky ladies in show-biz, Kristin Chenoweth doesn't get miffed very easily. But when she does, she does. And last year she did, after Newsweek published a commentary on the inability of gay actors to play straight roles. It upset the 43-year-old actress/singer so much she wrote an extensive letter to the magazine, calling the article "horrendously homophobic," which was published shortly after the debacle—and which she spoke about during this interview.

Chenoweth's allegiance to the gay community goes way back to being a child and growing up in the South—a place she returned to for her latest album, *Some Lessons Learned*, her first of four to fully embrace her country roots. But her success hasn't been confined to just the music business; Chenoweth broke out on Broadway, where she originated the role of Glinda in *Wicked* and most recently starred alongside *Will & Grace* star Sean Hayes in *Promises, Promises*. There's also been a book (2009's *A Little Bit Wicked: Life, Love and Faith in Stages*), and several TV spots: *Pushing Daisies*, *Glee* and, coming soon to ABC, *Good Christian Belles*.

So we had lots to talk about when we recently caught up with Chenoweth, who was on a dinner break from shooting her upcoming sitcom. During it, she discussed her history of dating gay men, her opinion on GOP presidential candidate Michele Bachmann's support of gay conversion clinics and being a little bit wicked.

Windy City Times: I can't get over your character's last name on *Good Christian Belles*: Cockburn. Carlene Cockburn.

Kristin Chenoweth: [Laughs] You can't?! I can't wait for my family to hear that one.

WCT: I'm glad I'm not the only one who's thought this.

KC: Oh, no. Are you kidding? I was like, "Wait a minute!" But I just think the most important thing for me as an actress, because of the lines that come out of my mouth, is to just have to speak them and keep going, because they're so funny and her name is so funny and the whole thing is just so great. I love it.

WCT: Does your character have anything in common with April Rhodes, who you play on *Glee*?

KC: [Laughs] Probably not on paper, but they're both pretty outlandish people. Carlene, though, is the antithesis of April.

WCT: Speaking of April, when do you think we'll see her on *Glee* again, considering the ban on guest stars for the third season of the show?

KC: I don't know! Nobody's mentioning it, so I'm hoping it happens. I certainly love her. She's so fun to play.

WCT: You grew up in Oklahoma, so country music is your roots. How is this album a reflection of that?

KC: It's so funny, because I get asked, "Why a country album now?" But that's how it all began for me—and, of course, why would anyone know that? It's not something I've been talking about a lot, but it's the music I grew up listening to. One of my biggest influences is Dolly Parton, and when you look at the history of songs in musical theater and in country, they're both usually great storytellers.

I know just how lucky I am to do this kind of music. Getting to go to Nashville and sing this music that feels like home to me was a real gift, and one that I don't take lightly.

WCT: "What Would Dolly Do?" reminds me a lot of Dolly herself.

KC: I co-wrote that, and [producer] Bob Ezrin asked, "Who's had the biggest influence on you country music-wise?" I said, "Dolly, without question." And he said, "How would she ap-



Kristin Chenoweth. Photo by Jeremy Cowart

proach it? Let's think: What would Dolly do?" I said, "Bob, why aren't we writing that song?"

There's something about her that I feel very attuned to. There's only one Dolly. I'm not comparing myself, but I'm just saying her spirit and the way she looks at life is pretty similar to me. And the cover I did of hers ("Change") is actually a very emotional thing and it reminded me—of course, how could I ever forget?—what an amazing songwriter she is. You know, I didn't do a lot of covers. I did two covers, one of Carrie [Underwood's] and one of Dolly's, and I just love both of them. I love their music, I love their spirit; everything they stand for.

WCT: It makes total sense, because, to me, both you and Dolly epitomize happiness.

KC: Oh my God, thank you. That's the biggest compliment you could give me.

WCT: It's true. You are two of the happiest people I know of. So, tell me... what pisses you off?

KC: [Laughs] Oh gosh. I don't really get mad that often. But I'm not going to lie, when I do, there's a quiet that comes over me that is a little like whoa, and that happens when I don't feel other people are prepared or doing their job or pulling their weight. I come from a family where my dad came from nothing and worked hard to get where he is, and he said, "Work hard, play hard, Kris," and I guess that's kind of been my motto in life. So when I see people squandering opportunities or having a sense of entitlement, that really makes me crazy. Because I don't understand it. It's not a world I get.

WCT: You're driving, so how about something that ticks you off about other drivers?

KC: You know what? I don't get road rage! I just don't. I'm like, "OK, you cut me off—you must need to go somewhere a lot quicker than I do. Go on then." And also, I've had so many people in my life be affected by car wrecks, and I've had a few myself, that I just have realized, "Eh, you know, life's too short."

WCT: I know one thing that makes you upset, and that's homophobic people.

KC: I don't like that, you're right.

WCT: Your letter in response to that Newsweek column said it all. Why was it important to address your feelings on that issue?

KC: To be honest with you, I wasn't prepared for what was going to happen. I was on Broadway doing *Promises, Promises*, and I read the article and I actually thought it was pretty irresponsible. I'm not even talking about whether a person agrees with being gay or not, I'm talking about artistry and gay actors trying to play straight. It just made me mad, because I thought, "Well, I've played a prostitute, does that mean I am one? No." I just thought it was a little bit of a bullying thing, and I honestly prayed about it—no kidding, I prayed about it. I wrote that letter in one fell swoop and I gave it to a good friend of mine to proofread, because the last thing I wanted to do was sound like an idiot, which I can do as well. So we sent it on and the next thing I know, they printed it.

And, by the way, I'm a big fan of the magazine, which is why I was so bummed. But I think that they felt bad and hopefully there's been some discussion about it and some learning, because that's what we're here to do on this Earth, to learn our purpose. Well, one of my purposes in this life—since I'm a believer and a Christian—is to help people realize that not every Christian thinks that being gay is a sin.

WCT: To reinforce your stance that gay actors can indeed act straight, you made out with your *Promises, Promises* co-star Sean Hayes at the Tonys last year.

KC: It might've been a little jibe. It might've been a little one. [Laughs]

WCT: What was it like to make out with a gay man, and was that your first time making out with one?

KC: Well, let's face it: My high school boyfriend is gay, so I don't think it's my first time making out with gay men—and I bet a lot of women don't even know they've done it! And Sean Hayes is just a darn good kisser, what can I say?

WCT: Wait, so you dated a gay man in high school?

KC: Yeah, and I'm like, "Well, that's why we were such a great couple!" He didn't pleasure me in any way but he helped me pick out my prom

dress!

WCT: Was he one of the first gay people you knew in Oklahoma?

KC: Yeah. I want to tell you something I know about myself: When I was in the second or third grade, I first heard the word "dyke," and it was in reference to a girl in our school who was very, very tomboyish—and I didn't really understand what the word was, but I knew I didn't like the way it was said. And for some reason I've always been drawn to the person that was alone, and I don't mean to make me sound like I'm Mother Teresa, because I'm not, but I've always been drawn to people who felt left out or different, and maybe it's because I too felt different and unique. People would not think this of me, because there's this perception of me that, "Oh, life's been perfect and things have come so easily."

But let's face it: My speaking voice is very interesting. Yes, I was a cheerleader but I also wanted to do all the plays, I was in renaissance choir, and I too felt a little bit like an outsider. I was always drawn to people who felt that way too. And sure, some of them were gay and I never did understand—I guess the word is fear.

God made us all equal. He made me short, he made someone gay, he made someone tall—whatever it is, it's not a sin; it's how we're made. And that's the way I feel about it. It flies in the face of a lot of what Christians believe, but as I'm finding out there's a lot of Christian people who think the same as me. So that's my deal, and I think we should not be careful of the unknown but rather accepting and loving of it.

WCT: As someone who's Christian and supports the gay community, how do you feel about the pray-away-the-gay program that Michele Bachmann supports?

KC: [Long pause] Um, you know what—you can have your opinion. One of the great things about being in this country is we get to freely say what we believe. I just don't happen to agree with that. I like the pray part! [Laughs]



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TELEVISION

Trevor Donovan: Breaking ground on the CW's '90210'

BY TERRI-LYNNE WALDRON

Trevor Donovan went from playing a high school womanizer to playing a gay man coming to terms with his sexual orientation on 90210. His character, Teddy, experienced self-loathing and a series of dysfunctional relationships with men, before coming out amid societal pressures. Windy City Times talked to Donovan about Teddy's transformation, fan reaction and playing a living doll on the big screen.

Windy City Times: Hi, Trevor. What season of 90210 are you going into this fall?

Trevor Donovan: It is my third season and the fourth season of the show.

WCT: Your character, Teddy, came out last season. Did you have any idea that he would be written as a gay character?

TD: No. In my first season I came on as a guest star and had no idea about the direction of the character or if he was even going to stick around. And then on the break between the sec-



Trevor Donovan. PR photo

ond and the third season, I signed as a series regular and found out that he was going to be coming out of the closet.

WCT: What was your reaction to the storyline?

TD: Initially I had my reservations because I wasn't sure how they were going to handle it, so I wanted to wait and talk to the producers and writers and make sure that we all had the same idea in mind, and it turns out we did. They wanted the coming out story and not just a ratings booster or shock value story.

WCT: There was a scene last season where Teddy called his one-night stand a "faggot." Was he saying to someone else what he felt about himself?

TD: That's exactly the intention of that scene.

The point of the storyline was to show Teddy's inner personal struggle and to show him coming to terms with who he really was and why he hasn't been happy his whole life, and lose a lot of those expectations that his family and peers had for him because he looked a certain way and acted a certain way so there's no way he could be gay by society's standards. So he had that drilled into his mind from a young age until he did go outside of that comfort zone and he came to realize it created this inner turmoil, anger and self-hatred. Then it exploded and he projected it onto someone else who was trying to help him. It showed the difficulty of coming out because of the way society views homosexuality.

WCT: How have fans reacted to the storyline?

TD: It has been nothing but positive. I get tweets and Facebook messages saying how much my character has helped them in their personal lives.

WCT: How do you feel about being a sex symbol for both men and women?

TD: It's very flattering. It's not a bad thing, especially in the line of work I'm in.

WCT: Do men hit on you because they confuse your reel life with your real life?

TD: You know what's funny? I haven't gotten hit on once. I live in the West Hollywood area and I get a lot of people thanking me and saying how much they appreciate my character. I was hit on more prior to doing this role. [Laughs]

WCT: How many episodes will you be doing for the upcoming season?

TD: As of right now it's five, but I'm just rolling with the punches of whatever they decide to do. The episodes are going to be scattered throughout the first half of the season is what I gather.

WCT: If you had the opportunity to write for Teddy, what direction would you want to see your character go in?

TD: The way that they're going, which I can't talk about, is a brilliant direction. Just as my storyline coincided last year with social issues with the bullying, this season is going to coincide with a lot of political and social issues going on in the news.

WCT: How did you get involved in the public-service announcement for the Trevor Project's "It Gets Better" campaign?

TD: My manager and I just decided to do it. I went over to his house and we just shot it in an afternoon, and we just posted it ourselves.

WCT: Is it true that you are going to be playing Ken in the Barbie live-action movie?

TD: I've been talking with the producer Laurence Mark (Dreamgirls), whom I've known for quite some time. It's in pre-production and I've been meeting with them about it. It's definitely a possibility.

WCT: Can you tell me about your upcoming movie, Savages?

TD: It's an Oliver Stone film that I start at the end of August. It's a mystery/thriller type film with a little dark comedy. There's some great names in it: John Travolta, Benicio Del Toro and Salma Hayek.

WCT: You are in excellent shape. What is your workout regimen?

TD: I exercise every single day. I have been surfing for most of my life and also do a workout regimen called Crossfit and I do a lot of mountain running.

WCT: How do you feel about those shirtless scenes on 90210?

TD: I understand the purpose of it but there have been times where I've said, "No I'm not taking my shirt off. There's no reason for it." But it's a part of my job and I'm totally comfortable with it.

WCT: Did you start out as a model, and was acting a natural progression for you?

TD: I did start out as a model, but I had no interest in acting. I started taking acting classes because I was so terrified of getting in front of the camera for commercial auditions. After about a year I just fell in love with acting.

WCT: What kind of legacy would you want to leave behind as an actor?

TD: One actor who I look up to is Paul Newman who was a great actor, but took it outside of that and was a philanthropist as well. He started the salad dressing company and did not take a single dime from the profits. I want to leave a mark in the entertainment industry but also make a positive impact on the world.

Season four of 90210 premieres on Tuesday, Sept. 13. To keep up with Trevor Donovan, visit <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Trevor-Donovan/143984612895>.

NUNN ON ONE: TV

Gay man among 'Most Eligible'

BY JERRY NUNN



Bravo has a new program that proves everything is bigger in Texas, including the drama. Most Eligible Dallas follows the movers and shakers from the Lone Star State. Drew Ginsberg is one of the cast who is rich, successful and looking for the man of his dreams. Find out the behind-the-scenes of Dallas with Drew in this interview.

Windy City Times: Hello, Drew. I'm calling you from Chicago. Do you ever come up here?

Drew Ginsberg: I used to all the time. My dad has done WLUP and The Loop a long time ago. He was the one that put Danny Bonaduce and Steve Dahl on the air.

WCT: Did you have a big party to kick off the season of this new Bravo show?

DG: Yes, there was a big party with family that flew in.

WCT: You all knew each other before the show, correct?

DG: Yes, everyone but Neill [Skylar] until she was introduced to me. Everyone else I had known socially for a pretty long period of time. In fact Tara [Harper] and I had friends in common for a very long time. Tara has a friend named Greg that I have known since I was 16 years old. My sister and I called him our fairy godfather and this was way before I came to grips with being gay. There is a long history between us.

WCT: She seems like a good friend on the show. What's your dog's name?

DG: Coco. People think I named her after Coco Chanel but what happened was Coco was a rescue from a mutual acquaintance. He would leave the dog at his friend's house that didn't work out. I just took Coco under my wing and she has been with me ever since.

WCT: You lost over 200 pounds in the past, I heard.

DG: I lost so much that I am actually skinnier now than when I was on camera. I am about 15 pounds lighter now. The weight loss has been slowly occurring over the last nine years.

WCT: So taking pregnant female hormones works?

DG: They do work as long as you follow what the doctor says.

WCT: This is doctor recommended, then.

DG: It has been totally under the care of a doctor. I was under a program. They come in once a week. They give me 12 injections, ask me how I feel and have been eating. They monitor a lot of things.

WCT: You mention surfers are your type on the show.

DG: I developed the taste for surfers living in California.

WCT: People tend to like to date a type distant from where they are from.

DG: Right, kind of an exotic oddity.

WCT: How is the dating scene in Texas? Do

you go out to the gay bars?

DG: On the weekends I go out to the gay bars. The Round-Up Saloon is a stop also the Grapevine. The Round-Up is a country western bar but after midnight the tone of the evening changes. It becomes more up a Lady Gaga type of club. Every time Lady Gaga is in Dallas she performs there. She will do a small free concert. She came last time and performed "Born This Way" a couple of months ago. I go out to the bars from time to time.

WCT: Do people meet online there?

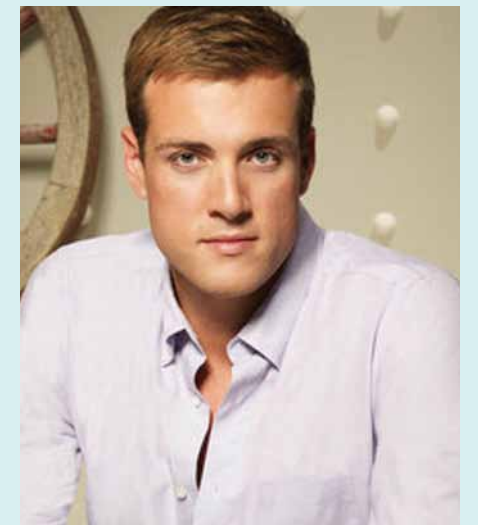
DG: I have a lot of friends online but I prefer to meet people in person. Occasionally there is that person that you get that Facebook suggestion for and you become intrigued to get to know them better. I have gone on a couple of dates online. It turned out pretty well. But some have turned out to be complete nutcases. With the good comes the bad.

WCT: What happens on the show when someone meets a partner? Then they couldn't be on the show any longer...

DG: That's a good question. [Laughs] That's someone else's call!

WCT: How did you get involved in this series?

DG: I was approached on Facebook by the production company. They sent me a message asking if I would do the show for Bravo. It was so funny—24 hours before a friend of mine that was helping out the casting for the A-List: Dallas on Logo asked me to audition for that show, too. I looked at both of them and decided to go with Bravo. I did an audition



Drew Ginsberg. Photo courtesy of Bravo

in a group and small interviews. It was put together after two auditions. It all happened within a 60-day period. I was confirmed as a cast member then did a negotiation to put a contract together.

WCT: I heard they are doing an A-List down there.

DG: They are doing a lot of reality shows in Dallas.

WCT: What is going on with Dallas? It's hopping!!!

DG: I don't know. Since the time when I first moved here when I was kid everyone has been interested in this town. The first time I left Dallas when I was 7 in the airport everyone was asking my dad if there really is a Sue Ellen and J.R. [from the classic TV show Dallas] there. The funniest is that those are the names of gay bars!

WCT: Would you ever want to move away from Dallas?

DG: I left and moved back to Dallas about three years ago. California is still a place that is fond in my heart. I would love to move back to California if I could but the opportunities in life are in Dallas right now.

"T" is for Texas and Thursday nights on the Bravo Channel every week with Most Eligible Dallas. Visit <http://www.bravotv.com> for listings and details.



Very rarely do I receive a remix single that is solid from beginning to end. A recent delight is **Leona Lewis'** "Collide." Her previous hits, "Bleeding Love" and "Happy," have been re-worked for clubland.

With "Collide," she is no longer partial to her familiar power ballads. Similar to what Beyoncé has done with "Run the World (Girls)," Lewis uses a dance track, "Penguin" by **Avicii**, as the basis for her latest. The piano adds a nice touch, keeping the song moving in between waves of beats. "Collide" has a booming, uplifting chorus as the X-Factor winner wails, "You're all I want, yeah, you are the one. Crash into me at full speed. We can collide."

Remixes come courtesy of Afrojack, Alex Gaudino with Jason Rooney, Cahill and Nay Ray. The video is the perfect keepsake of summer and we can expect this to be a fall anthem.

Lewis was slated to tour with Christina Aguilera last year, but the trek was canceled, citing the blonde diva's need to ready to promote her motion picture, *Burlesque*. "Collide" will be on Lewis's forthcoming third album. Check out one of British vegetarian's career highlights online, as she flawlessly sings "Whole Lotta Love" with Jimmy Page at 2008 Summer Olympics closing ceremony in Beijing.

Avicii has remixed the hits of dance luminaries like David Guetta, Robyn, Bob Sinclair and Tiesto. Even though the scorching hot club tracks "Penguin," "Street Dancer" and "Bromance" are instrumental, they are bubbling over with personality. Avicii returns to Chicago for a set at Congress Theater, 2135 N. Milwaukee Ave., on Saturday, Oct. 1. Cazzette will open. For tickets, visit <http://www.clubtix.com>.

Tomorrow's World marks quite a comeback for **Erasure**. Here, the synth-loving duo recruits **Frankmusik** to produce the nine-track set, the pair's first batch of new material since 2007's *Light at the End of the World*. The album comes to life with the very contemporary "A Whole Lotta Love Run Riot." "I Lose Myself" has Erasure in fine form with a big chorus and a stomping beat.

For those who just can't get enough of vintage Erasure, the electronic pioneers' first albums, *Wonderland* and *Circus*, have been reissued with a bonus disc of outtakes and remixes plus a DVD.

There is even more Erasure to be had, as DJ Greg Haus will be playing just the pair's music from 10 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 9, at Berlin Nightclub, 954 W. Belmont.

Frankmusik opens for Erasure's tour, which comes to Congress Theater on Friday, Sept. 16 and Saturday, Sept. 17. Tickets are available at <http://www.ticketfly.com>.

Frankmusik's full-length outing, *Do It in the A.M.*, is due out Sept. 27 via Cherrytree/Interscope Records. Here, the British-born club fixture teams with Colette Carr on the infectious "No ID" and Natalia Kills on "No Champagne." The title track is ideal for making speakers vibrate with its heavy bass. Frankmusik has remixed tracks for dance-pop staples Lady Gaga, Pet Shop Boys, Alphabeat and Mika.

Five years since her last studio album, beloved folk singer **Melissa Ferrick** is back with vengeance on *Still Right Here*. On the title track, she reiterates that one cannot run away from

oneself as she sings, "You keep running but you're still right here ... you keep thinking what you need is not there." The blue-eyed artist finds an escape in music on "Headphones On" and proclaims, "You can't fix me. I'm the one who's got to live with me." On "Seconds Like These" Ferrick puts a positive spin on the changes happening in current times. The closing track, "This Time of Year," is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser during her concert.

On Friday, Sept. 16, Ferrick will be at Space, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston.

On the heels of coming out with the new album *Sister Vagabond*, blues artist **Candy Kane** is embarking on a tour. Combining sass, attitude, humor and raw talent into her work, Kane takes to the stage at Space on Thursday, Sept. 15. Kane's 2009 song *Superhero* shows her mighty powers and spirit that helped her overcome pancreatic cancer. The 2005 effort *White Trash Girl* is possibly one of Kane's best.

After a brief partnership with Tommy Boy, queer female rock trio **Hunter Valentine** is hit-



Leona Lewis. PR photo

ting the road to support *Lessons from a Late Night*. These Brooklyn-transplants are slated to perform at Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace, on Friday, Sept. 16 with Minnesotan riot grrls Sick of Sarah. *Lessons from a Late Night* features a great, straight up rock vibe as heard on "Revenge" and "Stalker." Fans of The Runaways and The Cliks should definite familiarize themselves with Hunter Valentine.

When I told my friends that I missed most of **Marissa Nadler's** concert earlier this summer, they were in disbelief. For live shows, I like to stake my space and soak in the atmosphere before the set. Well, the start time of Nadler's performance at Schuba's was listed incorrectly in some sources. The part I did see, I thoroughly enjoyed. She easily translated the ethereal material like "The Sun Always Reminds Me of You" from her fantastic self-titled outing to a live setting. Before her upcoming European tour, Nadler returns to Chicago with James Vincent McMorrow on the bill at The Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave., on Thursday, Sept. 15.

Miss Continental 2012 crowned



Alexis Gabrielle Sherrington returned to Chicago this past week to try and win the Miss Continental crown, after previous unsuccessful bids, which may have made her victory that much sweeter Sunday night at the jam-packed Vic Theatre. Sherrington came in first among a very tough field of contestants from across the country, and some from other countries.

First runner-up was Fontasia L'Amour, Miss Pacific Coast Continental, and second runner-up was Tifani Hunter, Miss Heart of America Continental. Sherrington is Miss South Carolina Continental.

Mokha Montrese, last year's winner, was treated to a lengthy tribute from her fans, and newly crowned Mr. Continental P. Alexander, who was his title Saturday night at the Park West, performed a live song for the enthralled crowd.

Past winners including Candis Cayne entertained the crowd during breaks in the contest, which featured swimwear, evening gown, talent and question/answer sections. The talent portion had some amazing numbers from all of the final 12 contestants.

Miss Continental CEO Jim Flint, owner of the Baton, was the emcee, and said he was proud how far the event has come over the years. Nikki Adams and Tajma Hall were fabulous as co-emcees.

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.mysticimagesphotography.com), with many more online at <http://www.windycitymedia-group.com>



Gay Softball World Series

35th Series wraps up

BY ROSS FORMAN

After two years of planning, preparing, promoting and, no doubt, praying (for no rain), the 35th annual Gay Softball World Series ended Sept. 3 in Schaumburg with the final hits, runs and errors of five days and hundreds of games, featuring 150 teams from across the United States and Canada.

"It was an awesome World Series. It definitely ranks as one of the best ever," said Chris Balton, the assistant commissioner for the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance (NAGAAA), which hosts the event. Balton also serves as the

like a big family reunion because you see some people who you see [only] once a year," Neilsen said. "There's the joy of the winners, the heart-break of the losers.

"This event was my opportunity to give back to the community."

Balton, who pitched for the Memphis Neons in C-Division, knows all about the emotions that run the gamut for six-days of softball. His team was eliminated before championship Saturday, yet he reflects fondly on his 2006 Series when his team finished second.

"The World Series is a memory that you'll have forever," Balton said. "We have guys in the



The Boston Alley Gators, champions of the B-Division. Photo by Ross Forman

athletic director for the World Series.

"Teams create lifetime memories at the World Series, and this year was no exception."

Roy Melani of Portland, a 2011 NAGAAA Hall of Fame inductee and the NAGAAA commissioner, said this year's series ranks alongside all past tournaments.

"It definitely was one of the best ever. It ran without a hitch," Melani said. "It's just been a great, great event. The local organizing committee did a fantastic job, down to the last detail."

Jack Neilsen was in Milwaukee in 2009, representing the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) and its bid to host the 2011 Series, marking the event's first time in Chicago since 1983.

Neilsen was teary-eyed moments before the final out was made Sept. 3, ending the six-day tournament.

"I'm speechless right now," said Neilsen, a member of the eight-person local organizing committee: Series 2011, Inc.

"Seeing it all come to life over the past week has been absolutely amazing. It's been kind of a blur, though. We were instructed [on Aug. 26] by NAGAAA to sit back, relax and smell the roses. I can kick myself in the butt for not doing that. From [that] Friday until Wednesday night or Thursday morning, it's all a blur.

"We wanted to showcase Chicago, and I think we did that."

Neilsen tagged the event, "a major success, and another landmark for our gay sports legacy in the city of Chicago."

"The thing that always will stand out to me about the World Series is the camaraderie; it's

[NAGAAA] Hall of Fame who have never played on Saturday."

Balton praised the level of play this year, calling it, "exceptional."

However, there were only 10 top-tiered A-Division teams, down from 14 in 2010. The drop in A-Division teams "is a concern," Balton said. Melani said the A-Division lineup could grow to as many as 17 teams next year in Minneapolis.

Melani added that all other divisions might expand in 2012 as well, particularly the Master's Division for players age 50-and-over. There were only four Master's teams in 2011, and that total could triple in 2012, he said.

There were 75 teams in the 2002 Series in Portland, Ore. The event doubled that total this year—and even more expansion is possible.

Next summer in Minneapolis, the games will be played on 17 fields; the 2011 Series was played on 16 fields.

"I graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, a city with about 300,000 people; it is the smallest association" within NAGAAA, Balton said. "Still, Knoxville sent three teams to Chicago. One of the teams didn't win a game, but they still said it was the best time of their lives.

"That made the event worth it for me."

Knoxville also had a second-place finisher as the Cyclones battled in the championship game, but couldn't defeat the Boston Alley Gators for the B-Division title.

The 2011 Series featured teams from 41 NAGAAA member cities across the United States and Canada. No new cities will be added to NAGAAA in time for the 2012 Series.

Cities expected to join NAGAAA in the future include Cincinnati, Detroit, Buffalo and Salt Lake City, among others.

"Chicago has a reputation of having bad fields, so I think a lot of people had a lot of pre-conceived notions about Chicago. But these three complexes—in Schaumburg, St. Charles and Elmhurst—were great, beautiful," Balton said.

So, too, was some of the play. Take, for instance, the B-Division player from New York who made spectacular catches, one after the other in center field. "He made leaping, diving [catches], was rolling on the ground, and then throwing a strike to second base. He did that a number of times; it was pretty awesome," Melani said.

With the good, though, came the bad, such as protests—when teams challenge an opposing player's pre-tournament ranking, based on numerous skills.

"Everyone can protest up till the championship game, including [during] a championship game," Melani said. "If a team feels someone is out of a division, you can protest that—and keeping that [option] is important for everyone, to keep the rules clean."

In the end, the New York Eagle (C-Division) and the Oklahoma City Swallows (D-Division) were deemed to have erroneously ranked players, thus each was disqualified from the tournament.

Melani said there has been "no discussion" about adding an E-Division, despite rumors that the new division is being considered.

Melani said that when the Master's Division ultimately expands its total number of teams, it also likely will split the teams in two groupings, based on talent level.

The Chicago Sidetrack Classics won the four-team Master's Division, while the Chicago Spin Menace advanced to play Sept. 3 in A-Division.

"We played very well in round-robin, going 3-0-1 and earned the No. 2 seed, but then lost a heartbreaker in the first game of elimination play that obviously sent us into the loser's bracket," said Cameron Turner, player-coach for Chicago's A-Division team. "We won our first loser's bracket game over the Phoenix Toros 18-15, and it was a very good game."

Then the Menace fell to the Orlando Force, 14-4.

"Overall, I thought we played really, really well, especially in the round-robin games," Turner said. "It is disappointing to not win at home, but it was a great week. The local organizers did an outstanding job with this tournament.

"This was my sixth World Series and, sure, maybe I'm biased because it is Chicago, but I thought this was my favorite one."

Pitcher Kevin Ball had an exceptional Series for the Menace, said Turner, who also praised the Series play of Joe Bland, Matt Lawless and Will Dong.

"When I look back on this event, I think the highlight for me is going to be that moment when I walked on the stage at Navy Pier [during the Opening Ceremony], looking out at about 2,000 people, all enjoying themselves. That was a tremendous feeling, a great moment, a great way to start the event; I think it really set the tone," said Ted Cappas of Chicago, the president of Series 2011, Inc.

"I'm proud, relieved and happy. It's been a long 18 months of planning. I'm proud of the job that the eight [Board members] did; I think we represented Chicago and CMSA well. We've heard nothing but positive responses from the athletes—and that's the most important thing. Whether you're the star player on an A-Division team, or the worst player on a D-Division team, we wanted everyone to have a great experience—and I think they got it.

"We've talked all along that this is more than just a softball tournament, that we're making an

impact on the community. It was a great event, a 100 percent success. It was better than we ever thought it would be.

"We've proven time and time again that Chicago is one of the best cities in the world to host major LGBT sporting events; we know how to do these events; we know how to organize them; we know how to execute them. Like our motto, we're second to none. We know what we're doing, and we're proud of that fact."

Cappas added that, once all financial numbers are tallied and the economic impact study is tabulated within a few weeks, the Series will prove to be a great economic boon for the city and have a positive impact on the charities, too.

Cappas batted lead-off and played outfield for one of Chicago's B-Division teams. In fact, seven of the eight Board members for Series 2011, Inc., also played in the event.

"Playing was a release for me," Cappas said. "I think playing actually was very therapeutic, to get that mental break."

This marked the ninth World Series for Cappas, and was certainly one of his two favorites. In his first, while serving as the team manager, he finished third in Toronto in 2000. "That was a great experience, but this year's Series obviously will stand out," he said.

"To have been an integral part of the two largest LGBT sporting events ever held in Chicago, I'm very proud."

Cappas was the co-chair of sports, and director of basketball, for the 2006 Gay Games held in Chicago. He predicted Chicago representatives will make another bid to host the World Series within the next 10 years.

The 2012 World Series will be played in Minneapolis; the 2013 World Series will take place in Washington, D.C.

Here's a look at the finals from the 35th annual Gay Softball World Series:

A-DIVISION

Champion: Atlanta Venom

Runner-up: San Francisco Hitmen

B-DIVISION

Champion: Boston Alley Gators

Runner-Up: Knoxville Cyclones

C-DIVISION

Champion: Las Vegas Rat Pack

Runner-Up: Boston 5 Star Diablos

D-DIVISION

Champion: Boston Club Cafe Good Times

Runner-up: Los Angeles Swingers

MASTER'S DIVISION

Champion: Chicago Sidetrack Classics

Runner-up: Los Angeles Silver Streaks

Read more about the World Series on page 34, and see more photos online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>.



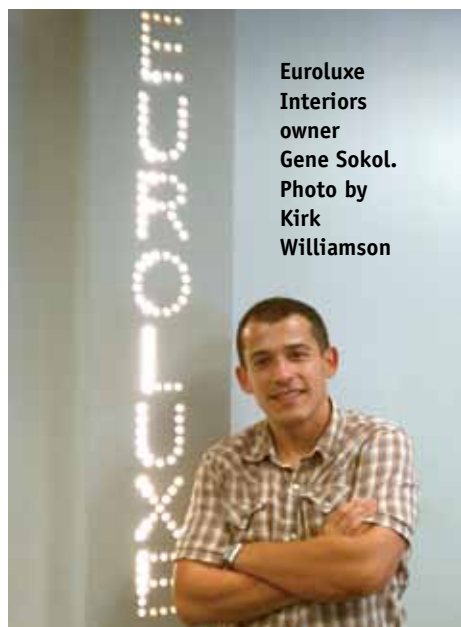
Houston baseball player. Pic by Ross Forman



Euroluxe Interiors

BY KIRK WILLIAMSON

In today's economy, many consumers are trending toward home remodeling as a way to revamp their surroundings, rather than packing up and moving altogether. Just ask Gene Sokol, owner of Euroluxe Interiors, which prides itself on specializing in high-end European cabinetry, interior doors and other home-related products. "We are a bargain stop for people that are looking to remodel their home within a budget. We offer contemporary, modern pieces from Europe."



Euroluxe Interiors owner Gene Sokol. Photo by Kirk Williamson

When Gene started in this business over eight years ago at the original location in Rogers Park, he got the main portion of his business (about 60 percent) from professional clients—developers and interior designers working for builders and realtors, and about 40 percent from individual consumers. Since then, he has seen a remarkable shift as today, developers account for only about 20 percent of his base; 80 percent of his current clients are private consumers.

Gene describes his typical customer as someone who is remodeling a home or buying a new home or apartment and looking to remodel cabinetry, bathrooms or even to buy small pieces of furniture. They are most likely a city resident (up to 80 percent of Euroluxe's clients reside in Lincoln Park, Lakeview and Bucktown) who is looking to move away from a typical, big-box kind of product and into something that's more unique.

And it's this same kind of uniqueness that Gene attributes to his loyal GLBT clientele. "Throughout the years I've seen many clients coming from the gay and lesbian community. I can only guess why my products are attractive to people from that community. It's colorful, it's unique, it's different and that's how I see the gay and lesbian community: as being different from the mainstream."

Euroluxe Interiors offers a variety of finishes and colors and that allows them and the customer to work together to achieve an absolutely unique result in home remodeling.

Visit Gene and Euroluxe Interiors at their new Lakeview showroom, 3066 N. Lincoln Ave. Call 773-270-0030 or check them out online at www.euroluxeinteriors.com.



A few examples of Euroluxe Interior's work. Photos courtesy of Euroluxe Interiors.

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Free event to offer closer looks at prime buildings

The Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) is hosting openhousechicago 2011 (OHC 2011)—a free event that takes the public behind the scenes of more than 100 spaces in five diverse neighborhoods—Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 15-16, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

The neighborhoods are downtown Chicago, Bronzeville, Garfield Park/North Lawndale, Little Village and Rogers Park/West Ridge. The OHC neighborhood hubs are: Little Black Pearl Art & Design Center (Bronzeville), Santa Fe Building (downtown), La Villita Community Church (Little Village), Garfield Park Conservatory (Garfield Park) and Warren Park Field House (Rogers Park).

Among just a few of the buildings that will be showcased are the Santa Fe Building, 224 S. Michigan Ave.; Lake Point Tower, 505 N. Lake Shore Dr.; the Welcome Inn Manor, 4563 S. Michigan Ave.; Second Federal Savings, 3960 W. 26th St.; MRC Polymers, 3535 W. 31st St.; Power House High School, 931 S. Homan St.; Christy Webber Landscape Designs, 2900 W. Ferdinand St.; Mayne Stage Theatre/Act One Pub, 1328-30 W. Morse Ave.; and Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon Ave.

Advanced registration for OHC2011 is not required. However, sites will be open on a first-come, first-served basis.

Transportation will be available within the neighborhoods. There will not be any connecting those areas, however.

During a meeting with media, OHC 2011 Managing Director Bastiaan Bouma said that the

event's distinguishing characteristics are: a deep engagement with community partners; behind-the-scenes access; and a focus on sustainability.

People can schedule their own itineraries and find out much more information by visiting <http://www.openhousechicago.org>. In addition, volunteers are needed—and volunteers (as well as CAF members) have line privileges during OHC 2011.

—Andrew Davis



Apollo's 2000 Theatre (top) and the Emil Bach House are just two of the many buildings that will get closer looks at openhousechicago 2011. Photos by Caroline Stevens



The Sarasota, Fla., residence. Photo courtesy of Susan Katanic

Real estate news:

—**A day at the beach:** A Sarasota, Fla., residence leads TopTenRealEstateDeals.com's list of the best beach homes. This residence is situated in the very private and gated Sandlering Club on Siesta Key. The home—which the owners and their architect, Guy Peterson, organized its living spaces into color-coded “cubes”—functions like a private family resort, with a large pool designed to accommodate both water polo games and lap swimming. The pool features a slide and an oversized Jacuzzi for relaxing. The 1.53-acre site features landscaped gardens on both the entry side of the residence and the beach side living and entertaining areas. It goes for \$14.5 million; contact Linda Dickinson at lindadickinson@michaelsaunders.com or 941-350-3304.

—**Infamous home sells:** The Lakeview mansion that Cook County prosecutors said was the site of Chicago's most infamous home video—

R. Kelly's alleged sex tape—sold for \$2.64 million recently, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. Kelly's former 11-room home, at 1010 W. George, has a 1,600-gallon fish tank and a lofted living room overlooking an indoor lap pool; it sold for far less than its \$3.5 million asking price. An owner who purchased the house for \$1 million from foreclosure in 2008 added touches such as an elevator and a \$7,000 shower head.

—**Fritchey sells:** Cook County Commissioner John Fritchey sold his Lincoln Park home for \$990,000, according to ChicagoRealEstateDaily.com. This development took place after he was criticized for reportedly not paying more than \$24,000 in property taxes. The sale resolves a foreclosure suit filed by Wells Fargo Bank in February that claims Fritchey and his wife, Karen, had defaulted on a \$411,000 loan on the house. John Fritchey blames the loan and property-tax problems on the couple's pending divorce.



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 Courtney Welsch 773-697-5555



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 Price Reduced! Great Wicker Park brick 2-flat at a great price. Close to all Division offers. Updated units with beautiful woodwork throughout. 1st floor is duplexed down to large living area. 2 car garage and rooftop deck area. ID#07796289
 Michael Canaan 773-549-1855



1853 N Damen 3 \$560,000
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854 W Buckingham 3S \$439,000
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 Erik Blinn 773-549-1855



2127 W Belmont 4W \$419,000
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5455 N Sheridan 1005 \$124,000
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 Eleni Mathias 312-640-7010



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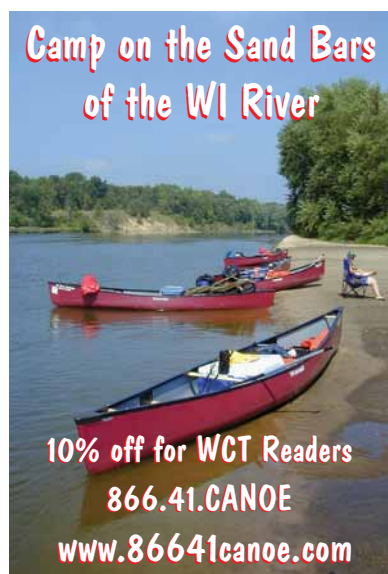
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the **DISH** WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN **WINDY CITY TIMES**



THE BLACK SHEEP

BY MEGHAN STREIT

For all of the Chicago chefs churning out slightly different versions of the same old thing, there is one who is clearly marching to the beat of his own drum. James Toland took over the West Town space formerly occupied by May Street Market. Aptly named The Black Sheep, Toland's restaurant serves American cuisine, "twisted and distorted for your entertainment."

The highly experimental menu includes stuff like olive oil powder, a parmesan sponge, a mozzarella balloon and carbonated strawberries. Toland sets a dramatic stage to unveil his culinary marvels. The gray on gray on gray space is moody and masculine in a way that works. Steel-colored leather booths line muted gray walls, and the focal point in the main dining room is a jarring collection of artwork that looks as if it's been splattered with blood.

My meal began with an amuse of a tiny fried bit of something or other atop olive oil powder. I was intrigued by the latter, but it turns out olive oil does not need to exist in powder form – it tasted like chalk. I washed it down with a few sips of champagne and prepared myself for my next course of sweet corn soup. Our waiter described this soup in a way that sounded delicious. The cold, watery soup did not deliver. Bourbon, cress and blueberries are admittedly interesting additions to a corn soup, but after two spoonfuls, I'd had enough.

Mercifully, my next course was Gruyere "doughnuts." I've never met a ball of fried cheese and dough that I didn't like, and these were no exception. I also tried the beet salad, which was prepared with goat's milk yogurt, pistachio, arugula and citron. It was fine, but forgettable.

The main courses include several clever at-

tempts to deconstruct traditional foods and present them in a new way. The Illinois beef, for example, struck me as a reinterpretation of the typical meat and potatoes meal you might get at a steakhouse. Toland's version featured a tender and flavorful cut of high-quality beef with an egg on the side. The "bloomin' onion" you might get at a chain steakhouse is refashioned into thin crispy strips of fried onion on top of mashed potatoes that failed to leave an impression on me.



Deconstructed carrot cake at Black Sheep.

Vegetarians are in luck at The Black Sheep. The meatless options are clearly conceived with the same creativity that goes into all of the other dishes. There's a "mushroom feast" with black walnut and mustard greens. I tried the cauliflower entrée, a plate full of nicely seasoned cauliflower and a hunk of ciabatta drizzled with olive oil. For a vegetarian entrée, it was quite good, but I don't ever need to eat that much cauliflower again.

By dessert time, I'd seen so many unusual combinations and culinary sleights of hand that when my waiter told me carbonated strawberries were an option, I started to wonder if my dessert might be served with a Bunsen burner and a beaker. I was too curious not to order the hazelnut churros (because that's how you get the carbonated strawberries). The crisp sweet churros were offset perfectly with a delicate tart lemon cream. As for the carbonated strawberries, they were kind of like "natural" Pop Rocks candy. Don't ask me how, but they actually do fizzle a little bit when you bit into them.

I also tried the carrot cake ice cream, which was a deconstructed version of carrot cake. It was a pile of spiced cake crumbles, a smear of cream cheese studded with rum "jello shots" and a scoop of sweet carrot-flavored ice cream. I appreciated the ingenuity, but here's the thing – it wasn't better than an actual piece of carrot cake.

A meal at The Black Sheep is kind of like being a judge on Top Chef or a guest on Rocco's Dinner Party. If you're looking for a consistently satisfying meal that will fill you up, this is not the place for you. But if you're up for an entertaining culinary experience with some hits and some misses, then book a table at The Black Sheep – but I would do it soon. This place has already seen some high drama when the entire kitchen staff reportedly walked out after Toland fired his chef de cuisine and pastry chef, and frankly, I don't think this kind of highly experimental (sometimes puzzling) cuisine will keep Chicago diners coming back for more.

The Black Sheep is located at 1132 W. Grand Ave.; call 312-997-5100 or visit <http://www.blacksheepchicago.net/>.

Do you need some more Sugar & Spice in your life? Follow me on Twitter: @SugarAndSpiceMS – for inside scoop and commentary on Chicago's dining scene.



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calendar

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Wed., Sept. 7

North America Now A cultural event focusing on the state of North America on the tenth Anniversary of the 9/11, Bailiwick Chicago and Teatro Luna present performances and visual art as well as a town hall panel discussion with local politicians, cultural leaders and artists on current border issues and concerns. 7 p.m., Instituto Cervantes of Chicago, 31 W. Ohio St., <http://www.bailiwickchicago.com>

"All You Can Shove" Tonight is "All You Can Shove" pizza at Boystown favorite, Pie Hole Pizza Joint. That's unlimited slices and fountain drinks for only \$8.99! 5 p.m., Pie Hole Pizza Joint, 3477 N. Broadway, <http://www.pieholepizzajoint.com/index.html>

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives book sale More than 50 categories of books, including LGBT, cookbooks, fine arts and social sciences. Takes place on various days through Sept. 17. Fabulous selection of gift books; 6 p.m.-9 p.m., 1127 W Granville Ave., <http://www.gerberhart.org>

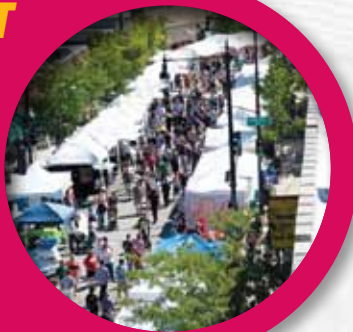
Gay Liberation Network Organizing Meeting Organizing meeting for Chicago's LGBTI direct action group—new participants welcome. Located just at the corner of Granville Street & Sheridan Road; 7 p.m.-9 p.m., 773-209-1187, Berger Park Fieldhouse, 6205 N. Sheridan Road, <http://www.gayliberation.net>

Queer Social Club A no-attitude, casual evening for the Humboldt/Ukie Area LGBTQ and their friends to come in, have drinks, meet new friends, mingle, etc. 8 p.m., Archie's Tavern 2600 W. Iowa, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10150094929770492>

SIMPLY THE FEST Sat-Sun., Sept. 10-11

The Lakeview East Festival of the Arts will take place on Broadway in Boystown.

Photo courtesy of the
Lakeview Chamber
of Commerce



Blondie Enduring punk-gone-pop rockers. Tickets \$69-\$119. 7:30 p.m., House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn, <http://www.liv-entertainment.com>

Thursday, Sept. 8

Miss Representation WHAT: The YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago presents Miss Representation, a film by Jennifer Siebel Newsom; 5:30 p.m.-8 p.m., 312-762-2743, Fifth Third Bank, 222 S. Riverside Plaza, <http://www.ywcachicago.org>

A Lecture with Justin Spring, Secret Historian Historian and author Justin Spring will discuss Chicago's evolving gay scene as well as the life and times of Samuel Steward, the university professor who left academia to become a tattoo artist and sex researcher with Alfred Kinsey. Reception. 6 p.m.-8 p.m., Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, <http://www.chicago-history.org>

Waiting for Lefty American Blues Theater (ABT), Chicago's second oldest Equity ensemble, opens its 2011-2012 season with

Clifford Odets' classic one-act play "Waiting for Lefty"; 8 p.m.-10 p.m., 773-871-3000, Victory Gardens Theater, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., <http://www.victorygardens.org>

Sinferno Chicago Lesbian Pride Events The Windy City PRIDE PARTY, hosted by MTV's Real World Chicago Star Aneesa; 9 p.m., 708-668-6226, Illuminati 2354 N. Clybourn Ave., <http://lafemmeent.com>

Friday, Sept. 9

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives book sale More than 50 categories of books, including LGBT, cookbooks, fine arts and social sciences. Takes place on various days through Sept. 17. Fabulous selection of gift books; 12 p.m.-6 p.m., Gerber/Hart Library, 1127 W Granville Ave., <http://www.gerberhart.org>

Mary King at Woman Made Gallery Mary King curates a new show that involves participation of non-artists and her recent work based on interviews with persons involved in war from World War I to Iraq is featured on the lower level of the gallery. 12 p.m., Woman Made Gallery, 685 N. Milwaukee, <http://www.womanmade.org>

Windy City Wine Festival The seventh annual Windy City Wine Festival, presented by U.S. Bank, returns to downtown Chicago's Buckingham Fountain, in the center of Grant Park at Columbus Drive and Congress Parkway. Through Sept. 10. 4 p.m.-10 p.m., 847-382-1480, Buckingham Fountain, Grant Park, <http://www.windycitywinefestival.com>

Nearly Naked! Running as a part of the Chicago Fringe Festival, Nearly Naked is set at a college party in a Midwest town. 7 p.m.-8 p.m., Dream Theatre 556 W. 18th Street, Chicago, <http://www.chicagofringe.org/index.php>

Patricia Ann McNair, author Temple of Air Launch Party 7:30 p.m., Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Impromptwo: Club for Gay Swingers New, private club for committed, non-monogamous gay couples. Meet like-minded couples in a relaxed, private setting. Pool table, videos, dance floor & private play rooms. 2nd Friday of every month. RSVP required. BYOB; 8 p.m., 847-417-7076, Impromptwo, 1640 W Hubbard St., <http://www.impromptwo-chicago.com>

Janis Ian songwriter, performer, and author with 9 Grammy Nominations. Her songs "At 17" and "Society's Child" are in the Grammy Hall Of Fame. \$25-\$40; 8 p.m., Space, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, <http://www.evanston.space.com>

Club Kylie calling all the lovers to Club Kylie. All Kylie all night with DJ Riley York.

9 p.m., The Call (Chicago), 1547 W Bryn Mawr, <http://www.facebook.com/clubkylie>

There Goes the Gaybarhood There Goes the Gaybarhood is a new musical revue by The Alliance Sketch Group about the gay bar, the gaybarhood, and everything in between. Ten new songs about all types of relationships: lovers, friends, and strangers. 9 p.m.-10 p.m., 312.337.3992, De Maat Studio Theatre, <http://www.secondcity.com>

Bi-polar Fridays Come see why they have to close the blinds! Hot male dancers and hostess Regina Upright turn up the heat in Andersonville every Friday night. 10 p.m., 773-784-1100, @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St., <http://atmospherebar.com>

Saturday, Sept. 10

Lakeview East Festival of the Arts 2011 The Lakeview East Chamber of Commerce is proud to present the seventh annual Lakeview East Festival of the Arts. The Festival takes place Saturday, Sept. 10 and Sunday, Sept. 11 on Broadway Avenue, just north of Belmont. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Broadway between Belmont and Roscoe, <http://www.lakevieweastfestivalofthearts.com>

Chicago's Oldest House celebrates milestone South Loop Community Organization Marks the 175th and 125th anniversary of two significant Chicago landmarks at Art & Crafts Festival of History and Play. Visitors will experience an atmosphere of Prairie Avenue in the 19th century with activities spotlighting a unique variety of art, history, architecture, music and family-style play. 12 p.m., Prairie Ave. Historic District, <http://www.glessnerhouse.org>

Celebration of the life of Christina Santiago Christina Santiago was killed in the Indianapolis State Fair stage collapse on August 14, and is survived by her wife, Alisha Marie Brennan, who was injured in the collapse. The celebration in memory of Christina Santiago's life will be held at the Chicago History Museum, and is open to the public. Info president@amigaslatinas.org or squinn@pcipr.com; 1 p.m., Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark

Celebration of the life of RJ Chaffin A celebration of life for longtime community activist, volunteer and businessman RJ Chaffin will take place Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. A reception will be held 12-1 p.m.; the program will be 1-2 p.m.; and a closing reception will take place 2-3:30 p.m.

9-11 and the Afghanistan War: Who Was Right? The 9-11 tragedy was used as the excuse to launch the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Yet 10 years later, the United States remains mired in this country's longest-ever war. 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., 773-209-1187, Merlo Public Library, 644 W. Belmont Ave., <http://www.gayliberation.net>

Sunday, Sept. 11

Urban Village Church LGBT-welcoming worship services at Urban Village Church are eclectic and experiential, practical and intelligent, relevant and, hopefully, inspiring. 10:15 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Urban Village Church, Spertus Institute, 610 S. Michigan, <http://www.newchicagochurch.com>

3rd Annual Jackhammer County Fair Dunk tank, fair games, free food, pie eating contest, Bags tournament and tons of surprises. Half of all money raised will go directly to TPAN. 12 p.m.-10 p.m., Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St., <http://www.jackhammer-chicago.com>

Chicago Spirit Brigade Workshops & Try-outs If you're passionate about giving back to the community & love to perform, then the Chicago Spirit Brigade (CSB) invites you to tryout for their Drill, Dance or Cheer squad. No prior experience is necessary. 1 p.m.-5 p.m., East Lakeview Fitness Formula Club, <http://csbstars.com>

Urban Village Church Wicker Park Worship



'17' AGAIN Friday, Sept. 9

Janis Ian—who has had hits such as "At 17"—will perform at Space in Evanston.

PR photo

Services LGBT-welcoming worship services at Urban Village Church are eclectic and experiential, practical and intelligent, relevant and, hopefully, inspiring. 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m., 1502 N. Hoyne (at LeMoyne), <http://www.newchicagochurch.com>

Monday, Sept. 12

United House: A Night of Unity in House Music Join Hydrate Nightclub, ChicagoPride.com, and host Cyon Flare for United House: A Night of Unity in House Music, featuring Resident House DJ Semaj; 9 p.m., Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

A-List Viewing Party and Karaoke Mondays Karaoke from 10 p.m.-2 a.m. with your host, John Florida. Enjoy \$4.50 Absolut Cocktails and \$4 Miller Lite & Coors Light Drafts; 9 p.m., Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

Tuesday, Sept. 13

Spaghetti & Meatballs Night Join Philip and all the pretty gang at Angelina Ristorante every Tuesday for Spaghetti & Meatballs Night. 6 p.m.-10 p.m., Angelina Ristorante, 3561 N Broadway, <http://www.angelinaristorante.com/>

Wed., Sept. 14

Gay Liberation Network Organizing Meeting Organizing meeting for Chicago's LGBTI direct action group—new participants welcome. Located just at the corner of Granville Street & Sheridan Road, a few blocks east of the; 7 p.m.-9 p.m., 773-209-1187, Berger Park Fieldhouse, 6205 N. Sheridan Rd., <http://www.gayliberation.net>

Only at Brunch Viewing Party Be the first to catch new episodes of Only at Brunch! From sex, dating, and relationships to news, politics, and bedroom etiquette, no topic is off limits. 7:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Scarlet, 3320 N Halsted, <http://www.onlyatbrunch.com/>

Friday, Sept. 16

LCCP's Garden of EVE Howard Brown Health Center's Lesbian Community Care Project will again host the annual Garden of Eve event. Raffle with fabulous prizes, an exciting silent auction, live entertainment, dancing with DJs, light hors d'oeuvres and drinks. All proceeds from this event benefit LCCP, the women's program at Howard Brown Health Center. The event this year will also include a special tribute to our colleague, Christina Santiago. Co-chairs are Cindy Hernandez, Alma Izquierdo, Kat Fitzgerald. Early-bird ticket prices extended to Sept. 9. 6 p.m.-11 p.m., Carnivale, 702 W. Fulton St., Chicago, <http://www.howardbrown.org/>



GARDEN DELIGHTS

Friday, Sept. 16

The LCCP event Garden of EVE—which will include a tribute to Christina Santiago (above, right)—will take place at Carnivale, 702 E. Fulton.

Photo from 2010 by Kat Fitzgerald

BILLY MASTERS

"I would definitely be open to it. It seems appropriate, seeing as I was part of the birth and the initial success of the show, to bring me back for the final season. But we'll see if there's interest there."—Jesse Metcalfe puts the word out there that he's available to appear in the final season of *Desperate Housewives*. I have a feeling there's not much interest.

I was recently in a Burger King when I was recognized by the cashier, who identified themselves to me as a fan and a transgender person. While I'm always glad to meet a fan, I want to say something that will be considered politically incorrect—would it be too much to ask someone who is in transition to make it clear exactly which sex that person is transitioning to and from? I had absolutely no idea which way this cashier, Tony (or Toni), was going. But either way, I'm happy that a fan is able to serve up a Whopper with pride. You go, girl ... er, guy...

Leave it to the domestic version of *Dancing with the Stars* to trump all other international versions. Sure, we've had a gay competitor with Lance Bass. However, Israel and Austria had openly gay competitors dancing with same-sex partners. So what did the U.S. do? Find a transgender competitor, naturally. If this was a couple of years ago, it could have been the lovely and talented Candis Cayne who was, at the time, a member of the ABC family. But she's back in nightclubs so we have someone considered a huge "get"—Chaz Bono. When this was announced, the ABC website was flooded with negative comments from the more conservative members of the viewing audience. This prompted Cher to tweet her support, condemn the haters and express her pride at Chaz's courage, although she admitted that "Chaz isn't exactly the 'Gotta Dance Gotta Dance' kinda guy." That was my first reaction because, let's face it, Chaz doesn't exactly seem ... well, "graceful." But I'm willing to give him a chance.

Someone very interested in getting to know Chaz is fellow competitor David Arquette: "I'm just looking forward to having some time where I can just sit and talk to him 'cause Alexis, my sister, is transgender and I grew up with her and I saw some of the struggles she had." Interestingly enough, prior to Alexis' surgery, she was quite close with Elijah Blue—Cher's other child. But if you ask David who he thinks will be the fiercest competitor, it's Rob Kardashian: "The thing about Rob is—and a lot of people don't know this—but he's got a great ass just like his sister. I'm serious. Once you see it, his ass is fantastic. And I really think it's going to be a secret weapon." That may not be the best weapon to use in light of the fact that sister Kim was voted off on the third week!

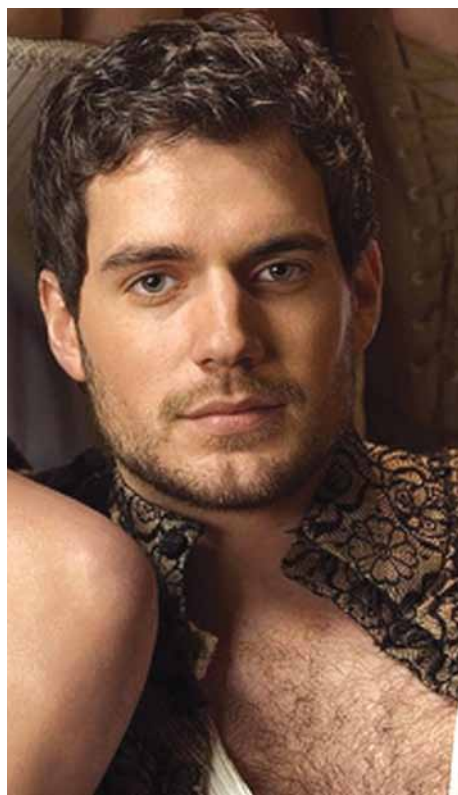
Being on a reality show seems to be a prerequisite for posing nude in *Playgirl*. The magazine recently pursued Rob Kardashian and offered him \$45,000 for a nude pictorial—with an additional \$15K if he got hard. My God: I must have earned at least half a mil last night on the dance floor. Be that as it may, Kardashian declined and went for "Dancing." On that show, he'll be paid roughly \$150K for the first two weeks ... and that's before you include the tips he might make from Bruno (double if he gets hard).

So *Playgirl* went to its next choice—Joey Kovar, who was on *The Real World: Hollywood*. Kovar will be featured on the cover and centerfold of the next issue, which comes out on Sept. 13. We hear the mag only paid him \$20,000 for the spread, which is still quite a princely sum for someone who was on a show back in 2008 (although more recently he was on *Celebrity Rehab*). As someone who has already seen his spread, let me be so indelicate to say I'd dock him \$15K right off the bat. Also, perhaps a bit less shaving and a bit more dieting would have been in order—but why wait another week when

you can see all on BillyMasters.com?

On Sept. 19, there will be a special one-night-only reading of Dustin Lance Black's new play based on the Prop 8 hearing, which is simply called 8. The Broadway reading, which is a benefit for the American Foundation for Equal Rights, will star people like Morgan Freeman, Anthony Edwards, Christine Lahti, Marisa Tomei, Rob Reiner, John Lithgow and Bradley Whitford. Oh, it will also star Cheyenne Jackson and Matthew Bomer, who will play the real-life couple who initiated the suit. You can get tickets and information at Afer.org. But we will take this opportunity to show pics of Matt making out with his ex-boyfriend at BillyMasters.com.

Rather than squeeze in an "Ask Billy" question, we're gonna respond to the many e-mails about various photos of hot males. First up is Oscar de la Hoya. Back in 2007, I ran numerous photos of him in a variety of fishnet stockings, female undergarments, and other gender-bending attire



Henry Cavill (seen here on the TV show *The Tudors*) is the new Man of Steel.

(and showing some of his "junk"). At the time, he said the pics were Photoshopped and sold to the tabloids by an exotic dancer who later sued him. Now he has come clean and admitted the photos were real (quelle surprise). He blames his questionable behavior on cocaine and alcohol—funny because when I'm high and drunk, the last thing I wanna do is put ON clothes! The downside to his revelation is that he's been dumped as ambassador for Tres Generaciones tequila. On the positive side, you can see the pics on BillyMasters.com.

While you're on our website, you'll want to check out the new photos of Rafael Nadal winched into Armani briefs.

Lastly, you can also see the first photos of sexy Henry Cavill in his Superman costume—rippling and bulging in all of the right areas of BillyMasters.com.

When I'm reveling in reality rejects' rumps, it's definitely time to end yet another column. One more fun filled week in South Florida and then I'm bound for Hollywood. Well, I was bound here too ... but that's another story. One that quite possibly could turn up on www.BillyMasters.com, the site that knows no bounds! If you've got a question or perhaps a juicy tip, drop a note to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Oscar and Rafael compare panty lines! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Local rugby player recalls 9/11 hero

BY ROSS FORMAN

The Chicago Dragons, a relatively new team in 2004, were playing that year in the inaugural Bingham Cup, named in honor of the late Mark Bingham, and the Dragons were paired with the Atlanta Bucks. Held in London, the Bingham Cup commemorated the life and (rugby) career of openly gay Bingham, who died during the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The morning that the tournament started, organizers announced the teams and the players then ran down the sidelines and lined up along the back of the try zone.

"I remember looking out and seeing all these gay rugby players and saying to myself, 'I knew it—I wasn't alone,'" said Chicago resident Paul D. Cannella, emotional then as well as today, just reflecting on the moment.

"That experience, including playing with the Bucks and the bond we formed, was incredible.



Mark Bingham. Photo from Windy City Times archives

While we can bitter rivals when our clubs face each other, there was a bond that was formed between every player that weekend that exists today."

Cannella, 41, who lives in Lincoln Park and is a local entrepreneur, owning multiple businesses, started playing rugby in 1989 while attending the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater—and has played annually since. He is a founding member of the predominantly gay Dragons, and now plays flanker and scrum half.

Bingham, who lived in San Francisco and founded his own company, the Bingham Group, died in the terrorist attacks aboard United Airlines Flight 93, though he was among the passengers who attempted to storm the cockpit to try to prevent the terrorists' plans.

Bingham, survived by his boyfriend of six years, Paul Holm, played for the San Francisco Fog RFC, a rugby union team that also is predominantly gay.

The Bingham Cup is a biannual, gay international rugby union tournament, established in 2002.

"The Bingham Cup is an incredible experience," Cannella said. "I am so proud to be able to play in this tournament, and I hope players appreciate what a unique experience it is. I love pushing my body to the extremes, and I'm very proud of the fact that I've played in every minute of every match in 2004, 2006 and 2010.

"The only minutes I missed in 2008 were after I blew out my ACL [in my knee], but I still played portions of that tournament.

"The brotherhood, camaraderie, and passion felt in these tournaments is unmatched in day to day life and I eat that [stuff] up."

Cannella, who graduated from Wheeling High

School in 1988, played in the 2006 Bingham Cup in New York City, Dublin in 2008 and Minneapolis in 2010.

He already has the 2012 Bingham Cup in Manchester, England, in his plans.

"When I first heard about the Dragons forming, I wanted to be a part of it so I could share the greatest sport on earth with other gay people," Cannella said. "Rugby has given me so much on and off the pitch that I feel bound to the sport and a duty to help others play it and learn from it.

"The Bingham Cup and rugby in general has allowed gay people to break down stereotypes. The relationships that we form with the other rugby clubs helps send a message that we are just like anyone else in society."

Cannella said the Bingham Cup is the pinnacle of his rugby career, and also a personal measuring-stick to assess his play every two years.

"At 41, I don't know how many more I can play in, but, if I think I can compete, help the team, and have fun, I'll probably keep playing. Especially if they're [held] in other countries," Cannella said. "For the Dragons, I'm very proud to travel with the club and to help spread the experience of this tournament. Booting up day after day, no matter how much pain you are in, or how tired you are, builds character. You can learn a lot about yourself during these tournaments, [such as] how far you can push yourself. Then the next time you're competing against someone for that promotion [at work], think about what you've been through."

Bingham has received numerous posthumously honors, including:

- The Arthur Ashe Courage Award in 2002.
- Melissa Etheridge dedicated the song 'Tuesday Morning' to his memory.

Mark Bingham is one of many heroes from 9/11," Cannella said. "Each person who lost their life helped save lives [too], and is a hero in my eyes. I am proud of them.

"I never knew Mark personally, but my guess is that he never would have thought his name, or what he did, would mean so much. His name will live on forever because this tournament and league is not going anywhere. Mark Bingham is a legend, and I think it is an honor to play in a tournament with his name on it. This tournament stands for so much more than a metal cup. It stands for equality, dignity, brotherhood, pride and more. While my goal is to win [the tournament], at the end of the day, I am so happy for the team that wins the tournament, and for any team that enjoys success within their own league."



Paul Cannella. Photo by Ross Forman

GAY SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES

Chicago team takes Master's title

BY ROSS FORMAN

Father Time may have impacted their skills and speed, but certainly not their joy and jubilation.

Rick Tivers, 54, pitched the Chicago Sidetrack Classics to a 20-5 championship game victory on Saturday, Sept. 3 in Schaumburg and the inaugural title in the 50-and-over Master's Division at the 35th annual Gay Softball World Series.

"The team had great defense, great offense, solid pitching. And to be the first Master's Division champion is very, very rewarding," said Tivers, making his World Series debut.

The Classics' record was 1-2 in pool-play, then won three straight for the title. They were the only Chicago team to capture a championship.

"This is unbelievable," said Tivers, who was married for 18 years (to a woman) and has three kids. "This was amazing. It feels right; it feels authentic; it feels great."

He celebrated with his teammates and his boyfriend.

"The guys were totally supportive of each other. They played wonderfully."

"It's great that the Master's Division team brought home a championship to Chicago; I'm very happy for them," said Jack Neilsen, part of the eight-person Board of Directors for the local organizing committee.

Cappas, president of the local organizing committee, said having a Chicago team win its division, "was the icing on the cake."

"I'm very happy for that team; they are a great group of guys. They have always represented us well, and I couldn't be happier for them," Cappas said.

The team posed for photos minutes after the final out was recorded, and many players insisted that Sidetrack co-owner Art Johnston

and his longtime partner, Pepe Pena, join the team for pictures.

Johnston has attended many past World Series, although he has never played in one. Still, he is a NAGAAA Hall of Fame member.



Art Johnston. Photo by Ross Forman

"This World Series shows the amazing progress of our community," Johnston said. "The growth of gay sports, and this event in particular, is an indication of the progress that we as a community have made.

"I went to the World Series in Milwaukee in 1979 to see what it was all about. I came back from there inspired and got involved with gay softball leagues in Chicago—and it changed my life. Like so many, I was the last one chosen [for sports teams] in school; I hated gym class and wanted nothing to do with it.

"However, a lot of my [adult] life has been devoted to helping to provide opportunities for gay kids to play sports, especially softball.

"I thought the tournament was very well-run, and am very proud of those who put it on. I am thrilled that Chicago has hosted the World Series twice and each time there was a champion sponsored by Sidetrack. That's wonderful."

Johnston said there was "no question at all" that he was going to attend the 2011 Series. "This is too important of an event to our community; I wouldn't have missed this for the world."



Wrigley Pride with series winners

The first Windy City Times Pride Day at Wrigley was held Sept. 4 under beautiful skies and with lots of pride treats during the Cubs game. Winners of the multiple Gay Softball World Series divisions came onto the field before the game began to be honored for their finishes in the Chicago-hosted tournament last week. Windy City Times Gay Idol 2011 TJ Chernick sang the national anthem and "God Bless America" before the standing-room-only crowd. Windy City Times Publisher Tracy Baim was honored before the game with a bat courtesy of State Farm Insurance for its "good neighbor" award.

The Chicago Series 2011, Grab Magazine and ChicagoPride.com co-sponsored Pride Day at Wrigley, and it was a benefit for seven area LGBT charities. Skyy Vodka sponsored the after-party at Spin bar, which featured Windy City Gay Idol winners, runners-up and finalists. Hosts for the event were Cynthia Holmes and David Byrne.

The Cubs won the game 6-3 vs. the Pittsburgh Pirates. Photos by Hal Baim; more images at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>



Top: Champions in the Gay Softball World Series Divisions. Above: TJ Chernick and Laura Ricketts. Photo of the winners by Hal Baim; image of Chernick and Ricketts by Ross Forman

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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. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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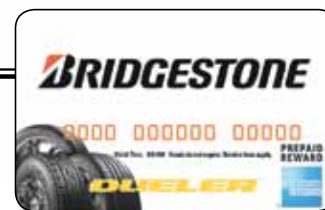
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