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CARDINAL APOLOGIZES, BUT SOME STILL PROTEST
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AIDS ACTIVIST FRANK SIEPLE DIES
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Giffords' gay savior says he's no hero

BY JOE FRANCO

Daniel Hernandez is a modest hero. Most remember him as the openly gay political intern who is credited with saving the life of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords after Jared Lee Loughner shot her Jan. 8, 2011. "We were running a 'Congress on Your Corner' meet and greet with the Congresswoman that morning," he said. "It was my fifth day working with the Congresswoman. The meet-and-greet was Giffords' idea for a way to enable her constituents to meet her and voice their concerns about the direction Congress was taking. It was my job to control the flood gates and speak with the constituents about what questions they had for Giffords."

What happened shortly after the event began that morning changed Hernandez's life in a dramatic way: "We started at 10 o'clock in the morning. At 10:10, I heard shots and then someone shouted 'Gun!' I dropped what



Daniel Hernandez. Photo courtesy of Hernandez

I was doing and ran immediately to see what happened. I had been trained in high school in first aid and started checking for pulses on those who were hit to see who was still alive. It was then that I saw Giffords bleeding from her head. I rushed to her, checked her pulse and propped her up against my chest so she wouldn't aspirate any more blood."

Others in Hernandez's position may not have been so quick to react and so calm but he said that he "realized fairly quickly that panicking now was not an option. My duty was to the Congresswoman—to keep her alive and in the best condition possible until the paramedics arrived. I credit my actions that day with my training in a high school trade program that allowed me to learn basic first aid and work as a certified nurses' assistant." Many

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CHICAGOAN GETS GAY GAMES HONOR
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WINTER FILM SPECIAL



POP MAKING SENSE WITH RIHANNA
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Read Richard Knight Jr.'s roundup of LGBT-focused films coming to theaters and DVD (such as *The Skin I'm In*, above). Also, he interviewed the gay author of a book on iconic critic Pauline Kael, and reviewed the Dolly Parton movie *Joyful Noise*. The cinematic special begins on page 22.

SHE'S MARY GOOD...

The "Queen of Hip-Hop Soul," Mary J. Blige, talks about everything from career longevity to homophobia. See page 26.
Photo by Klinko & Indrani

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Mothers of LGBT individuals will be the focus of a new photo essay book from Windy City Times. We are soliciting submissions from LGBTs in the Chicago area, or those formerly from Chicago, for this new project.

Just in time for the holidays, people can submit photos with their moms via email, Facebook or Twitter through Feb. 5, 2012. Windy City Times is looking for diversity in families. Once the winners are selected, a professional photo shoot will be done by Kat Fitzgerald of Mystic Images Photography (of the winning mothers with their child or children), so winners must be available in the Chicago area, although some additional photos may be used. Winners will also be asked to submit a 200-word essay about what their mother has meant to them.

Depending on the reception for this project, other books may be done with fathers, or queer parents, but the focus of this first book is on mothers.

To submit:

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-  [Twitter: windycitytimes1](https://twitter.com/windycitytimes1)
-  [or email editor@windycitymediagroup.com](mailto:editor@windycitymediagroup.com)

DEADLINE: FEB. 5, 2012

You can also submit a short essay about why you think your mother should be selected to be photographed with you. Families with multiple LGBT children are welcome to submit as well.

Images may also be used in Windy City Times newspaper.

this week in
WINDY CITY TIMES

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Photos on cover (left, from top): Photo from Jan. 8 protest at Holy Name Cathedral by Kate Sosin; Frank Sieple photo by Rex Wockner, Outlines/WCT archives; Israel Wright pic courtesy of Wright; Rihanna photo by Jerry Nunn



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'WALK' ON BY

Read a review of the sexuality-switch movie Walk a Mile in My Pradas, out on DVD.



Financial guru Phil Sitar talks about estate planning and gift-tax strategies.

Photo from Sitar



The book Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty is among Five Worth Finding.

(HAY)MARKET DAYS

Read about the relevance of the Haymarket Riots 125 years after they took place.

CASTING A SPELL

Read an interview with Colin Morgan, the star of the TV series Merlin.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

This week's entertainment round-up includes items on Darren Criss, Martha Stewart and RuPaul.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

BETTER THAN EZRA



Bent Nights looks at concert performances by Smokey Robinson as well as Ezra Furman (above) and the Harpoons.

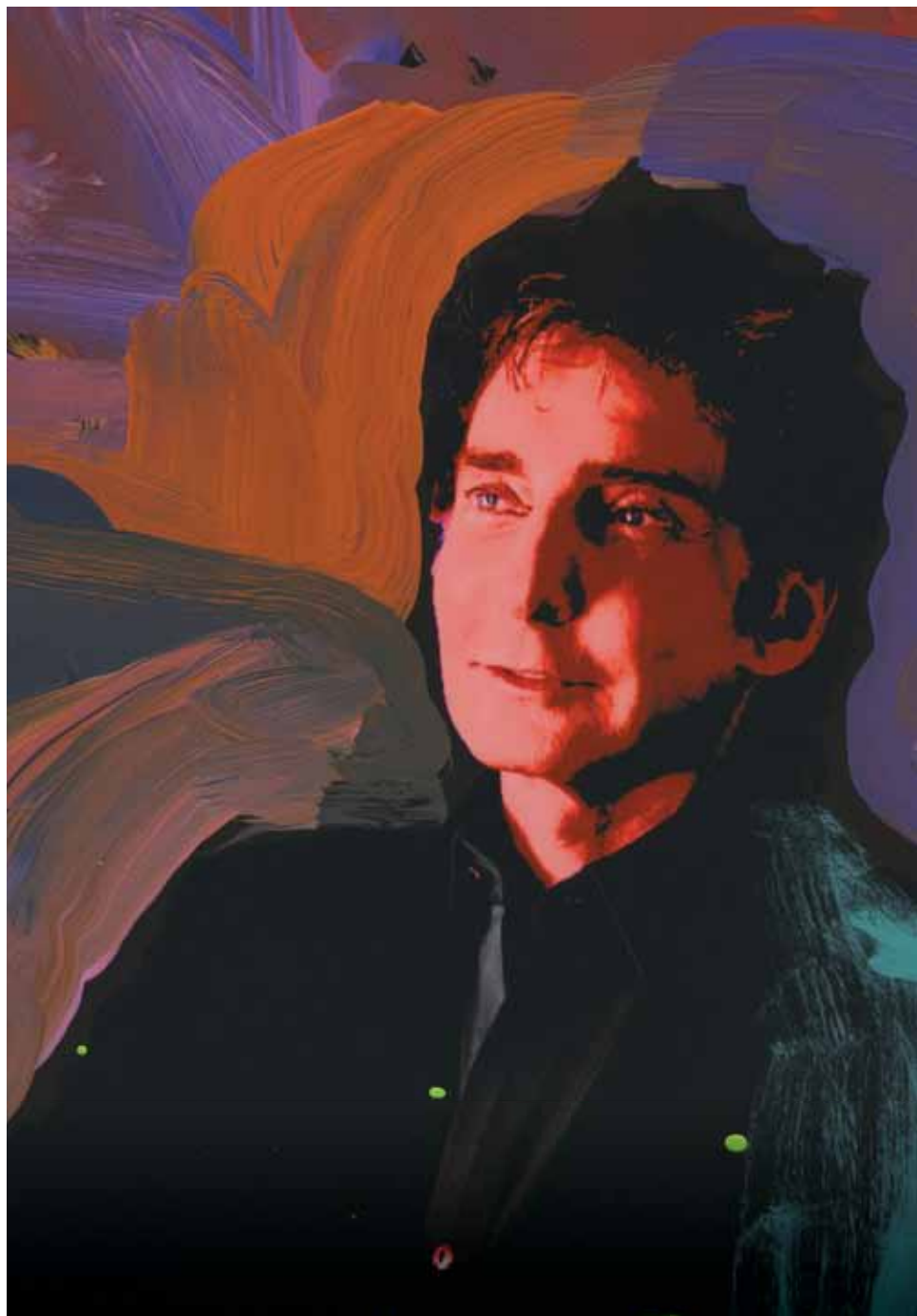
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Weekend debates focus on gays

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

There were two debates for the major Republican presidential candidates the weekend of Jan. 7-8, and a question about same-sex marriage seemed inevitable. The events were taking place in New Hampshire—one of only six states with marriage equality. The most anti-gay candidate among the major GOP hopefuls—Rick Santorum—had just made significant gains in Iowa and some subsequent polls, making him seem a more viable contender for the nomination than ever before. However, the gay-related questions came fast and hard.

On Jan. 7, national ABC reporter Diane Sawyer pressed the candidates for a heartfelt, “personal” response to a question from a gay viewer in Virginia who wanted to know “what do you want gay people to do who want to form loving, committed, long-term relationships?” On Jan. 8, Boston NBC reporter Andy Hiller challenged Santorum and frontrunner Mitt Romney to say how they had ever “stood up for gay rights.”

Their answers broke little news but demonstrated the candidates’ awareness that they had to adopt a kinder, gentler tone toward gays in order to win more votes in the Jan. 10 New Hampshire primary and, eventually, in the general election. However, longshot candidate Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the U.S. House, bared his teeth against the time spent discussing the rights of gays, claiming it showed a bias by the media for gays and against religious institutions.

Sawyer read a question submitted to the Jan. 7 debate via Yahoo.com by a 30-year-old man named Phil in Virginia. The man’s question was: “Given that you oppose gay marriage, what do you want gay people to do who want to form loving, committed, long-term relationships? What is your solution?”

“What would you say personally sitting in your living rooms to people who ask questions like this?” asked Sawyer. She directed the question first to Gingrich.

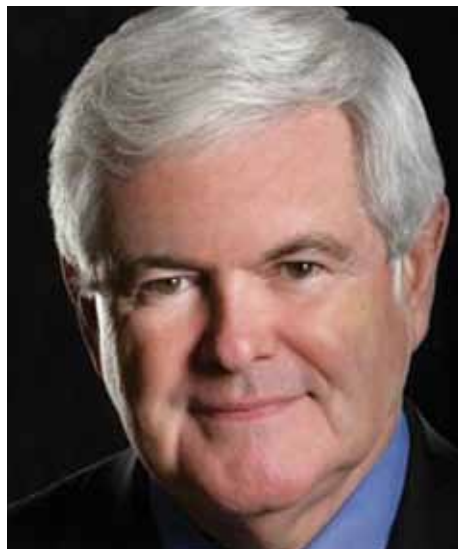
“I think what I would say is that we want to make it possible to have those things that are most intimately human between friends occur. For example, you’re in a hospital, if there are visitation hours, should you be allowed to stay? There ought to be ways to designate that. You want to have somebody in your will? There ought to be ways to designate that.

“But it is a huge jump,” said Gingrich, “from being understanding and considerate and concerned—which we should be—to saying we’re therefore going to institute the sacrament of marriage as though it has no basis. The sacrament of marriage was based on a man and a woman, has been for 3,000 years, is at the core of our civilization and is something worth protecting and upholding.

“And I think that protecting and upholding that doesn’t mean you have to go out and make life miserable for others, but it does mean you have to make a distinction between a historic sacrament of enormous importance in our civilization and simply deciding it applies everywhere and it’s just a civil right. It’s not. It is a part of how we define ourselves and I think that a marriage between a man and a woman is part of that definition.”

Sawyer prodded former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman to talk about his support for civil unions.

“Well, personally, I think civil unions are fair. I support them. I think there’s such a thing as equality under the law,” said Huntsman. “I’m a married man. I’ve been married for 28 years. I have seven kids...and I don’t feel my relationship is at all threatened by civil unions.



Newt Gingrich.

“On marriage, I’m a traditionalist,” added Huntsman. “I think that ought to be saved for one man and one woman. But I believe that civil unions are fair, and I think it brings a level of dignity to relationships. And I believe in reciprocal beneficiary rights. I think they should be part of civil union rights as well.”

Local ABC reporter Josh McElveen then directed the discussion to Rick Santorum, noting that 1,800 same-sex couples have obtained marriage licenses in New Hampshire under that state’s two-year-old law, “and they’re trying to start families, some of them.”

“Are you going to tell someone that they belong as a ward of the state or in foster care rather than have two parents who want them?” he asked.

“Well, this isn’t a federal issue; it’s a state issue,” said Santorum. “The states can make that determination, and New Hampshire—my feeling is that this is an issue that—I believe that the issue of marriage itself is a federal issue, that we can’t have different laws with respect to marriage, we have to have one law. Marriage is, as Newt said, a foundational institution of our country and we have to have a singular law with respect to that. We can’t have somebody married in one state and not married in another. ...

“If we don’t have a federal law [banning marriage], I’m certainly not going to have a federal law that bans adoption for gay couples when there are only gay couples in certain states. So, this is a state issue, not a federal issue.”

McElveen followed up, asking what would happen to the marriages of the 1,800 New Hampshire gay couples if a federal ban on same-sex marriage is instituted.

Santorum responded as he has when asked the question in other forums.

“If the constitution says marriage is between a man and a woman, then marriage is between a man and a woman,” Santorum said. “And, therefore, that’s what marriage is and would be in this country and those who are not men and women who are married would not be married. That’s what the constitution would say.”

Sawyer then asked Mitt Romney to explain what he would say in his living room to a gay couple “who would say, ‘We simply want the right to,’ as the person who wrote the e-mail said, ‘We want gay people to form loving, committed, long-term relationships.’ In human terms, what would you say to them?”

Romney replied, “The answer is, ‘That’s a wonderful thing to do,’ and that ‘There’s every right for people in this country to form long-term committed relationships with one another.’ That doesn’t mean that they have to call it marriage or that they have to receive the approval of the

state and a marriage license and so forth for that to occur. There can be domestic-partnership benefits or contractual relationships between two people, which would include, as Speaker Gingrich indicated, hospital visitation rights and the like.

“We can decide what kinds of benefits we might associate with people who form those kinds of relationships, state by state. But to say that marriage is other than the relationship between a man and a woman, I think is a mistake. And the reason for that is not that we want to discriminate against people or to suggest that gay couples are not just as loving and can’t also raise children. But it’s instead a recognition that society as whole—the nation—will presumably be better off if children are raised in a setting where there’s a male and female.

“And there are many cases where that’s not possible—divorce, death, single parents, gay parents and so forth. But, for society to say we want to encourage, through the benefits that we associate with marriage, people to form partnerships between men and women and then raise children, which we think that will be the ideal setting for them to be raised.”

The discussion had gone on for about six minutes, when Gingrich apparently signaled that he wanted to speak, and Sawyer gave him the floor.

“I just want to say, since we spent this much time on these issues—I just want to raise a point about the news media bias. You don’t hear the opposite question asked,” said Gingrich. “Should the Catholic Church be forced to close its adoption services in Massachusetts because it won’t accept gay couples—which is exactly what the state has done.”

“Should the Catholic Church be driven out of providing charitable services in the District of Columbia because it won’t give in to secular bigotry? Should the Catholic Church find itself discriminated against by the Obama administration on key delivery of services because of the bias and the bigotry of the administration?”

“The bigotry question goes both ways,” said Gingrich, “and there is a lot more anti-Christian bigotry today than there is concern on the other side, and none of it gets covered by the news media.”

The audience, which had been silent throughout the gay-related discussion, suddenly burst into applause, and Romney gained the floor.

“As you can tell, the people in this room feel that Speaker Gingrich is absolutely right,” said Romney, “and I do, too. And I was in a state where the supreme court stepped in and said marriage is a relationship required under the constitution for people of the same sex to be able to marry. And John Adams, who wrote the constitution, would be surprised. And it did exactly as Speaker Gingrich indicated.

“What happened was Catholic Charities, that placed almost half all the adopted children in our state, was forced to step out of being able to provide adoptive services. And the state tried to find other places to help children—We have to recognize that this decision about what we call marriage has consequence which goes far beyond a loving couple wanting to form a long-term relationship that they can do within the law now. Calling it marriage creates a whole host of problems for families, for the law, for the practice of religion, for education. Let me say this, 3,000 years of human history shouldn’t be discarded so quickly.”

Actually, although none of the reporters on the panel mentioned this—perhaps because they did not know—the state of Massachusetts did not “force” the Catholic Church to close its adoption services. The state required that Catholic Charities, a separate, non-profit organization, to obey state laws if it wished to receive state funding for its provision of adoption services. The group said it could not obey the state’s human rights law, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Thus, Catholic Charities chose to stop receiving state funds, rather than provide adoption services to gay couples, the same as straight couples.

Fewer than 12 hours later, the six candidates

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NATIONAL NEWS

—Wash. state gov (left) to press for marriage equality

—CDC gives \$339 million for HIV prevention

—Black GOP out gay mayor in N.J.

were back on stage in New Hampshire, this time with a special edition of NBC’s Meet the Press.

NBC Boston reporter Andy Hiller tried to tackle Romney on his 1994 statement during the Senate campaign. He read Romney’s quote to Bay Windows, a Boston gay newspaper, in which he said, “I think the gay community needs more support from the Republican party, and I would be a voice in the Republican party to foster anti-discrimination efforts.”

Hiller asked, “How have you stood up for gay rights, and when have you used your voice to influence Republicans on this issue?”

Romney responded that he had appointed a gay person to his cabinet, appointed people to the bench, “regardless of their sexual orientation,” and “made it very clear that we should not discriminate in hiring policies, in legal policies.”

“At the same time, from the very beginning, in 1994,” said Romney, “I said to the gay community, ‘I do not favor same-sex marriage. I oppose same-sex marriage,’ and that has been my view. But, if people are looking for someone who will discriminate against gays or will in any way suggest that people who have different sexual orientation don’t have full rights in this country, they won’t find that in me.”

Hiller turned his question to Santorum.

“Sen. Santorum, would you be a voice for gay rights in the party?”

“I would be a voice in speaking out for making sure that every person in America, gay or straight, is treated with respect and dignity and has equality of opportunity,” said Santorum. “That does not mean that I would agree with certain things that the gay community would like to do to change laws with respect to marriage, with respect to adoption, and things like that. So, you can be respectful—this is the beautiful thing about this country. James Madison called the First Amendment ... the perfect remedy, and that is that people of all different backgrounds—diversity, opinions, faith—can come into the public square and can be heard, and can be heard in a way that’s respectful of everybody else.

“But just because you don’t agree with someone’s desire to change the law doesn’t mean you don’t like them, or hate them, or that you want to discriminate against them, but you’re trying to promote things that you think are best for society. And I do so, and I if you watched the town hall meetings that I’ve been doing all over New Hampshire, I do so in a respectful tone, I listen to the other side, I let them make their arguments, and then we do so in a very respectful way. And you know what, we may not agree. That’s why we leave it open to the public to be able to elect members of Congress and the Senate and the President who support their ideas.”

“What if you had a son who came to you and said he was gay?” asked Hiller.

Turn to page 5

Former Chicagoan a force in national organization

BY DAVID-ELIJAH NAHMOD

Former Chicagoan Stacey Long, now a resident of Washington, D.C., brings an impressive resume to the table. Newly installed as the director of public policy and government affairs at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), she previously spent two years as the organization's federal legislation director and chief lobbyist. She embodies the old adage "walk softly but carry a big stick."

Her voice is gentle and soothing, but her tone and words are most powerful. She told Windy City Times that her goals are basic—to "shine a light on issues that will surface between now and the 2012 election. We want to empower an informed LGBT electorate."

NGLTF was founded in 1973. In 1978, when former beauty queen Anita Bryant made headlines in her attempts to deny equality to LGBT people, it was the NGLTF who stepped up to the plate to galvanize the troops in what turned out to be a successful campaign to discredit Bryant's efforts.

"Many of the tenets of our early days are still true today," said Long. "We represent the LGBT voice of political progressives. We keep the basic principles that everyone has access to a job, and is not hired or fired based on sexual orientation or gender identity."

An attorney with a bachelor's degree in African studies from Vassar College, Long is also a graduate of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's People of Color Media Training Institute.

She's a strong advocate for coalition building, and is very pleased about many laws that are LGBT-inclusive. "I'm encouraged that we can work with civil rights and women's groups. Progress is taking shape in ways that are different from our original scheme of things."

Spreading the word is one way Long's office is helping to insure this continues. "We are doing our very best to let allies know ways we are being attacked, ways in which we need their support. We can't be everywhere all the time, so they can speak up when they see or hear something homophobic."

"I don't take this work lightly," Long stated. "I don't take this moment lightly. Action is hot and power is sexy. We want to give people the tools they need to empower themselves. I worry about apathy. There's been too much struggle to get to where we are today. We have a responsibility to



Stacey Long. Photo courtesy of the Task Force

make sure that people who are marginalized are included in our wins in a way that's authentic and not just symbolic."

She's most pleased about the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT), and feels that public opinion is trending in the LGBT community's direction. "I'd never have imagined that the hate crimes law would have passed and that DADT would be repealed in our lifetime," she said. "Health care has been an incredible win for the community."

Long has strong words for those on the fence about the re-election of President Obama, some of whom plan to sit out the next election cycle. "Every decision has a consequence," Long said. "Can you live with the consequences of not playing a role in the outcome of this election? Remain engaged. Write letters. Make phone calls."

For all she's done, Long sees a tough road ahead, with much more needing to be accomplished. "It's a huge undertaking to sway current members of Congress to do the right thing and pass ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Some polls indicate that 80-90 percent of those in favor of ENDA think the law has passed. It should be a no-brainer, but we still have not been able to do it thus far."

She won't be giving up the fight anytime soon. As the interview concluded, Long prepared herself for an upcoming meeting. "I'm privileged to be involved in shaping public policy," she concluded.

To support the work of Long and NGLTF, visit <http://www.TheTaskForce.org>.

answer then was, 'Well, let's relieve them by giving them affirmative action.' So, I think both are wrong, if you think in terms of individuals and protect every single individual."

Huntsman, too, chastised candidates for playing "the blame game" in referring to gays and unions.

"Everybody's got something nasty to say," he said. "You know what the people of this country are waiting for. ... They want a leader who is going to unify, who's going to bring us together. Because, at the end of the day, that's what leadership is all about. It's not about taking on different groups and vilifying them for whatever reason. It's about projecting a vision for a more hopeful tomorrow."

In all, there were about 13 minutes of discussion of gay-related issues in the 210 minutes of weekend televised debate.

"Gov. Romney and Sen. Santorum today provided thoughtful and constructive answers to the questions they were asked about gay Americans," said Solmonese in a statement. "If only they had been that thoughtful when they crafted their various policy positions."

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DEBATES from page 4

Without hesitation, Santorum—who has four sons, the oldest of whom is 18—said, "I would love him as much as the second before he said it. And I would try to do everything I can to be as good a father to him as possible." The audience applauded.

"Both candidates say they oppose discrimination yet they're also opposed to laws that would make it illegal to fire LGBT people," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "Both candidates profess inclusion, yet they also want to deny patriotic Americans the right to defend their country. You can't say one thing simply because it sounds good but yet continue to act in a manner that is completely at odds with that rhetoric."

Later in the Jan. 8 debate, second-place challenger Ron Paul, in a discussion of entitlements, interjected that he doesn't like to use the term "gay rights," as had been used by Romney and Santorum.

"I don't like to use those terms—gay rights, women's rights, minority rights, religious rights," said Paul. "There's only one type of right. It's your right to your liberty. And I think it causes divisiveness when we see people in groups. Because for too long, we punish groups, so the

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AIDS activist Frank Sieple dies

BY KATE SOSIN

Frank Sieple, a longtime HIV/AIDS activist with ACT UP/Chicago, passed away suddenly Jan. 5. He was 51.

Sieple was born and raised in Chicago, where he spent most of his life. He spent his last years in San Francisco, where he relocated in the early 1990s.

Sieple was an early leader of ACT UP/Chicago, participating in actions throughout Chicago with Danny Sotomayor, Tim Miller and others who protested the government's silence as AIDS ravaged Chicago's gay community.

"His life was short and voluminous," remembered Bob Huffman, Sieple's former partner from his ACT UP days. "He was a charmer, had a wonderful engaging personality."

Sieple held a number of jobs over the years. He never attended his college, but his impatience drove him to pursue career after career. According to Huffman, he excelled in everything he tried.

He worked as a model, a go-go dancer, a flight attendant, a real estate agent and a travel agent when he was younger. In his later years, he worked as a deputy sheriff in San Francisco. Most recently, he managed property.

"He really had a thirst for knowledge," said Huffman. "He was really inquisitive."

Sieple was born in 1960 in the Chicago area and grew up in Glen Ellyn. His childhood was not easy, said John Ferrel, a friend from San Francisco.

"He took quite a few beatings for being gay," Ferrel said. "That prejudice and those beatings that he took were sort of fuel for the fire that made him more compassionate."

He came out at a young age, Ferrel said, despite the cost of discrimination he faced.

In 1982, a young Sieple found out he was HIV-positive. He fought desperately to stay alive as the virus was decimating his community. He used his job as a flight attendant to travel the world, testing out treatments from Mexico and other countries as they became available.

In August 1987, Sieple attended his first meeting of Chicago for AIDS Rights, a group that would eventually become ACT UP Chicago. It was also the first meeting of AIDS activist Tim Miller, who befriended Sieple at that time.

"All of those people were running as fast as they could to try to stay alive," Miller said.

Sieple was with ACT UP/Chicago at its start and worked on treatment issues, speaking passionately about drug protocol and participating in actions throughout the city. He was arrested multiple times for protests and participated in the organization's largest demonstrations.

He was motivated in part by desperation, said



Frank Sieple in the 1980s. Photo by Rex Wockner, Outlines/WCT archives

Miller. Sieple was determined to live, and he did so against the odds for decades after his diagnoses.

In the early 1990s, he moved to San Francisco with his partner at the time, Joshua Margulies.

His activism remained strong, said friends. He coached many through substance abuse recovery as a sponsor.

With Margulies, he raised twin sons—Adam and Noah, who are now 8.

"He was an incredibly devoted father," said Ferrel. "He was a great example to me of how to live life to the fullest."

Ferrel remembers Sieple standing with his sons outside of GLIDE Memorial Church one day as people receiving social services exited the building. Sieple and his sons, 5 years old at the time, were handing out peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches.

Margulies and Sieple eventually separated. Friends say Sieple remained a devoted father.

On Jan. 5, Sieple was home with friends in San Francisco when he complained that he was not feeling well. Sieple collapsed and passed away shortly after.

Sieple is survived by his mother, Florence Sieple, and his brother and sister.

Friends remembered Sieple as an opinionated and impatient person, eager to change the injustices around him but fun-loving all the same.

His activism continued quietly beyond his involvement with organizations, said friends.

"He always had someone that he was caring for with AIDS," said Ferrel.



Frank Sieple (left, with Michael Thurnherr) at a kiss-in. Photo from WCT archives

YPS unveils national strategy

Youth Pride Services has issued a report entitled "A National Strategy for Black Gay Youth in America."

The report contains a plan called Year for (You)th. The goal of said plan "is to improve the quality of the lives of Black gay youth living in the United States. [That will be accomplished] by organizing those 25 years of age and younger (alongside elected officials and youth serving agencies), who want to take part in positive activities and gain support that will improve their condition of life, to help develop and improve their physical (health), mental, emotional, social and educational well-being."

The report goes on to list objectives such as promoting community cohesion; identifying culturally safe spaces in every state and designing additional ones; and ensuring high-quality services for Black gay youth.

Year for (Youth) 2012 has the following as its sources of funding: participating youth, private donations from the LGBT community, Youth Pride Services, and foundations and for-profit businesses.

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

Bachmann ends presidential run

Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann ended her White House bid Jan. 4.

The Minnesota representative earlier can-

celed her campaign trip to South Carolina after finishing sixth in the Jan. 3 Iowa caucus.

The New Hampshire primary is the next contest in the race, but Bachmann's strategy had her basically writing off that Jan. 10 contest and focusing on South Carolina, which appeared to be a better fit for her conservative policies. The South Carolina primary is on Jan. 21.

She is known for her staunch anti-LGBT views, even signing a marriage pledge that would limit the institution to opposite-sex couples. In addition, husband Marcus owns a clinic that Truth Wins Out reported practices reparative therapy, a controversial and discredited clinical method designed to "cure" LGBT people.

Kelly Cassidy fundraiser Jan. 18; Gingrich-Jones to attend

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy, D-14th Dist., will hold a fundraiser Wed., Jan. 18, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the home of Brad Lippitz and Jonathan Pizer, 551 W. Stratford Pl.

Candace Gingrich-Jones, the lesbian half-sister of GOP presidential candidate Newt Gingrich, is slated to attend.

Admission is \$75-\$1,000. Interested persons can email KellyCassidy14@gmail.com or call 312-399-1902 for more information.

GIFFORDS from cover

consider Hernandez's quick action coupled with his first aid to Giffords to be the difference between her being alive today or not. He spoke with Giffords months ago but was not at liberty to discuss what she said. "That's really between us and I just do not want to disclose that."

Since that day, numerous groups have given Hernandez accolades and awards. He was even given a standing ovation led by President Obama. However, after the storm of celebrity, Hernandez continued to work within his passion, education. He recently ran for and won a seat on his local school board. "I was never interested in holding an elected office but once a there was a vacancy on the school board, I was approached by some members of the community who asked me to run and I did," he said. Hernandez's central focus, even through his college career, has been on education and higher-education advocacy—especially given these uncertain economic times. "In Arizona, I found it important to protect public education funding," he said.

He ran on a simple platform that included continuing all-day kindergarten; graduating students from high school who were either college- or workforce-ready; and bringing in the support of the business and private community to support the education of the next generation. Hernandez said, "I believe that education begins at the earliest age possible. We need to give these kids the best head start they possibly can get. It is no longer valid to graduate high school seniors just to say they graduated but to provide them the leg-up they need to either enter college or for entry straight into the workforce."

Hernandez noted that it was his own high school's certified nurses' assistant program that gave him the skills he needed to save the life of Giffords: "It's not enough that graduates end up at McDonald's. We need to work with the community and build partnerships with stem programs to properly train and educate these graduates." Hernandez added that "education is a group effort" and that "it's

actually in local and national businesses best interests to be a part of the process. The students get better education and the businesses get better-educated and better-qualified candidates to fill their staff."

Hernandez said that his passion from education comes from his being a first-generation college student: "I'm in my last year at the University of Arizona. Education is extremely important to low-income students. When we raise fees or tuition, in many cases we are making it impossible for those at-risk individuals to finish what they started. We need to begin at the lowest levels: K-12. That's where it's at."

Recently, Hernandez has become involved with the Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute. The institute's focus is getting qualified gays and lesbians elected to public office. "They are helping to train the new generation and this generation in what it takes to be an elected official," he said. The institute offers Hill Congressional Internships, where young LGBT individuals can intern for a senator or a congressperson in much the same way he did.

"The Victory Institute shows you that being gay isn't always a liability but could also be an asset," he said. Hernandez—who, at only 21, has won his first local election and has not yet graduated from college—offers sound advice for those in the LGBT community who would rather sit on the sidelines than be on the field. "If you think just because you are LGBT you cannot serve and could never be elected, you're wrong," said Hernandez. "The institute can show you the successes of others who are qualified and want to serve. In Wisconsin right now, the people are working to elect Tammy Baldwin as the first openly gay Senator in United States history."

Hernandez is not certain of where he will go from here: "I'm 21. A senior in college. I have a lot of time to think about my options. What I do know is that wherever I end up I will be lobbying and working for the public good."

For more information on the Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, please visit its website at <http://www.glli.org/home>.

Proposed ward map has Lincoln Park on edge

BY KATE SOSIN

Lincoln Park residents tend to pride themselves on seeming cohesiveness of the neighborhood. However, that may change, they say, if a current proposed ward map goes through.

The "Map for a Better Chicago," splinters the heavily LGBT neighborhood between five different wards. Under it, Lincoln Park could be spread over the 43rd, 44th, 32nd and 27th wards as well as a new 2nd Ward.

That possibility does not sit well with residents, including 43rd Ward Ald. Michele Smith.

"It's just very impractical," Smith said. "The entire feeling of the ward would shift."

The "Map for a Better Chicago" was put forth by some alderman in an attempt to maintain the same number of Black aldermen on the council. The map has been met with the expected criticism as aldermen representing different interests take up the decennial battle of redistricting.

In a letter released on behalf of Lincoln Park community groups, residents argue that the alternative, the "Taxpayer Protection Map," put forth by Latino aldermen, is fairer.

The issue is a matter of pragmatism, residents say.

Five different aldermen in one neighborhood will make community planning difficult to impossible, residents say. Neighborhood festivals will need five approvals, as opposed to just one or two. In addition, zoning issues could become tricky.

"There are going to be people across the street that are literally in a different ward," said Rodger Owen, president of Lincoln Central Association.



Ald. Michele Smith.

According to Owen, the "Map for a Better Chicago" remap will carve the Lincoln Central Association's represented area between four wards. Other community groups could be similarly affected.

Owen said that community groups have developed a strong working relationship with Smith, who took office in May. A remap that severs the community five ways will mean that local organizations have to start over, he said.

Additionally, Smith's office at 2523 N. Halsted St., will have to relocate, as it will no longer be in the ward.

However, "that's the least of my worries," said Smith, who argued that having to negotiate community planning between five aldermen would be difficult neighborhood residents.

Pat Dearing, president of the Park West Association, said the "Better Chicago" map is problematic politically as well.

"We just had an election," Dearing said, not-

ing that Smith only recently took office. "People who live in certain areas are being disenfranchised. We didn't vote for these aldermen."

Shifts in the population are expected when boundaries are redrawn, she said. But she said that the shifts were too significant for Lincoln Park to be fair the community as a whole.

Lincoln Park is not the only neighborhood to suffer a 5-way split in Chicago's history. Residents in the Back of the Yards neighborhood are engaged in a similar push to unite their community which has been spread out over five wards in past years. Other neighborhoods like Little Italy could be facing a split of up to four wards.

Ald. Richard Mell, chair of the City Council's Rules Committee, has taken much of the heat over the map, which he is sponsoring.

He said that in the redistricting wars, people always lose.

"I know Lincoln Park people are upset, and they have a right to be," he said. Mell said that in his decades overseeing the process, this is the "worst" redistricting he has seen.

The bottom line, he said, is that everyone will have to swallow the bitter pill of compromise if the city is to avoid a costly referendum vote. That may mean that map lines are redrawn over and over again, he said.

"It's not a utopian situation," he said. "It's a difficult situation. ... I've lost people I represented for 25 years."

In the end, Mell said, the goal is simply to figure out what appeases enough wards to gain the City Council votes needed to avoid a referendum.

The magic number is 41.

Lincoln Park will hash out the debate a public hearing Wed., Jan. 11, at 6 p.m. The hearing will take place at DePaul University, 2324 N. Fremont Ave., at Cortelyou Commons.

Another meeting on redistricting will be held Thursday, Jan. 12, at Progressive Baptist Church, 3658 S. Wentworth Ave., at 6 p.m.

Two more hearings are expected to be held, the details of which have not yet been announced.

State lawmakers meeting on marriage equality

BY KATE SOSIN

A group of Illinois legislators has started meeting with local LGBT groups to strategize on making marriage equality a reality in Illinois.

State Reps. Greg Harris, Deb Mell, Ann Williams, Kelly Cassidy, Sara Feigenholtz and state Sen. Heather Steans are in talks with Illinois organizations about introducing a bill that would allow same-sex partners to marry in Illinois.

According to Harris, the bill will not likely come to a vote until at least 2013. Harris believes the fight will be difficult, especially as anti-gay political candidates work to bolster support for upcoming presidential elections.

"I do not delude myself into thinking this will be an easy process," Harris said. "But we need to take the first step."

Harris and others will be working with Equality Illinois, the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal, The Civil Rights Agenda, Log Cabin Republicans and the Human Rights Campaign, among others, he said.

November elections will be crucial for marriage-equality advocates. The entire General Assembly will be up for election then.

"We have to be ready to stand up and defend the gains that we've made and to look toward the next steps," he said.

Harris added that those next steps will be educating the community and the legislature on why marriage equality matters.



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American Historical Assn. conference covers LGBT issues



From left: Amanda Littauer, Don Romesburg, Allison Miller and Nicholas Syrett at the "Queer Politics..." panel. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

A variety of panel discussions on LGBT issues took place at the 126th annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) in Chicago Jan. 5-8. Academics from around the country presented papers at each panel discussion and took questions from the audience.

Amanda Littauer of Northern Illinois University moderated the panel "The Queer Politics of Managing Youth and Sex in the 1920s United States." Don Romesburg of Sonoma State University—whose paper, "Wayward Sexualities, Delinquent Mentalities and Early Twentieth-Century Youth Experts"—delved into queerness as a form of delinquency, how reformatories were used to separate delinquents from society and the surgical and non-surgical methods that were used to control supposed delinquents.

Nicholas Syrett of the University of Northern Colorado presented his paper, "Child Marriage and Contests over Non-Normative Sexuality in the 1920s." In the paper, Syrett a story to illustrate child marriages and the subsequent laws that resulted from these unions, including waiting periods for marriage licenses—which reformers hoped would eradicate child marriage altogether.

Allison Miller of Rutgers University-New Brunswick presented "Therapeutic Discipline and Queer Youth in a School for Delinquent Girls, c. 1926." In her paper, Miller detailed what happened at a reform school in California, specifically the therapeutic discipline that a girl named "Johnny" received from a staff member named Miriam.

Another panel discussion on LGBT issues centered around the book *Bodies of Evidence: Queer*

Oral History Methods. Marcia Gallo of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas chaired the panel and the book's co-editors—Horacio N. Roque Ramirez of the University of California-Santa Barbara and Nan Alamilla Boyd of San Francisco State University—moderated the discussion. Ramirez introduced the book and spoke about the importance of oral history as a way to gain information. Ramirez also talked about his chapter of the book *Sharing Queer Authorities: Transgender Latina and Gay Latino Meanings*. Boyd, in her introduction of the book, spoke about the work's four parts: silence, sex, friendship and politics.

Other book contributors who spoke on the panel included Daniel Rivers of Emory University and Jason Ruiz of the University of Notre Dame. Rivers—in his paper, "Race, Class, Oral History, and the Liberation-Era Divide"—talked about lesbian and gay parenting in the pre-Stonewall era. Ruiz focused on the sexual past of his subjects in his paper, "Private Lives and Public History: Excavating the Sexual Past in Queer Oral History."

During the question-and-answer session, all of the panelists agreed that it was important to have face-to-face interactions so their subjects stayed focused and gave honest answers.

On the last day of the conference, the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) was discussed within the context of lessons learned from integrating minorities and women in the U.S. military. The chair of the discussion was Douglas Walter Bristol Jr. of the University of Southern Mississippi; he also presented his paper, "Making Integration Work: Group Identity, African-American G.I.'s, and Implementing the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

In his paper, Bristol says there are parallels between the repeal of DADT and the integration of African-Americans into the military, including the fact that "bad policies create tensions between being a member of a minority group and being a member of the military" and one needs to be "mindful of the generation gap" in military ranks.

David Hall of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network outlined the history of DADT repeal and the battles yet to come because the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, nor has the Defense of Marriage Act been repealed which would allow military personnel who are in same-sex marriages to receive full benefits for their non-military spouses and children.

Tanya Roth of Mary Institute and Saint Louis Country Day School—in her paper, "Elusive Integration: The Challenges of Integrating Women

into the U.S. Military"—talked about what she said are the still pervasive sex-based limitations on women serving in combat situations. Roth also discussed continued wrongs against women, covering everything from assaults to the denial of benefits.

Lastly, Charissa Threat of Northeastern University spoke on the subject of male nurses in the military in her paper, "Does the Sex of the Practitioner Matter?: Sex Discrimination, Nursing, and the Army Nurse Corps in the 1950s." Threat detailed the nursing shortages in the 1950s and how the Korean hostilities and the emerging civil rights battles over equality re-ignited the debate about the acceptance of male nurses into the Army Nurse Corps.

See upcoming editions of WCT for more reports on AHA LGBT- and AIDS-related panel discussions.

Lesbian raising funds for brain surgery

BY ROSS FORMAN



Rachael McIntosh. Photo from McIntosh

Rachael McIntosh knew something was wrong immediately.

It was only 15 minutes into 2011 and her head just felt a little off—and not from overdoing her New Year's celebration.

She got up to get some water and her vision went blank, and she felt something pop in her head.

"I felt something go wrong in my brain. I thought I was bleeding to death; I thought I was dying," she said.

It took McIntosh about three hours to compose herself enough so she could remember where she was, who people were, and even get up and walk around.

Still, "I didn't want to worry anyone, spoil anyone's good time, so I downplayed it and just told people that I was recovering from the flu, which I was, though I knew that wasn't the issue."

The next morning, McIntosh still had pressure in her head, so she went to the emergency room. Doctors performed a CT scan and found a lesion in her head. They recommended that she get an MRI, which would show, in more detail, what the lesion looked like.

She did—and it was determined to be a lesion on the brain.

"My viewpoint of life is, it's not supposed to be easy; you're supposed to have ups and downs," McIntosh said. "The only way people grow is by being challenged. And I welcome those challenges. I see this as a really great opportunity to grow and become a better person."

McIntosh, 27, a massage therapist who lives in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, has had one of the most trying years. After all, doctors recommended she have an-

other MRI last April, but, without insurance, she couldn't afford it—she was still paying off about \$2,000 in medical bills from January.

"I just ignored it [in April], hoped [the lesion] would go away," said McIntosh, an out lesbian who admits the lesion has impacted her speech, thinking and more.

On Oct. 6, McIntosh had another MRI, and she learned the lesion had doubled in size.

Doctors recommended removal, particularly based on the location and the lesion's unpredictability. The area of the brain where the lesion is located impacts vision, balance and more.

The bigger problem for McIntosh remains insurance—or the lack thereof.

The hospital where she wants to have the necessary surgery is asking for a down payment since she still does not have insurance. So McIntosh has spent November fundraising, reaching out to anyone and everyone.

"It's been a humbling, enlightening experience," she said. "The majority of people who have donated are complete strangers, which is very touching."

To date, McIntosh has raised more than \$6,000. She's shooting for at least \$10,000, which her online research indicates is about 10 percent of what brain surgery might cost.

Donations are being accepted at: Rachael McIntosh, Brain Surgery Fund, 1425 W. Diversey Pkwy., Chicago, IL 60647.

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Immigration activists to go on trial

BY JAMIE ANNE ROYCE

Trial begins Wed., Jan. 11, for six youth immigration activists arrested while protesting an U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Secure Communities public hearing.

Through the method known as Secure Communities, when someone is arrested, that person's biometric information (fingerprints) is sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) for a criminal history check. The FBI checks this information against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) databases. If there is a match, ICE is notified and takes appropriate enforcement steps.

"If there is a match, that doesn't mean the person is necessarily in violation of U.S. immigration law. It just means there's a record of them in our database system," said Nicole Navas, DHS spokeswoman. "The DHS database contains more than 124 million biometric records of people who have had lawful encounters with the DHS.



Tania Unzueta. Photo courtesy of Unzueta

That would include anyone who has applied for a visa, anyone ICE has deported, anyone who has applied for an immigration benefit, naturalized citizens and lawful permanent residents.

DHS hosted a series of public hearings across the country on the Secure Communities program to gain feedback from the community. During the Chicago hearing in August, members of Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL), Nuestra Voz and the Latin@ Youth Action League (LYAL) shared their opinions on the program and called for attendees to walk out.

"The meetings were useless because the government wasn't really going to listen to the community, and the way they've been enforcing stuff has been really bad," said Tania Unzueta, an organizer with IYJL.

After leaving the meeting, six activists—Fanny Lopez-Martinez, Jorge Mena, Arianna Salgado, Ireri Unzueta Carrasco, Carla Navoa and Miguel Martinez—formed a circle on West Washington Street, blocking traffic. Police removed them from the street several times before the activists sat in an entrance to the I-94 expressway. Police asked them to move, and upon refusing, the activists were arrested.

Mena and Unzueta Carrasco have been named among the Windy City Times 30 Under 30 for their work on LGBT undocumented immigrant rights.

"There's been a lot of LGBT leadership within the undocumented immigrant movement," said Unzueta. "Almost every instance of civil disobedience we've done, there's been LGBT people involved. It's something I've never seen in the past, LGBT people at the forefront of these civil disobedience actions and rallies"

The activists, all undocumented immigrants, will plead not guilty to charges of reckless conduct and blocking traffic. They contend, "their arrest was necessary to reveal the harm that Secure Communities programs cause communities," according to a IYJL press release.

"Technically, the government could have the activists deported," said Unzueta. "We haven't had any contact with ICE, as of now. We don't think they're in any danger of being deported because this is such a public action."

The defendants will rely on the "necessity defense," an argument anti-war activists spearheaded in the 1980s. To successfully argue this

defense, they must prove the protest action is directly connected with the laws being protested.

Thirty-nine percent of individuals arrested through Secure Communities report having a United States citizen spouse or child, impacting approximately 88,000 families, according to "Secure Communities by the Numbers," a research report by Berkley Law School. Two percent of

non-citizens arrested through Secure Communities are granted relief from deportation by an immigration judge, as compared to 14 percent of all immigration court respondents.

"[The government] tells us Secure Communities is catching criminal aliens, but the way they are defining criminal is something like a traffic stop makes you a criminal," said Unzueta.

Longtime ACLU director dies

Jay Miller, the longest-serving executive director of the Illinois chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), died Jan. 3 of complications related to emphysema, according to the Chicago Sun-Times. He was 83.

Born in Cleveland in 1928, Miller grew up in Chicago, eventually moving back to Cleveland, the Chicago Tribune reported. He returned to the Windy City in 1961, becoming executive director of the ACLU of Illinois in 1965. He went to lead the ACLU of Northern California in San Francisco in 1971, eventually returning to the ACLU of Illinois in 1979 and retiring at the end of 2000.

"He traveled to every corner of the state to speak out for basic rights — whether popular or unpopular," said Colleen K. Connell, current executive director of the state ACLU. "He simply thought we had an obligation to follow the Constitution."

The group challenged everything from city loitering laws to HIV discrimination in the workplace. It defended the rights of both pro-life and pro-choice protesters, and started a Reproductive Rights Project.

On the ACLU of Illinois' website Connell wrote, in part, "He championed rights for all persons, including women, persons from the LGBT community, persons of color and persons with disabilities. It was woven into Jay's DNA that no individual was less deserving of precious constitutional protections than any other person."

Pamela Summers, who worked for Miller, posted on Facebook, "If all ACLU people were like Jay Miller, we'd all be better off—spoken as a former ACLU employee. He provided an actual moral example to everyone within his ambit."

Services are 11 a.m. Friday, Jan. 6, at Chicago Jewish Funerals, 8851 Skokie Blvd., Skokie.

To make a memorial gift for Miller, see <http://www.aclu-il.org/the-aclu-of-illinois-remembers-jay-miller>.

Wis. governor's ex-staffer, partner face felony charges

BY KATE SOSIN

A Milwaukee gay couple is facing felony charges following an undercover investigation into employees who worked for Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker when Walker was serving as a Milwaukee County executive.

Timothy Russell, a former deputy chief of staff to Walker, is facing two felony counts and one misdemeanor count of embezzlement for allegedly stealing from two political campaigns and a local group that honors veterans.

His partner, Brian Pierick, is facing two felony counts of child enticement and causing a child to expose his genitals after investigators seized the couple's iPhones and computers in the embezzlement investigation and found explicit communications Pierick allegedly had with a 17-year-old boy. According to a complaint filed by the Milwaukee County District Attorney, Pierick allegedly exchanged illicit text messages and pictures with the boy, who told Pierick he was 19. The complaint goes on to allege that Pierick sent the boy a picture of himself with Russell.

Russell could face up to 10 years in prison for the alleged theft of more than \$10,000 from the American Heritage Preservation Society, Inc., which hosts an annual veteran event.

Pierick's charges could come with a \$100,000 fine and 25 years in prison.

Russell's attorney did not respond immediately to a request to comment.

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Cardinal apologizes for gay comment; protest canceled

BY KATE SOSIN

Chicago's Cardinal Francis George has apologized for repeatedly comparing the gay liberation movement to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

On the archdiocese of Chicago website, the archbishop conceded that he "used an analogy that is inflammatory."

The apology came just two days before a scheduled protest against George, which has since been cancelled.

The cardinal told Fox News Chicago in December he worried that changes to the LGBT Pride Parade that interfered with Sunday services at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Lakeview, could mirror KKK protests.

"You don't want the gay-liberation movement to morph into something like the Ku Klux Klan, demonstrating in the streets against Catholicism," he said.

Parade organizers have since announced an agreement with the church, which has declined to weigh in on George's controversial remarks.

The cardinal made a similar analogy twice after the initial statement, causing outrage among LGBT advocates who called for him to apologize and step down.

George's apology came in the form of an official statement Jan. 6.

"I am personally distressed that what I said has been taken to mean that I believe all gays and lesbians are like members of the Klan," he wrote. "I do not believe that; it is obviously not true. Many people have friends and family members who are gay or lesbian, as have I. We love them; they are part of our lives, part of who we are. I am deeply sorry for the hurt that my remarks have brought to the hearts of gays and lesbians and their families.

"I can only say that my remarks were motivat-

ed by fear for the Church's liberty. This is a larger topic that cannot be explored in this expression of personal sorrow and sympathy for those who were wounded by what I said."

The Civil Rights Agenda (TCRA) commended the cardinal's decision to apologize in a statement.

"I am incredibly pleased that Cardinal George has taken responsibility for his actions and has issued an apology for his comments comparing the LGBT Community to the KKK and the hurt those comments have caused," said Anthony Martinez, executive director of TCRA. "A true leader can admit when they are wrong, and the Cardinal has set a good example of leadership today with his statement. Now, with this apology, the LGBT community and the Catholic community can begin to heal the divides that this has caused."

State Rep. Greg Harris emailed Windy City Times, stating, "I am glad that Cardinal George has reconsidered his remarks. Part of what makes America great is that the Catholic Church, and all faiths, are guaranteed Freedom of Religion by our Constitution."

"Similarly, the LGBT community will continue to struggle to achieve equal treatment under the law guaranteed by the our Constitution. In our democracy there will be philosophical, cultural and faith-based differences. However, we should always address these differences with respect and tolerance, and not attacks based on fear."

The pro-LGBT group Truth Wins Out—which took out a full-page ad in the Jan. 1 issue of the Chicago Tribune with the headline "Hey, Cardinal Francis George, Gay is not like the KKK"—applauded the cardinal's apology in a statement. Executive Director Wayne Besen said, "It is gratifying to see the Cardinal take personal responsibility for the hurt he has caused and we hope



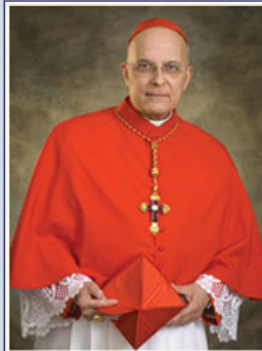
May the tribes of the earth give blessings with his name; may all the nations regard him as favored.

Psalm 72:17b

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Cardinal George

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Statement from Francis Cardinal George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
January 6, 2012

During a recent TV interview, speaking about this year's Gay Pride Parade, I used an analogy that is inflammatory.

I am personally distressed that what I said has been taken to mean that I believe all gays and lesbians are like members of the Klan. I do not believe that; it is obviously not true. Many people have friends and family members who are gay or lesbian, as have I. We love them; they are part of our lives, part of who we are. I am deeply sorry for the hurt that my remarks have brought to the hearts of gays and lesbians and their families.

I can only say that my remarks were motivated by fear for the Church's liberty. This is a larger topic that cannot be explored in this expression of personal sorrow and sympathy for those who were wounded by what I said.

Francis Cardinal George, OMI

The apology, as published on the archdiocese's website.

this incident leads to improving relations with the LGBT community."

LGBT activists had planned to protest against the cardinal outside of Holy Name Cathedral Jan. 8 at noon. Joe Murray, executive director of LGBT Catholic organization Rainbow Sash Movement (RSM), released a statement saying that the protest would be called off on behalf of his organization.

"I want to thank the Cardinal for his sincere words, and ask the Chicago Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender community to receive this apology as a sincere attempt at reconciliation," Murray wrote. "I believe we can now put this matter behind us."

Murray said he would be in touch with Gay Liberation Network (GLN), which was backing the protest, about canceling.

GLN agreed to cancel on Jan. 7, despite initial plans to continue. According to the group, George "said that while he was 'sorry' that he hurt lesbians and gays, that his statement comparing gays to the KKK was 'motivated by fear for the church's liberty.'"

"This is completely disingenuous. No one was challenging the church's 'liberty.' Even though George himself has done everything he can to prevent legal equality for LGBTs, we have never in turn insisted that the church be forced to perform same-sex marriages, for example, any more than others have insisted that it be forced to perform marriages for divorcees."

Activist Lair Scott, who initially called for the protest, also agreed to cease demonstration plans but said he plans to continue to with future action around the issue.

"Saying sorry isn't good enough," he said.

However, confusion remained after the cancellation as some media outlets reported that the protest would continue and other activists disagreed with the decision not to demonstrate.

Many cited mixed messages between Thayer and Murray. Murray released a statement that implied the protest would not go on, while Thayer released a statement saying that it would.

"Initially, there was some miscommunication," Murray said later. "We recognized that both organizations could look at the cardinal's apology and see different things... this points to the strength of our relationship, rather than the weakness."

The two groups did come to the consensus to hold off on demonstrating until February, when GLN has protested outside of the Holy Name Cathedral in past years for National Freedom to Marry Day.

But not all protesters got the messages, and some disagreed. A handful of LGBT-rights activ-

ists assembled outside of Holy Name Cathedral Jan. 8 anyway. Six protesters gathered outside of the church as Mass let out. George's apology did not satisfy the protesters, who said it came too late and meant little.

Protester Andy Karol called the cardinal's apology "completely insufficient" and "not from the heart."

"I don't want people to stop and stay silent and forget about it," said Karol.

"We all know what this is about," said protester Ryne Poelker. "It's about civil unions and adoption rights."

A group of Catholic Charities chapters lost its foster-care contracts last year after the civil-unions law went into effect and the branches refused to place children with same-sex civil-union couples. The charities lost a lawsuit against the state over the contracts. Some activists have argued that the cardinal's recent remarks were payback for the loss of the contracts, worth tens of millions of dollars.

Therese Flanagan passed the protesters outside of the cathedral after dropping her mother off to church. She agreed that the cardinal's apology was too little, too late.

"I just think what he said was so out of line," she said. "You can't spread hate like that and maintain a Catholic base."

Flanagan does not identify as LGBT, but said she supports equality.

Security guards and police eyed protesters from the steps of the cathedral as parishioners poured from the building when Mass let out just after noon. Several of the churchgoers stopped to read signs or talk to the protesters, but the interactions appeared mostly calm and cordial. Some parishioners stopped to debate with protesters, but most continued on their way.

Also present were Murray and Thayer, who anticipated that protesters might come despite the cancellation.

Thayer also called the cardinal's apology "insufficient."

Murray spent time at Holy Name earlier in the week. On Jan. 6, he attended Mass there, where he was denied communion for wearing a rainbow sash, he said.

According to Murray, he was told four times that if he took the sash off, he could receive communion. Murray declined to do so.

"Every other group in the church self-identifies," he said, rebuking the argument that wearing the sash was too political.

GLN and RSM will protest outside the church Sunday, Feb. 12, in coordination with National Freedom to Marry Day.



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Talking with Tammy Duckworth's lesbian finance director

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Leah Israel, the openly lesbian finance director for Tammy Duckworth's congressional campaign in the 8th District of Illinois, is no stranger to political campaigns or politics. At 28, Israel has spent the bulk of her post-collegiate life in the political realm working on campaigns in both Wisconsin and Illinois.

Israel, a native of Highland Park, graduated from the University of Iowa with a major in English and a minor in political science. Before attending school in Iowa, Israel was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While there, she started volunteering for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign.

Volunteering for Dean's campaign motivated Israel to switch her minor to political science and to get involved with politics. Being openly gay and living in Madison changed the direction of her life.

Working for Duckworth's campaign is the latest in a career working for Democrats and democratic causes.

"When I graduated from college in 2006, my first job out of school was for an issue-based campaign called Fair Wisconsin, which was trying to stop the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage and civil unions," said Israel. "I counted myself very lucky to work on this campaign because I felt so passionate about what I was doing, despite the long hours and fast-paced environment ... especially as I watched a lot of my friends go into 9-to-5 jobs they were unhappy in."

Israel was responsible for educating college students at campuses in Wisconsin on the proposed ban. Although the ban passed, working on that campaign inspired and reassured her that politics was a career that was worth pursuing.

Following the Fair Wisconsin campaign, Israel moved back to Illinois and interviewed with Nancy Kohn, president of Nancy Kohn Consulting (her firm does political fundraising and strategizing for senatorial races). Kohn hired her and she started at the bottom of the totem pole. Israel was with Kohn's consulting firm for almost four years; through Sen. Dick Durbin's 2008 re-election, Sen. Al Franken's campaign in Minnesota, Sen. Jay Rockefeller's re-election in West Virginia, Jeanne Shaheen's Senate race in New Hampshire and several others.

Speaking about Kohn, Israel said, "Nancy has been my mentor and means the world to me. She did a great job teaching me the business, particularly how instrumental and necessary political fundraising is. I credit Nancy for where I am now."

During the 2010 election cycle Israel moved on to become the finance director for the Illinois Democratic Coordinated Campaign. There, she had her first glance at how to deal with campaigns from the top of the ticket to the bottom. Israel said their biggest focus was the Illinois senate and gubernatorial races, however, they did work on the four targeted congressional races in Illinois: Melissa Bean, Phil Hare, Debbie Halvorson and Dan Seals as well as statewide races.

After the 2010 election was done, Israel moved on to Duckworth's campaign after Kohn recommended her for the job. That is how she became Duckworth's finance director. "It is very important to me that I work for a candidate who shares the same values as I do," Israel said.

The 8th District, where Duckworth hopes to win a Congressional seat, covers much of the Northwest suburbs and a small slice of Chicago's Northwest Side. Suburbs in the district include South Barrington, Hoffman Estates, Stream-



Leah Israel (back) and Tammy Duckworth. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

wood, Schaumburg, Hanover Park, Roselle, Bloomingdale, Addison, Elmhurst, Villa Park, Rolling Meadows, Elgin, Mount Prospect, Elk Grove Village and Des Plaines.

As finance director, Israel has many tasks including developing a finance plan and working with the campaign manager to figure out how much money needs to be raised for the primary and the general election, should Duckworth win her primary. Israel doesn't have a typical day. She spends many hours dealing with spread sheets, planning events, answering emails and talking to donors to raise more money and hear their ideas for the campaign, so she can put together events that will be the most effective for the campaign and most accurately reflect who Duckworth is.

Israel said working with Duckworth has been a unique experience and she is learning more and more every day.

"I am more and more inspired by Tammy every day," she said. "Having a disability, let alone having had both her legs blown off, wheelchair accessibility has never been an issue I was too familiar with until I got involved with Tammy's campaign. Now every time I go somewhere I am very conscientious of whether or not a place is accessible and I am consistently disgusted by how few places, especially in Chicago, are fully accessible. Tammy could easily live off of her veteran benefits, but instead, wants to run for Congress so she can make a difference, and I enormously respect that. I know she will be an effective congresswoman," said Israel.

"Part of why I work for Tammy is because she will be a great congresswoman for the LGBT community. ... There are very few elected officials and candidates out there, regardless of what they internally believe, who actually make movements and strides for LGBT equality. I know Tammy will be an advocate for the LGBT community and that gives me a lot of joy," said Israel.

As for the future, Israel said, "I think that if you have politics in your blood, you are incapable of thinking about the future. I won't know what I am doing until next November, but I know it will be something exciting."

See <http://www.tammyduckworth.com>.

Springfield reverses vote against civil-union benefits

BY KATE SOSIN

The City of Springfield has reversed its decision not to extend partner benefits to civil-union spouses after a city committee came under fire for voting to deny the benefits based on financial concerns.

The Joint Labor/Management Health Care Committee, a Springfield committee composed of city staffers and retirees, had voted to keep its eligibility standards for insurance, which did not include civil-union spouses.

LGBT activists argued that the vote violated the letter and spirit of the civil-union act, which went into effect in June.

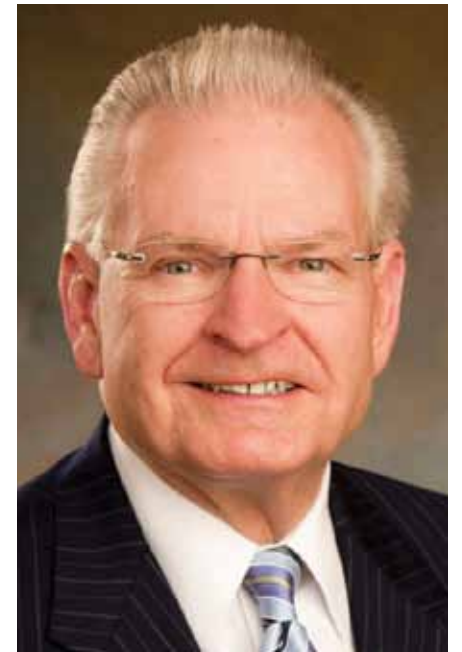
The Civil Rights Agenda (TCRA) announced Dec. 10, 2011, that the committee had voted unanimously to reverse its decision and extend the benefits.

"It is difficult to express appreciation when a unit of government follows the law," said Anthony Martinez, executive director of TCRA, in a statement. Martinez added that the vote reversal was due to a handful of alderman.

The committee initially voted against the benefits due to an actuarial projection that the move would cost the city \$725,000, despite the fact that no city employee in a civil union had yet inquired about the benefits. The committee argued that vote was legal because the city is self-insured.

However, in early January, Mayor J. Michael Houston urged the committee to reconsider, and said that he believed a court would not look favorably upon the decision.

"Given the experience of other units of government that are providing civil union coverage, I do not believe that there will be



Springfield Mayor J. Michael Houston.

a large number of participants joining the plan," Houston wrote. "I urge the committee to strongly consider that assumption in reevaluating its position, especially since it is able to review and adjust premiums on a quarterly basis."

TCRA said a revised actuarial estimate put the cost of the extension at \$66,000, in anticipation of covering just six couples.

According to Equality Illinois, nearly 150 residents of Springfield signed a petition urging the committee to reconsider its vote.

"We commend the LGBT community and our allies in Springfield for speaking out in favor of equal treatment for each and every couple," said Randy Hannig, Jr., director of public policy for Equality Illinois.

Springfield's new fiscal year begins March 1.

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Dykes on Bikes of Chicago now a chapter of San Francisco DOB



Dykes on Bikes at the 2009 Chicago Dyke March. Photo by Mel Ferrand

BY KATE SOSIN

In a landmark move, Chicago's Dykes on Bikes group has become an official chapter of the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes, making the riders a non-profit organization.

News of the move had not been announced officially until now.

Debby Rijos—who took leadership of the group after her aunt and founder Antonia "Tata" Flores passed away in 2009—said the move is historic for the city's Dykes on Bikes group.

"We've evolved from one lesbian wanting to display her pride ... to an organization," Rijos said. "We're going to have a lot more validity than what we did before."

The group had been working as an unofficial entity since 1987. The name "Dykes on Bikes" is a registered trademark of the San Francisco organization.

Last year, the Chicago group rode in its first Dyke March Chicago and, in November, Flores was posthumously inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. Rijos said that kind of recognition inspired her to seek official status.

The new organization will be called "Dykes on Bikes-Chicago." Riders will wear the official patch of the San Francisco organization as well as a patch representing their own chapter, Rijos said. The second patch will be a Chicago flag with rainbow colors.

"There's no better symbol than the Chicago flag, turned gay that is," Rijos joked.

Rijos said the move to an official chapter

opens up opportunities for the bikers to get more involved in the community. The organization will host events and fundraisers. In addition, the group takes on the bylaws of the San Francisco organization, which requires them to participate in the Pride Parade (they have done so already since their start).

Far North Side LGBT bar Parlour on Clark has agreed to serve as the host bar for Dykes on Bikes-Chicago, where meetings and other events will be held.

According to the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes website, 16 other chapters exist in the United States.

Rijos said the Chicago organization is already official. "The certificate is in the mail," she said.

Roe v. Wade anniversary celebration Jan. 24

Planned Parenthood Illinois Action (PPIA) will celebrate the 39th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion, Tuesday, Jan., 24 at Carnivale Restaurant, 702 W. Fulton St.

There will be a VIP reception at 5:30 p.m., with a celebration at 6:30 p.m.

State Sen. Heather A. Stearns will be honored with the Richard J. Phelan Profile in Courage Award for her leadership in supporting a bill that would mandate comprehensive sex education in Illinois public schools. Personal PAC founder Marcena W. Love will be honored with the Dr. Marvin Rosner Award for Lifetime Achievement for her lifelong commitment to protecting reproductive health care.

Tickets are \$39-\$390 each; see <http://www.ppiaction.org>.

Gabin reception Jan. 11

There will be a reception to support Cook County Circuit Court Judge Deborah Jean Gabin Wed., Jan. 11, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St., 6-8 p.m.

Admission starts at \$25; email lauren.v.carter1@gmail.com to RSVP.

Affinity, Amigas Latinas hold Burning Bowl

BY JAMIE ANNE ROYCE

Affinity Community Services—a social-justice organization that works with and on behalf of Black LGBTQ communities, queer youth and allies—celebrated the new year with Burning Bowl, an annual affirmation ceremony. The event took place at Hyde Park Union Church Jan. 7.

This year, the organization welcomed members of Amigas Latinas—a support, education and advocacy organization for lesbian, bisexual and questioning women of Latina

Community Services. "It's an inspiring, uplifting way to start the new year."

Organizers provided a light meal of bread and several varieties of "soup for the soul." Cake was also served to after the burning ceremony to celebrate the cleansing and healing ritual.

Leaders from both organizations addressed attendees, highlighting the previous year's accomplishments and goals for 2012. The event also featured performances from Queer Choir, Drum Divas and Korean American Resource and Cultural Center Drummers. Many more photos are online at <http://www.Windy-CityMediaGroup.com>.

'Out at CHM' to cover leather subculture, activist Bayard Rustin

Out at CHM begins its ninth year with three programs that delve into the contributions LGBT communities have made to Chicago and the nation.

On Thursday, Jan. 19, the Chicago History Museum (in collaboration with the Leather Archives Museum) will host an expert panel moderated by Dr. Jennifer Tyburczy, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow at Rice University's Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, on Chicago's leather subculture. "Chicago in Leather" will highlight how gender, sexual orientation, collaboration and separatism have co-existed throughout the past five decades.

On Thursday, Feb. 9, filmmaker Bennett Singer—co-director of the documentary *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*—and Rustin's surviving life partner, Walter Naegle, will host a conversation about Rustin's life and legacy. The evening will explore how Rustin is being rediscovered by a new generation of Americans committed to social and economic justice. During the conversation, film clips from *Brother Outsider* will be shown.

Lastly, on Thursday, March 8, curators Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier share the thrills and chills of mounting an exhibition on Chicago's LGBT history, and confess to their own trials and tribulations.

Each Out at CHM program starts with cocktails at 5:30 p.m. and programming at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$12 for the public and \$10 for members and students. The Out in Chicago exhibition will be open for guests to view during the cocktail hour prior to each program. Call 312-642-4600 or visit <http://www.chicagohistory.org>



Affinity Executive Director Kim Hunt at Burning Bowl. Photo by Hal Baim

heritage—to showcase their partnership on an upcoming community center.

Attendees purged the previous year's challenges and negativity by writing them down and burning them. They then wrote down affirmations, goals and positive thoughts for 2012; organizers will mail those to them mid-year.

"It's a time when the community can come together and feel comfortable in a safe space," said Alexia Rice-Henry, development and communications associate for Affinity

Quotelines

"But now, the remarkable new reality for Obama in this election is that supporting marriage equality is smart politics. A majority of independents and young voters already favor equal marriage rights. These are important voting blocks, and a key part of the President's reelection strategy. Support for gay rights will also help him energize liberals in the Party and others who think he has not acted boldly around core progressive issues such as immigration and the environment and on other civil-rights issues. Hard-right conservatives who strongly oppose marriage rights, meanwhile, will never support Obama anyway"—Democratic political strategist Richard Socarides, in *The New Yorker*, Dec. 19.

"My New Year's resolution is to werque myself more deeply into some high-level Wiccananigans and to straddle the cone of power with disarming intentions."—Former Justin Vivian Bond, to *Queerty*, Jan 2.

"It wasn't like handing over the torch, but it gave [Lady Gaga] my blessing, because it's nice to endorse young people. She was doing pretty well before that, but it was like me saying to her, 'I absolutely love you, and you go ahead and do what you want to do because you do it great.' That happened to me with people like George Harrison and Neil Diamond."—Elton John to *the L.A. Times*, Jan. 1.

"Even myself, I had no idea of the many injustices in the gay community, whether it's the adoption of children, marriage, benefits, [or] estates. But a lot of it was the assumption in the hetero world, in the straight world—my mother and I, we just assumed that gay people received automatically, by birthright, the same benefits as us."—Pam Grier on her role on *L Word*, to *The Advocate*, Dec. 19.

"I asked [Newt] if he's elected, how does he plan to engage gay Americans. How are we to support him? And he told me to support Obama."—Penn University Prof. Scott Arnold on *Bilerico*, Dec. 21.

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GAY in the LIFE

Mike Anderson

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS BY FORMAN, ANDERSON



Age
41

Hometown
Elburn, Ill.

Relationship status
Single

Education
Kaneland Community High School, class of 1988

Hobbies
Music, traveling, dancing and dining out.

Little-known fact
"I'm talented in many different fields."

Favorite Chicago restaurants
Sullivan's and Rose Bud

Favorite movie
Schindler's List

When the Halloween weekend reveler stumbled while leaving Roscoe's in Lakeview, Mike Anderson sprang into action, aiding the injured customer before paramedics arrived on the scene.

Anderson is, after all, a volunteer with the Kane County Office of Emergency Management and some of his duties in that suburban job include providing CPR instruction to volunteers and numerous Medical Reserve Corp. members. Anderson is a Certified BLS (basic life support) instructor for CPR, AED (automated external defibrillators) and first aid through the American Heart Association. He also has undergone training from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS).



At Roscoe's, Anderson works on the floor staff and in security detail. He wears the familiar gold name badge and an earpiece to communicate with other staff members—but don't expect Anderson to offer a cold beer or sweet cocktail.

"The Roscoe's work, well, I really do that for the fun. I like people and like to talk to people," he said.

Anderson's full-time gig is a bit more stressful. He is a water operator for the city of Geneva, a position he's held for more than 10 years. He is a Class A Public Water Supply Operator, licensed through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

"I have to explain to most a little in-depth about what I do," Anderson said, smiling. "Basically, we take well water and, through reverse osmosis, we take out everything [foreign] except the pure water molecule and then add [healthy] chemicals and aeration to bring [the water] back to its normal state. We then distribute it to our customers."

In short, Anderson is part of a team that delivers the safest possible drinking water (softened, and radiant- and pollutant-free) for the residents of Geneva.

"I like what I do; I really like the customer service aspect because there's a new problem or situation every day; it's never the same thing back to back days," Anderson said. "My job is challenging every day."

Anderson's resume also includes:

- Fire commissioner of the Elburn and Countryside Fire Protection District since October, 2009;
- Certified firefighter II through the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal;
- Intelligence training through the National Intelligence Agency;
- Certified severe weather spotter through the National Weather Service;
- Was the public works superintendent for the Village of Elburn from June 1996 through June 2001; and
- 10 years as an armed auxiliary police officer for the Village of Elburn Police Department.

"All of my jobs are, or have been, rewarding because I'm giving back to the community or providing a service," Anderson said.



T in the LIFE

COMPILED BY KATE SOSIN



Nathan "Precious Jewel" Davis

Preferred pronoun(s)
She

Identifies as
Genderqueer, Trans Female, Diva, Woman of Legacy Victory and Truth

Neighborhood
Lakeview

Zodiac
Scorpio

Life's work
Social Justice Education, Theatre Education, Fashion Muse, Cultural Attache', Youth Leader, Community Activist, Socialite, Oral History Raconteur, and Queer Revolutionary Performance Artist

Career
Youth health educator prevention coordinator, at the Center [On Halsted's] Youth Program.

Hobbies/ interests
Theatre, Fine Dining, Drag, Fashion, Philanthropy, Vintage Clothing, Spirituality and hanging out with friends Kandice, Chadwick and Georgie.

When did you start questioning gender?
"My sister took me with her to Payless Shoes in 1993 to pick out stilettos for her wedding.

She picked out a pair of "dyeables" and then dyed them ivory. The day she picked them up I saw her put them in the top of her closet. The moment she left I was gliding down the hall in them like they were mine! It was that moment that would forever change my life. I was no longer a little boy. I knew I wanted to be a girl."

What is the best thing about being trans/gender-variant?

"I have the opportunity to create my own version of what my gender iconography means to me. My gender expression can be feminine, masculine, or somewhere in between depending how I am feeling the morning I get up. One day I will look like Marilyn Monroe and the next day I will look like Janet Jackson."

How do you explain the way you feel about gender to others?

"I tell them I do not fit within the stereotypical binary confines of gender. I feel I am a two-spirited creature who embodies both the feminine and the masculine. Most of the time one doesn't have to ask because my presence speaks for itself."

Windy City Times Presents "T in the Life"

It is no secret that transgender lives and history have been sorely underreported over the years, even in the LGBT press. It is unusual to see stories about transgender and gender-variant people that respect their identities, and even more uncommon to see coverage that lets gender-variant people speak for themselves.

Part of the reason for this, history tells us, is that a small percentage of trans people could

safely come out. The other explanation is that historically, the gay press tended to focus on gay issues, and transgender news trailed behind.

Windy City Times has long covered transgender issues, and we have expanded that coverage in recent years to break some major local trans news stories. This year, we're trying to take that a step further.

Each week in our print edition this year, you'll

meet a new gender-variant person. They will explain in their own words what being gender-variant means to them and what makes them who they are beyond their gender identity. Welcome to "T in the Life."

Please consider nominating someone for this feature by emailing editor@windycitytimes.com. Self-nominations will be accepted.

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More Self-Reliant Living

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Organic Spirits
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CEO Vanessa Smith outside of South Side Help Center offices. Photos by Erica Demarest.



Outreach supervisor Harold Cherry shows off his education board.

South Side Help Center:

Agency meets AIDS head-on with support and services

BY ERICA DEMAREST

Betty Smith had been working as a respiratory therapist in a local hospital when the AIDS epidemic hit. It was called gay-related immune deficiency (GRID) at the time, but from Smith's experience, the disease didn't care about sexual orientation.

Straight male intravenous drug users were hit hardest in her South Side neighborhood, and Smith realized it was only a matter of time before the mysterious, fast-moving illness claimed women and children too.

Few people were paying attention to the African-American communities on Chicago's South Side, Smith said. Moreover, those who did pay attention didn't show much compassion.

Smith recounts one particularly upsetting experience. An AIDS patient at her hospital had requested a minister to perform last rites, but when the minister arrived, he refused to go anywhere near the dying man.

"He was gowned up. Masked up. Gloved up," Smith told the Chicago Sun-Times in 2004. "He was a minister, but he stayed outside of the room and talked to the man through a doorway." Tired of seeing patients ignored or treated like pariahs, Smith quit her job and launched the South Side Help Center (SSHC) in 1987. In addition to offering HIV testing, education and outreach programs, the family-run nonprofit boasts myriad community-based operations, such as youth mentoring and substance abuse counseling.

Smith's goal was simple: To give her community the help it deserved.

Her first stops were African-American churches.

"Targeting the churches was not necessarily out of religiosity," said Creola Hampton, a longtime SSHC employee, "but because of the impact the church has in African-American communities. People listen to the church, and if the church won't help, then who's going to bring attention to this disease and get us the kind of care that we need?"

Most ministers were hesitant at first. They argued that AIDS was a sinful disease; it was too steeped in sex and stigma to broach in church. Not one to be deterred, Smith shrugged off the rejection and turned to the minister's wives.

"She made it personal and talked to them about how this could possibly impact your family, your sons and daughters," said Betty's daughter Vanessa Smith.

Slowly but surely, the "first wives," as Vanessa called them, convinced their husbands to let Betty share her message. The SSHC team began speaking at Sunday school meetings, spreading the word at church dinners, and offering regular testing and referral services.

"I found [churches] to be very receptive, contrary to what the news media was saying about the religious community," Betty told Windy City Times. "We had some really large congregations get involved. Trinity and United Church of Christ were the first ones, then Sweet Holy Spirit [and] Beth Eden Baptist."

Smith's husband, Vannish, a sharp insurance

salesman, stepped in to spearhead fundraising efforts and became the SSHC's first chairman of the board. The couple's daughters, Valerie and Vanessa, volunteered with administrative and outreach efforts.

By 1990, the fledgling nonprofit had received its first grant (from the Chicago Department of Public Health) and set up offices at 112th and State streets. Although things were going well, Betty and her daughters still needed to work full-time to make ends meet.

"You know, when you're in your 20s, you have lots of energy," Vanessa said with a laugh. "We had purpose. We were driven to really educate our community because we saw the devastation."

Not long after setting up its offices, the South Side Help Center fell victim to constant break-

ins and vandalism at the hands of local youth.

"We brought them in and said, 'OK, what's going on? Why are you breaking into our organization?'" Vanessa said. "They looked at us and said, 'Well, we need something to do. What are you going to do for us?'"

What they did, Vanessa said, was launch an after-school program. Neighborhood teens received free snacks and tutoring services—not to mention a healthy dose of HIV/AIDS education—and Vanessa found her calling working with youth.

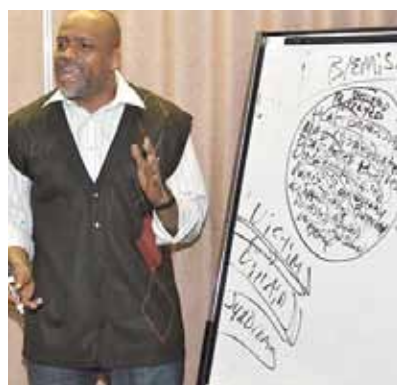
She signed on as a full-time SSHC employee and began visiting local schools, where she spoke openly and honestly about safe sex. Vanessa trained student volunteers to share infor-

Turn to page 15

Communications specialist Creola Hampton, MSM Project Director Charles Nelson, and CEO Vanessa Smith speak at a Sept. 1 event.



South Side Help Center is active in the community in many ways throughout the year. Photos courtesy of the South Side Help Center.



South Side Help Center's Betty Smith (left) with daughter, CEO Vanessa Smith.

SOUTH SIDE from pg. 14

mation and condoms with their peers who were uncomfortable talking to adults.

"It's always been an organization that goes to where the people are—whether it's at the church, or in the schools, or on the streets," Hampton said. "It's about going where people are to give them information because they're not coming here. They're not going to social services or the clinics. They're not going where they're supposed to."

In 1995, the South Side Help Center hired Harold Cherry full-time. The energetic prevention specialist, often called a "ghetto preacher" or "street preacher," was known for his ability to reach 'street' communities such as intravenous drug users or would-be gang members.

Dressed in jeans and wearing earrings and a ponytail, Cherry was able to blend into neighborhoods most outreach specialists wouldn't set foot in. He often brought with him vibrant display boards decorated with graffiti-style spray paint, bright photos and magazine clippings.

"I used to go out and give out literature," Cherry said. "I'd come back 15 minutes later, and it'd all be on the ground... I had to think: What am I going to say to you to make you pay atten-

tion at three locations. It regularly tweaks programs and shifts funds to meet the community's ever-evolving needs.

Cherry continues to lead street outreach efforts, which now include regular visits to community barbershops and beauty salons. Youth programs have grown to include mentoring and several leadership initiatives, and women have become a focal point with gender-specific counseling options.

Vanessa Smith has acted as executive director since 2007, when her mother retired to take care of her ill husband. Betty still stops by daily, and has an active presence.

One of SSHC's main initiatives as it moves forward is capacity building, or helping younger organizations stay strong during tough economic times. SSHC employees regularly travel across the country to share organizational strategies and lessons learned.

"We know what it's like to worry about making payroll, having to keep the lights on," said Pamela Tassin, director of capacity building. "If you look at South Side Help Center, the diversification of funding has allowed us to be able to survive when a lot of organizations were closing their doors. It kind of begs the question: What did we do right?"



CEO Vanessa Smith speaks at a Sept. 1 event.

tion to me, to keep you engaged? What are you going to remember when you walk away from me?"

Although he always talked about prevention and testing, Cherry changed his delivery method daily to keep audiences engaged.

The organization's continual push to reach people in their neighborhoods, at their levels, has kept SSHC alive and strong for more than two decades. It received its first federal grant in 1997 and reached a budget of about \$300,000 that same year.

In 1998, the Smith family experienced a crushing blow when Valerie Smith-Reid, who had worked alongside her parents and sister since Day 1, died of breast cancer. The family established a merit-based scholarship in her honor.

"We grieved," Vanessa told the Chicago Sun-Times in 2004, "but because so many people are depending upon us, we had to continue to work. Today, the organization boasts more than 30 programs, a \$2.3 million budget and 31 staffers

With a dwindling funding pool, Tassin said, many organizations wouldn't dream of helping their 'competitors.' But that's not what the South Side Help Center is about.

"We always assisted other organizations with things like getting their books in order, helping to identify key people for their staff or addressing HR issues," said Vanessa, who's frequently been called 'the collaboration queen' by staffers. "We've always been open and willing to help other organizations."

By creating a nationwide network of shared resources and common goals—instead of viewing each other as competition—Vanessa believes the country will be able to fight back against AIDS faster and more effectively.

"I don't think, Betty, when she started this organization, thought it would last this long," Hampton said. "I don't think any of us did. We thought there would be a cure by now. We're not in this industry to stay long."

See www.southsidehelp.org.

CDC announces new funding for HIV prevention

BY SARAH TOCE

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that HIV/AIDS has claimed the lives of more than 550,000 Americans. At the end of 2008, an estimated 1,178,350 persons aged 13 and older were living with HIV infection in the United States. Of those, 20% had undiagnosed HIV infections.

In part because of this, the CDC has chosen to award \$339 million to local health departments for high-impact HIV programs promoting prevention and education over a span of five years. There are also new guidelines for prioritizing the most effective prevention programs that will have the greatest impact on reducing new HIV infections statewide as well as nationally.

Funds were awarded to health departments in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, eight U.S. territories and eight cities with heavy HIV burdens. The funds are allocated to individual health departments according to a formula that better matched resources to the geographic burden of HIV, as measured by the number of people reported living with HIV in each jurisdiction.

The CDC funding to Illinois for 2009 was \$18,270,586.

"With 50,000 new HIV infections every year and a tough economic environment, the need to do more with existing resources is greater than ever," said Kevin Fenton, M.D., director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention.

Fenton continued, "This new approach to prevention funding is designed to focus on the places where needs are most urgent and on the programs that will have the most far-reaching impact. It will help us achieve the ambitious goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy with the efficiency and urgency the HIV epidemic demands."

In 2009, there were 1,708 new infections diagnosed in Illinois. The lifetime treatment cost for newly infected individuals in Illinois is \$627 million. According to the CDC, Illinois reported 37,880 AIDS cases, cumulatively, from the beginning of the epidemic through December 2008 and the state ranked 8th highest among the 50 states in cumulative reported AIDS cases.

To offer a comparison for the same timeframe in neighboring states, Indiana reported 9,186

AIDS cases (ranking 24th highest), Ohio reported 17,129 (ranking 14th highest), Iowa reported 1,936 (ranking 39th highest), Wisconsin reported 4,999 (ranking 31st highest), and Michigan reported 16,866 (ranking 15th highest).

Overall, the states with the highest number of new diagnoses in 2009 resulting in the greatest financial burden were Texas (77,070—ranking 4th highest), Florida (117,612—ranking 3rd highest), California (160,293—ranking 2nd highest), and New York (192,753—ranking 1st). To put this into perspective, figures from 2009 reveal that it costs the state of New York \$1,707 million annually for treatment costs of HIV/AIDS. Additional state rankings can be accessed directly in-depth here the CDC Website, www.cdc.gov, for 2010 NCHHSTP State Profiles.

"State and local health departments are the backbone of the nation's HIV prevention efforts," said Jonathan Mermin, M.D., director of CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention. "This latest round of funding will help them lead the nation to slow, and ultimately end, the HIV epidemic in the United States—a public health imperative that could finally be achieved."

The Illinois Department of Public Health also

offers a Quality of Life Endowment Fund. The Website states:

"On October 11, 2007, PA-95-674 was signed into law, creating the Quality of Life Illinois Lottery game called 'Red Ribbon Cash' or 'Red Ribbon Bonus Bucks.' Net proceeds from the sale of these tickets are deposited into the Quality of Life Endowment Fund. The Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Health Protection, uses the proceeds generated from the scratch-off tickets to grant funds to public and private entities with HIV/AIDS prevention, education and treatment programs that serve individuals at the highest risk for contracting HIV infection or developing AIDS. Grants awarded from the fund are intended to augment current and future state funding for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and are not intended to replace that funding."

Source: CDC HIV Surveillance Report 2009, Vol 21. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/surveillance/resources/reports/2009report/pdf/table19.pdf>

Remembering ...

Project Open Hand Founder Ruth Brinker



BY SARAH TOCE

At the invigorating age of 89, San Francisco AIDS angel Ruth Brinker died Aug. 8, 2011. Brinker founded Project Open Hand, an organization to assist people with AIDS in receiving access to healthy and nutritious meals they may not have ever had otherwise.

The concept for Project Open Hand occurred quite unexpectedly in 1985 when Brinker, a proud grandmother, discovered that her next door neighbor had succumbed to AIDS without being properly fed and cared for leading up to his untimely death. She was shocked to discover that malnutrition played such a heavy and damaging role in the outcome of the virus.

Having retired from a long and successful career in the food industry, Brinker decided to use her talents in the kitchen for good and began fixing meals for seven clients in the area. That number would soon grow exponentially as more people with AIDS, friends and family discovered the community resource they had been so desperately longing for in the early days of AIDS.

Brinker has said of this time, "I didn't think I was doing anything special. I did what anyone would have done under those circumstances."

Project Open Hand was the world's first charity to provide meals to people with AIDS. In 2000, Ruth's vision for Project Open Hand

expanded its mission to provide "meals with love" to people who were homebound and critically ill with any serious illness—not specific to AIDS.

According to the Project Open Hand Website:

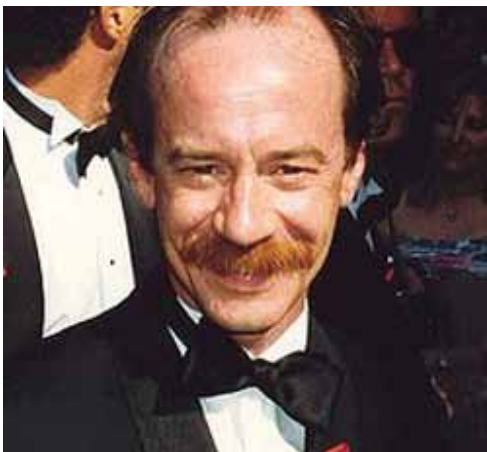
When Ruth delivered her meals, she took the time to talk with each person and help each feel loved and cared for. For Ruth, it was more than nutritious, dependable food. It was "meals with love."

From Ruth's vision evolved an organization, supported by a generous community and dedicated volunteers and staff, who provide daily nutrition and compassion to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community: people living with HIV/AIDS, the homebound, critically ill with any serious illness, and seniors throughout San Francisco and Alameda County, totaling over 7,000 people every year. Her vision has gone on to inspire over 100 other organizations throughout the U.S. as well as the United Kingdom and South Africa, bringing people together to provide nutrition with compassion to their neighbors in need.

Project Open Hand honored Brinker with its Visionary Award (recognizing courage and compassion) in 2010. In her lifetime Brinker also received the National AIDS Memorial Grove and the Jefferson Award. To continue her legacy, the agency will rename its Visionary Award in honor of Brinker.

Photo courtesy of Project Open Hand.

Michael Jeter



Michael Jeter did not let being gay or HIV-positive define his life. Jeter won Tony and Emmy awards for his acting and followed his dreams.

Jeter grew up in Lawrenceburg, Tenn. and went on to study at Memphis State University. According to Jamie Diamond in a New York Times article from Oct. 20, 1991, Jeter did not plan on a career as an actor; instead, he dreamed of being a neurosurgeon. In the article, Jeter said, "The idea of acting must have always been there. I was a child with a vivid imagination. My mother tells me I came up with some real whoppers. I was already pretending."

Jeter spent his life on the stage and in front of the camera. Jeter told the Times, "As a child I told untruths, but I believed them with all my heart and that's basically what an actor does. An actor has to believe his pretense to make the audience believe it."

In 1979, Jeter landed his first film role in Hair. Throughout the 1980s, Jeter performed several small roles in TV and performed frequently off Broadway.

He worked as a secretary in a law firm and was searching for a new career when a casting director sought him out in 1987 for a small role in TV's Designing Women. Later, Jeter received three Emmy nominations for his role in the CBS series Evening Shade (1990-1994) opposite Burt Reynolds. Jeter won the award in 1992 and was nominated twice more for guest roles on two of his other TV appearances, Picket Fences and Chicago Hope.

In the late 1990s he had appeared in roles in Murphy Brown, Air Bud, Johnny Bravo, Mousehunt and Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. In 1998, he played a mental patient in Patch Adams. In 1999, he played a mouse-loving and kindhearted death row inmate in The Green Mile. In 2001 he played Dr. Udesky in Jurassic Park III. Jeter had a recurring role on Sesame Street.

Jeter died at age 50 of AIDS complications on March 30, 2003, while filming The Polar Express. The film was dedicated to his memory.

Photo from Wikipedia.



Yvette Pryor, Rob Campbell and Shannon Cunningham. Photos courtesy of the couple.

Riding for the cause

BY ROSS FORMAN

Days before the 2011 Ride For AIDS Chicago, Amy Kozleuchar asked riders and life partners Yvette Pryor and Shannon Cunningham if they would carry a scarf in memory of Michael McCord, who had died of AIDS complications. Kozleuchar had donated to their ride fundraising efforts last summer in memory of McCord.

"I tied the scarf to my handlebars and, let's just say, I had some emotional moments with Michael along the way," Cunningham said months later, still teary-eyed. "I promised him I would ride all 200 miles if he kept me company. We both came through."

Cunningham and Pryor are just two of the hundreds of local cyclists who rode north from the Evanston campus of Northwestern University, returning the next day after pedaling for 200 miles.

"It was life-changing," Cunningham said. "I experienced just about every emotion you can have over the course of the weekend."

Cunningham, 39, is the senior manager for Baker Tilly. Pryor, 43, is in the military. They have been together for seven years and live in Chicago's Bowmanville neighborhood.

The 2011 ride was their first—each already is registered for the 2012 Ride, set for July 14-15.

"I had no idea I even wanted to do the ride [in 2011]," Cunningham said. "Angie Frank posted on Facebook that they were looking for riders for Team Cheetah. It was interesting timing for me because I made a resolution, 'to be a better steward to my community' in 2011. I saw Angie's post and it hit me that this is exactly what I was trying to do."

"Through the training, I met some amazing people who have become very dear friends. I also had friends [who] I've known for a long time share their HIV status with me. The process and experience became more personal than I had imagined. Most people do the ride because they have some personal connection to the disease or they signed up for the personal challenge of the ride. I was somewhere in the middle."

The first outdoor training ride was awful, Cunningham recalls. She had two flat tires and wiped out on Tower Road.

Months later, "Finishing the ride was bitter sweet," Cunningham said. "Team Cheetah rode the last five miles together. We felt every bump on Sheridan Road and it seemed like forever [before] we got into the [finisher's] ceremony. Rounding the last corner, you can't help but cry. [We were] happy to be finished, proud of [the] personal accomplishment, sad for the countless individuals who died and for the thousands who continue to live each day with HIV/AIDS. That's the reason we all continue to participate in the ride

"The best part of the ride is the friendships. We [still] get together with the people we met from the ride every chance we get.

Pryor added: "Over the course of seven months, I met the most amazing people who shared the belief that we had the power to change the lives of those affected by AIDS one pedal stroke at a time. The ride became a passion instead of an event. I was a team co-captain and, before I knew it, I was knee deep into fundraising, meetings, training, riding clinics and more—it didn't take over my life; it lifted it to a higher level.

"The memories from the ride really come down to human connectivity. It has had a lasting positive impact on my life and helped me realize how empowered I am to help others. The friendships cultivated over the riding season made every mile worth it. I rarely walk anywhere in Andersonville without running into someone who rode [in the event, or was part of the] crew, or someone who donated to [my fundraising], or someone who coached me, or someone who cheered for me. Kevin Bacon has nothing on the Ride For AIDS Chicago."

So is the ride difficult?

Both laughed. "It was the hardest, most fulfilling thing I have ever done," Cunningham said. "Physically, hell yes it was difficult. I affectionately referred to my thighs as 'Sara Lee and Little Debbie' and when you start pedaling up a crazy Wisconsin hill, you start to doubt yourself. But then you think about all of the people who donated just because you asked them to. You start thinking about the HIV-positive riders out there who would rather take on the biggest hill versus face a disease that comes with so much

pain and [a] stigma."

Pryor added: "It was very challenging, but I felt very physically prepared and incredibly inspired."

Yes, the pain was worth it, each said. That includes every sore muscle, scrape, sunburn and bug bite.

Cunningham raised close to \$4,000 for Test

\$750,000 through the 2012 Ride. The 2011 Ride raised about \$500,000.

"The [2011] ride was an interesting experience for us because it allowed both of us to help each other," Cunningham said. "When I told Yvette we each needed to raise \$1,000 she confided that she would rather ride another 100 miles versus ask anyone for money. I, [mean-



Shannon Cunningham and Yvette Pryor.

Positive Aware Network (TPAN) through her 2011 Ride. Pryor raised \$2,500. Their 32-member Team Cheetah raised more than \$62,000 in 2011, well over the team's initial goal: \$34,000.

"I never considered not doing the 2012 Ride," Cunningham said. "Even when I was at Mile 73 on Day 2, when I had a total meltdown, I thought, 'Next year I need to train different.'"

"This year, not only are we doing the ride [again], but we are committed to getting more friends to join us."

Cunningham wants to expand Team Cheetah for the 2012 Ride to 50 members.

"I'm riding so that one day there is no such thing as Ride For AIDS Chicago," Pryor said. "I'm hoping this is the last year, but, if AIDS is still around in 2013, I'll be back and each year after until AIDS is gone."

Cunningham is the fundraising co-chair for the 2012 Ride, and organizers are shooting to raise

while,] would rather raise \$2,000 and knock 100 miles off the event. Together, we both managed to exceed both our fundraising goals and each completed the 200 miles. We couldn't have done it without each other."

Added Pryor: "We rode every mile together, combining our strengths and compensating for our weaknesses. We picked each other up when one was feeling a little tired or low.

"200 miles, 2 dogs and 7 years [together]—I think there is a country song in there somewhere."

For more information about the 2012 Ride For AIDS Chicago, go to: <http://rideforaids.org>. For more information about their Team Cheetah, or to donate, go to: <http://bit.ly/TeamCheetahRFAC>

VIEWPOINTS

WINDY CITY TIMES

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"Windy City Media Group generated enormous interest among their readers in this year's LGBT Consumer Index Survey. Out of approximately 100 print and online media partners who participated in the survey, Windy City was the best performing regional media in the U.S. Only survey partners with a nationwide footprint were able to generate a greater number of responses." —David Marshall, Research Director, Community Marketing, Inc.

 Community Marketing, Inc.



MONIQUE RUFFIN

It's official: Gay is the new Black

The civil-rights issue of our time is same-sex marriage, and the key players in our country's most significant civil rights movement are on the wrong side of it. The Black church has taken on a new role: oppressor.

As a Black person born in the late '60s, I missed the actual civil-rights movement, but the remnants of oppression and stories of segregation were always fresh on my grandmother's mind. It was her lessons in Black history, literature, and Christianity that inspired me to be proud of my heritage. She did her best to teach me the value of diversity, and so I learned to love all people regardless of their race, sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic background.

Although my grandmother taught me to love, she was not immune to her community's mores. And so she also—unconsciously—taught me to deny the humanity of another human. My uncle (one of her five sons) is gay. For his entire childhood and young adult life, he was teased and beaten by his brothers for being gay. Our family never spoke aloud about my uncle's homosexuality, and for decades we called his life partner, who was a kind and loving man, his "friend." It was against the rules to openly accept, acknowledge, or appreciate my uncle for all that he really was. This was being a good Christian in my family's eyes, but for me it was telling a lie and an act of oppression.

Today, I am still shocked by the response of some of my Black Christian friends to the plight of gay people in our nation. "I just don't agree that gay people can compare their struggles to ours," they bemoan. This is followed by the list of injustices Blacks have experienced: the middle passage, slavery, lynching, rapes and deaths.

"Gay people haven't suffered nearly as much as Blacks," they say. "Being Black is not a choice," they add. "As if being gay is," I respond. I don't support the comparison. For me, the sufferings of a person or a group of people at the hands of other humans are frightening and heartbreaking. Instinctually, I feel that if any group can be oppressed, then I can be oppressed. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made this very point when he said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." This is why I'm always flabbergasted when I see some Black Christians fighting against the civil rights of gays. We know firsthand the impact and dehumanization of discrimination.

Like many Black people, I was raised in the church. I was in church every Wednesday evening and all day Sunday. There were Bible study, Sunday school and services. I have some great memories of growing up in church. However, when I became a young adult, I began to recognize a conflict in the church's "truth" and reality. Preachers and church members spoke of the sinful nature of homosexuality but, sometimes, the very people leading prayers, preaching and participating in the choir were obviously gay. Living in Los Angeles, I've sat in some of the biggest megachurches and have been baffled to learn that some of these church leaders—who preach that homosexuality is a sin—are closeted gay people. After watching a close friend's life come undone because of a scandal around her closeted gay husband, I left Christianity for good. Such hypocrisy in a place promoting spiritual growth was more than I could handle.

Not all Christians oppose gay marriage because they are struggling with their own sexual orientation. There are also those Black Christians who oppose gay marriage because the Bible declares, in their interpretation of it, that homosexuality is a sin. This is their sincere belief and value system. However, the Bible was also key in the justification of enslaving Blacks centuries ago. Blacks were believed to be descendants of Canaan's son Ham and, accordingly, were cursed to serve as slaves.

We perceive this as outrageous. Is it not equally outrageous to think that God deems another group of people to be less than? Rather than opposing the right of people who love one another to be married, I will suggest that there are those Black people who might look into their closets and begin cleaning them out. Our

churches might begin making their priority the rising numbers of gay Black men who are contracting HIV each year. They might teach church members self-awareness and inner growth as a means of revealing the spirit of Christ within them. When I was a practicing Christian, learning how to embody the loving spirit of Jesus—who dared not judge but lived a life of love and compassion—would have served me well. I believed then, and still hold dear, Jesus the Christ's command to love. Above all things, love.

Love is the driving component. Those who have suffered grave atrocities at the hands of others know too closely what the absence of love creates. They know the isolation, fear, devastation, and self-hatred the lack of love breeds. We don't need gay people to be lynched in order to know that the denial of their rights is damaging to the progress of all peoples. If one person has suffered at the hand of another, we need not measure that suffering to prove its value. In our attempt to distance ourselves from the plight of gay people, we also distance ourselves from our own struggle and take the position of oppressor.

Gay is the new Black. And some Christian Blacks must be willing to look into their hearts and find the seeds of fear that would have them deny the humanity of another in the name of God (just the way it was done to them not that long ago). Let's ask ourselves: Do we fear gays or fear being gay? Why must gay leaders in our churches and communities serve clandestinely?

Consider what the power of love and acceptance might offer if we are willing to stand courageously with gays as we stood for ourselves decades ago. Our freedom will not truly be granted until we can pass it forward. Gay is the new Black, sadly, because many Blacks haven't been willing to embrace their own practices, secrets, fear and shame about homosexuality. Many Blacks have not been able to reconcile their real-life experience with their faith, and until they do this, they are oppressed people who are also practicing the oppression of others.

Monique Ruffin is a mother, author, blogger and life coach. As a life coach, Monique specializes in assisting clients to harness their divine power to create the lives they were born to live. Monique is the co-founder of a daily inspirational blog ThoughtfulThingstoDo.com. This column originally appeared on the Huffington Post.

Follow on twitter.com/moniqueruffin.

LETTERS

Fund house

This is a call to look at how government funds go to the Catholic Church.

Over the years, the Catholic Church or the men who run it have called our community everything—intrinsic moral evil, dysfunctional, un-family, even violent and much worse—but a low point for the Church occurred recently when Chicago Cardinal Francis George compared our community to the Ku Klux Klan.

Chicago's LGBT community is not letting this pass, unlike many other cities in this country who give the church a pass. Bravo to Chicago. And if you don't mind, I'd like to offer some advice from an old activist. Change does not happen quickly, so a one-time demonstration won't work. You need to keep up the pressure. You also must have a stated goal. Here your choices are obvious: step down, apologize or meet with LGBT leaders. However, the parties must agree to treat each other with respect—something the Catholic Church has never done before.

Note: We have no problem with Catholicism, but we do have a problem with its leaders tossing verbal bombs at our community. But a demonstration, while a great place to start, is not in itself the answer. For that, you must be creative: Hit the Church where it hurts, in its moral pock-

etbook. After all, it seems at times that's all the Church really is—a business.

One of the best examples of how to tame the Church's tongue is in our nation's capital. You might recall that Washington, D.C., has marriage equality. In the lead-up to the vote on marriage equality in the district, the Church took the lead in attacking equality by stating it might have to close social services programs if it passed. But then, some of the elected officials who supported marriage equality made the point clear that the annoying and offensive voice of the Church might lead to stronger legislation. Translation: It could take funds away from religious institutions that the Church was saying it would voluntarily close.

The elected officials called the Church's bluff. In the end, they are both living with each other in harmony. The point is clear: If the church wishes to continue to be an opponent of equality, we must go for the wallet.

So to activists nationwide, let me share some information with you: One of the key funding sources for the Catholic Church is government programs and funding. Do I have to draw a map for you?

Mark Segal
 Philadelphia Gay News

Can we talk?

Cardinal George's apology consisted of two parts. The first paragraph concerned itself with the apology itself. The second paragraph concerned itself with the motivation for his negative metaphor of associating the gay-rights movement with the KKK.

George said, "I can only say that my remarks were motivated by fear for the Church's liberty. This is a larger topic that cannot be explored in this expression of personal sorrow and sympathy for those who were wounded by what I said."

We would like to respectfully invite the cardinal to engage with us in a private dialogue process on his fear for the Church's liberty. We believe that harsh words have been said on both sides of the issue over the years. Instead of issuing competing press release and seeking to sway public opinion, perhaps the time has come for direct dialogue as part of the ongoing process of reconciliation.

We want to reiterate our belief that the cardinal's apology spoke directly to our community in a very respectful and heartfelt manner, and we believe his apology was received and accepted by the LGBT Community in Chicago.

Rainbow Sash Movement

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Van Redin

CHOIR BRIGADE

(From left) Dolly Parton, Keke Palmer and Queen Latifah are in the gospel-themed comedy *Joyful Noise*. See page 22.

DISH

Darling Nookies.
Page 28.

Photo by Ed Negron



THEATER

Nun but the brave.
Page 20.

Photo of Late Nite Catechism's Liz Cloud
courtesy of Vicki Quade



MUSIC

Old school.
Page 26.

Photo by Jerry Nunn



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Limited runs to look out for

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Before she became founder and artistic director of the theater company Erasing the Distance, Brigid O'Shaughnessy honed her craft volunteering and working with Thresholds, largest and oldest provider of community behavioral health-care and mental health services in Illinois.

With Thresholds, O'Shaughnessy worked in its theater arts program which helped individuals with mental illness to share and perform their own stories.

"The more comfortable I got about talking about mental health in my own community, the more I realized that friends, family members, people I met on the train were just pouring their hearts out to me regarding things that they were struggling with—whether it was depression or maybe the anxieties of a roommate or maybe a parent's bipolar disorder," O'Shaughnessy said. "Then I started to sense that were all of these stories hungering to be told and that there needed to be a forum outside of our little program in Thresholds so people could have a voice."

So in 2005, O'Shaughnessy created a not-for-profit arts organization that would eventually become Erasing the Distance to shed light on mental health issues through theater. The idea is that sharing stories through theater helps to combat stigma and educate people.

"I decided to use professional actors for a variety of reasons. One was that I knew actors could really embody the stories to the point so that audience could get swept in and be able to see themselves in the characters," Shaughnessy

said. "And then I was really interested to see if we could erase that distance between audience members and storytellers so we could see that we're more similar than we are different."

Erasing the Distance's upcoming show *Finding Peace in This House* at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre in the Center on Halsted is a revival. It originally debuted in a one-night-only performance in June 2011 at the Chicago Cultural Center and grew as a collaboration with students from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology who collected stories from people struggling to find peace in their "house"—be it a someone growing up in terror-filled home, a person feeling abandoned by his disabled body or how someone copes while locked up in a prison cell. Some of those stories were then selected to be transformed into theatrical monologues for the show.

One of the collected stories was from a transgender woman called Candice, but those creating the show were reluctant to include it. Not because it wasn't a great story, but they were nervous about including it in a show exploring mental illness.

"We really did not in any way shape or form want to send a message that being transgender was a mental illness, because clearly it isn't," O'Shaughnessy said. "We were afraid of giving that impression."

However, once the title was settled upon and the focus of the show was shifted so that it explored the processes that people go through to find serenity in self, the show's creators decided to put Candice's story back into the mix of six monologues.

"Candice's story is really about a woman who at a very young age, even at age 3 or 4, didn't have peace," O'Shaughnessy said. "She felt like she was at constant war with herself because she knew who she wanted to be but that didn't seem possible for many years in her life."

In creating the show, O'Shaughnessy said some of the original people interviewed actively got involved with the actors portraying them (like a slam-poet with cerebral palsy), while others chose to step away from the process and see



Millicent Hurley portrays the transgender character Candice in Erasing the Distance's *Finding Peace in This House*. Photo courtesy of the company

how things turned out later. Either way, each original person interviewed got a copy of their script so they could see what was included.

At the previous performance of *Finding Peace in This House*, Candice was in attendance and participated in the talkback session.

"She actually talked to the audience about how it impacted her and how moved she was to see her own self reflected back to her," O'Shaughnessy said. "She was like, 'Wow, I've gone through this huge journey and I know it because I've lived it, but sometimes I forget

about the depth of my own experience and then when I saw it reflected back it was like seeing it in a whole new light."

Erasing the Distance's production of *Finding Peace in This House* plays 7:30 p.m. Jan. 23-24 and Jan. 30-31 at The Center on Halsted's Hoover-Leppen Theatre, 3656 N. Halsted. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Visit <http://www.brownpapertickets.com> and type in the search term "Finding Peace" for tickets. For more information on the organization, visit <http://www.ErasingTheDistance.org>.

Diverse new series

The Raven Theater is introducing its new "Raven's Evermore Series" to highlight emerging and diverse artists in theater, music and dance. On the bill through spring are modern-dance works by the Joel Hall Dance Company (March 10 and April 14), jazz music from George Goetschel & Friends (March 18) and the return of James Anthony Zoccoli's popular memoir piece *Wiggerlover* [white boy+Black dad=gray areas] about growing up in an interracial family in 1979 (April 6-7 and April 13-14).

However, to launch Raven's Evermore Series is a one-woman show from out performer Kelli Strickland called *We've Got a Badge for That*. Originally premiered at the Filet of Solo festival, the piece is a coming of age story of one girl in the scouts dealing with puppy love, pyromania and peach schnapps.

Strickland's past work include starring in the feature film *Hannah Free* (playing young Hannah with Sharon Gless) and holding the former position of Executive Director of Bailiwick's Lesbian Theatre Initiative.

We've Got a Badge for That runs at 8 p.m. Jan. 13 and 14 at the Raven Theatre's East Stage, 6157 N. Clark. Tickets are \$20 and \$15 for students and seniors. For more information on the Raven Theatre's call 773-338-2177 or visit <http://www.raventheatre.com>.

Send theater news and other related tidbits to scottishplayscott@yahoo.com or Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com.



Ironmistress.
Photo from
Oracle
Productions

THEATER REVIEW Ironmistress

Playwright: April De Angelis
At: Oracle Theatre, 3809 Broadway
Phone: 252-220-0269
<http://www.oracletheatre.com>; no admission
Runs through: Feb. 11

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The title of April De Angelis' play isn't a veiled reference to Margaret Thatcher, nor is it the latest Marvel Comics series (although Darcy Elora Hofer's leather-and-grommet costumes fit right into that genre's iconography). So we know what our story is *not*, but that's of small assistance in understanding an allegory steeped in mosaic narrative, expressionist motifs, elevated emotions and smoldering sexuality.

Our plot—what of it we can recognize—focuses on Mrs. Martha Darby and her daughter, dubbed "Little Cog" (as in "little cog in a vast machine") at birth by the late ironworks magnate Mr. Abraham Darby. Following his death, his widow refused to relinquish her claim to his empire by selling or re-marrying, but assumed management of the business herself—no easy task at the dawn of the 20th century, when men ruled the world of commerce. She prevails, however, and diligently schools her child in the skills the latter will need to continue the family business. Cog, however, displays a fanciful temperament, making for tensions that eventually force

the two women to communicate in hypothetical fables recounted during their lessons in social deportment. Twice, the play appears to be over, but not until a scene portending a future not modeled on hard, cold, rigid metals are the generational conflicts resolved.

So, is this a feminist allegory of the Industrial Revolution, a criticism of Victorian-era capitalism or a diatribe on male cultural supremacy? Are its neo-gothic elements—a murdered corpse discovered by Cog on the hill overlooking the mills, the cast-iron statue of a woman that Martha contemplates as one would an icon—meant to recall Mary Shelley or Jean Genet? What purpose do the flashbacks to Martha's girlhood and Cog's (inevitable) confession of paternal incest serve? Lastly, what's with the armored dresses, even the hoop skirts giving the impression of having been constructed by blacksmiths, rather than tailors?

Comprehension of our enigmatic text being difficult in the 75 minutes before De Angelis' manifesto—well, runs out of steam, and playgoers may want to shelve their questions and focus instead on the spectacle: Katherine Keberlein and Sarah Goeden navigate their fire-and-steel poetry with athletic stamina and impeccable accents within Michael Mroch's erector-set environment (its foundry ambience augmented by the Oracle Theatre storefront's renovations-in-progress). Whatever else *Ironmistress* may promise, there's no denying the artistry expended on this ambitious project.

THEATER REVIEW

Ten

Playwrights: Many (or Jenny Connell, J.T. Rogers, Andrew Hinderaker, Caitlin Montanye Parrish, David Rabe, Craig Wright, William Nedved, Eric Bogosian, Maggie Andersen and members of Natural Gas)
At: Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Phone: 773-283-7071;
Free admission, but reservations required
Web: <http://www.thegifttheatre.org>
Runs through: Jan. 15

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Don't be surprised if The Gift Theatre leaves you with warm and fuzzy feelings of affection with *Ten*. This free short-run show is Gift's way of giving back (all the actors are donating their time), but it also gives audiences a chance to reflect on all that this ambitious theater company gives to the Chicago theater scene in terms of thoughtful and enjoyable entertainment.

Ten is composed of 10 short plays by 10 different playwrights who have been produced by the often acclaimed storefront theater ensemble up through its 10th-anniversary season this year. There are world-premiere works by Gift ensemble members, by guest playwrights (some internationally known like Eric Bogosian, David Rabe and JT Rogers) and one thought on the spot by the resident improv company, Natural Gas.

With so much great work on tap (and at such a great price), it seems churlish to point out which works are stronger or better performed than others. However, like parents who secretly pick favorites among their children while professing that they love them all equally, it's easy to see which plays stand out more than the others.

Guy Massey is hilarious in *Seven Lies* by JT Rogers (*The Overwhelming*) which features an anti-Mormon fanatic struggling to recount his experience touring Salt Lake City's Temple Square. (Let's just say that a beautiful Peruvian Mormon missionary changes his original plans.)

Anna Carini and Boyd Harris also do particularly well as a first-time dating couple negotiating that "come-up-to-my-place" discussion in a refreshingly frank and smart 10 Dimensions by Caitlin Montanye Parrish (*A Twist of Water*).

William Nedved's *Prairie View* feels like it could be expanded to a full-length play, what with its intriguing central protagonist (Brittany Burch) as a young hipster dealing with terminal cancer and coping with the rules and regulations of living in a hospice. David Rabe's *It's Just the Moon* about two estranged brothers back in their childhood home also doesn't feel so self-contained in just 10 minutes.

Offering solid think pieces are Eric Bogosian (*subURbia*) with Tip Jar (where a high-powered businessman makes an unexpected offer to his regular barista), and Craig Wright (*The Pavilion*) with a transferable ghost story called *Dead*.

Rounding out the *Ten* collection is Maggie Andersen's *No Stars* in Jefferson Park, which is an excerpt from a book she's working on about the founding of Gift Theatre. Although some may see it as too self-referential, it does capture the excitement that Chicago's theater scene offers to ambitious young artists hoping to create important theater (and strike it big to become the next *Steppenwolf*). After 10 years, Gift Theatre isn't quite there yet, but it is most definitely on its way.



Ten. Photo courtesy of the Gift Theatre

SPOTLIGHT



If you missed the 2008 Tony Award-winning Best Musical *In the Heights* the first time it hit Chicago in 2010, now's your chance to see it again with the non-Equity national tour. The show, by composer/lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda and playwright Quiara Alegria Hudes, follows the fortunes of a largely Latino community in New York's Washington Heights neighborhood on the hottest day of the year. In *In the Heights* continues through Jan. 15 at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. Performances are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, Jan. 11-13; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14; and 1 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15. Tickets are \$25-\$75; call 800-775-2000 or visit <http://www.broadwayinchicago.com>. Photo by John Daughtry

Late Nite Catechism

Playwright: Vicki Quade & Maripat Donovan
At: Royal George Theatre Complex,
1641 N. Halsted St.
Phone: 312-988-9000
www.theroyalgeorgetheatre.com; \$30
Runs through: open run

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When Vicki Quade and Maripat Donovan's first adult-catechism class assembled at Live Bait Theatre in 1993, it was easy to nostalgize over the Catholic Church in its halcyon days following the reforms of Vatican II: our country had elected its first—and to date, only—Catholic president, the post-WW II "baby boom" made for crowded classrooms requiring armies of teachers, and parents reveling in optimism, enlightenment and economic prosperity eagerly enrolled their offspring in parochial schools, motivated by piety, but also by the academic and social advantages associated with its exclusivity.

Oh, but in the cynical light of 2012, with the Roman church under attack from accusations of inhumanity and corruption, it's a brave actress willing to don the gabardine and wimple for an interactive drama-*verité* play that casts us in the role of supplicants seeking indoctrination of the sort that many previous adherents have fought to escape. To

be sure, our mentor—at this performance, portrayed by former Free Associate company member Liz Cloud—exhibits the unflappable wit cultivated by all trench-experienced educators, referencing Lindsay Lohan and "Fear Factor" while frequently deviating from her lesson plan to discuss the sometimes-bizarre cultural aspects of growing up Catholic in America (burying a St. Joseph statue in the yard of a house-for-sale, for example).

The riskiest segment of the evening, however, occurs in the second act when Sister opens the floor to audience queries on Catholicism as it is practiced today. Confronted with the inevitable issue of Cardinal George's recent ill-chosen comments, the savvy surrogate-Sister remained unruffled—first explaining the controversy to the non-Chicagoans in attendance, then speculating on the possibilities of His Eminence himself appearing in the *Pride* parade, riding a float emblazoned with multiple banners proclaiming "God waters ALL His flowers!"

Encapsulated in this cheerfully acerbic reply is the reason that *Late Nite Catechism* has run continuously for 17 years in countless cities. The duty of any religion is to address its own time, and even if (like me) you're not Catholic, as long as you can remember not to sit with legs crossed or shout out your answers during quizzes—"We are not Baptists!" admonishes Sister—this smart, but never hostile, little show offers a diversity of humorously incisive observations to take home with you.

DOUBLE REVIEW

Boobs and Goombas: A Super Mario Burlesque

Playwright: "MsPixy"

The Boobs of Khan: A Star Trek Burlesque

Playwright: The Nerdologues
Both at: Gorilla Tango Theatre,
1919 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Phone: 773-598-4549; \$20
<http://www.gorillatango.com>
In an open run

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

At Gorilla Tango Theatre, Boobs are the brand when it comes to burlesque. This rental theater space has given prime performance slots to many Boobs-title spoofs based upon fanatical fanboy properties ranging from The Lord of the Rings (Fellowship of the Boobs) to Indiana Jones (Temple of Boobs).

With so few new shows opening at the start of January, I thought I'd sample some Gorilla Tango burlesque with two of its long-running 18-and-older shows: Boobs and Goombas: A Super Mario Burlesque and The Boobs of Khan: A Star Trek Burlesque.

Now I'll admit that as a gay man, I have limited experience following burlesque shows (save for Vaudezilla's super-fun 2009 burlesque of the film The Big Lebowski called Rollin' Outta Here Naked seen at Gorilla Tango as a rental show). Without the titillation that comes from seeing so much female flesh of various shapes and sizes on display, I'm going to understandably focus on other production elements ranging from the stripping costumes to the script.

Inevitably, most of these shows feature a flimsy plot twist where the usually male heroes of the original have been transformed into women, forcing them to go on a quest to become men again. In between come striptease numbers



The Boobs of Khan. Photo courtesy of Gorilla Tango Theatre

based upon the various characters or creatures from the original properties.

In terms of acting, I was disappointed that many of the performers (identified by their burlesque names) only half-heartedly attempted to offer imitations of the originals. In the Star Trek spoof, Sadie Hotking wasn't robotic enough as the android Data, while Zantana Zor-elle wasn't as stoic and wooden as she could have been as the Vulcan Spock.

Bella Canto did try to bring some William Shatner-styled overacting as Kirk, but she seemed to go over the top up front rather than build to a peak of over-exaggeration. As the plumbers Mario and Luigi, Coca Puffs and Angel de Vil respectfully felt hindered by their spicy-meat-a-ball Italian accents. Only Diva LaVida seemed to create fully defined characters, be it the snarling villain Khan in the Star Trek spoof or the drug-dealing Toad in the Super Mario spoof.

The costuming for both shows certainly were the creative high points, especially the fantastical Super Mario creatures. (The panel-revealing turtle was plenty of fun.) Yet I would have liked better striptease choreography and more of a sequential taking-off reveal as we eventually get down to the pasties in both shows.

Now I know that I am not in the target audience for Gorilla Tango's burlesques. But with

better acting, choreography and storylines, these Boobs spoofs might be more worthwhile even to those who aren't as interested in what each title promises.

Joffrey hosting African dance class for MLK

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Academy of Dance—the official school of the Joffrey Ballet—is hosting an African dance master class with Andrea Vinson.

Students learn a variety of traditional African dance steps accompanied by live drummers. The class takes place on the third floor of Joffrey Tower, 10 E. Randolph St., on the official Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Monday, Jan. 16, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

The African class is \$10 per person. Space is limited, so interested participants are encouraged to make a reservation by contacting the Academy of Dance by Friday, Jan. 13, at reception@joffrey.org or 312-784-4600.

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CRITICS' PICKS

Elizabeth Rex, Chicago Shakespeare Theater at Navy Pier, through Jan. 22. Heavy lies the crown of England, spurring its wearer to seek comfort with the actors of William Shakespeare's company, everyone—us, too—emerging the wiser for their encounter in Timothy Findley's speculative drama. MSB

The Magic Flute, Lyric Opera of Chicago, through Jan. 22. Mozart's final full-length stage work from 1791 is a wonderful introduction to wonders of opera. Kids will revel in the magical stage effects and catchy tunes, while adults can ponder all of the Masonic symbolism. SCM

Opus, Redtwist Theatre, through Jan. 29. A vicious queen destroys a famous string quartet in Michael Hollinger's acerbic drama about the intense world of classical music. There's much more going on in this beautifully acted staging, but I got your attention, right? Go see it. JA

Pump Boys and Dinettes, Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre at No Exit Café, through Jan. 15. You're right there in the diner (and sometimes the garage) with this intimate musical revue celebrating the lifestyles of humble Americans wearing their names embroidered above their hearts. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT, JR.

Joyful Noise; film notes

Thank God for queer writer-director Todd Graff. With his latest film, a quasi-musical called **Joyful Noise**, he has brought back to the movies (after a 20-year absence) the singular talents of the Backwoods Barbie herself, Dolly Parton. Parton looks increasingly like a visitor from a foreign planet—a place where inhabitants wear pounds of makeup, bouffant wigs and glittery clothes, as well as subsist on a liquid diet abetted by lots of plastic surgery procedures and cheerfully admit that “it takes a lot of money to look this trashy.” Yet none of these physical trademarks detracts from Parton’s buoyant Southern charm or from her seemingly endless musical gifts.

It’s not hard to see why Parton has finally agreed to return to the big screen. Graff’s movie, a gospel mash-up of *Sister Act* and *Footloose*, is an unabashed cornball confection that is about as modern as a Grandma Moses painting and gives Parton a role that cannily exploits her manufactured persona and exuberant, what-the-hell acting style. Even with a creaky conceit that stretches credibility to the limit, this old-fashioned movie is a crowd-pleaser that really pleases.

Graff’s secret weapon is Parton’s co-star, the almighty Queen Latifah, whose talents are also pretty spectacular and whose ability to connect with modern audiences anchors the movie in what little reality it maintains. Latifah is nothing if not a level-headed actress. She specializes in characters who inspire trust, and who audiences look at to find their bearings as well as to learn the moral of whatever story she’s embellishing with her presence. Here, as Vi Rose Hill, she’s a conservative nag who wants to keep to the straight and narrow when she’s asked to take over guiding the gospel choir of the little church



Dolly Parton (left) and Queen Latifah in *Joyful Noise*. Photo by Van Redin

in Pacashau, Ga., after Parton’s husband (an ossified Kris Kristofferson) has kicked off.

Although Parton as G.G. Sparrow—the economically depressed hamlet’s richest citizen—isn’t happy with competitor Vi Rose taking over the choir, for the sake of unity she agrees to the change in leadership. Moreover, Vi Rose is none too happy with the “pop junk” (like “Man in the Mirror” and “Maybe I’m Amazed”) the choir has been performing or when her spirited 16-year-old daughter, Olivia (Keke Palmer), puts a little too much emphasis into her solos and makes it apparent that she’s fallen for Parton’s visiting grandson, Randy (Broadway performer Jeremy Jordan)—a troublemaker with a dreamy voice, dreamy dimples and a dreamy smile.

However, the audience knows that Vi Rose doesn’t need to worry—not about the burgeoning interracial romance between Olivia and Randy (it’s so chaste that all it seems to be missing are the fidelity rings); not about when and if her kids will learn the truth about her wayward husband; and not if her teenage son with Asperger’s syndrome will be okay. (There’s also a hint that he might be gay.)

Mostly, we know that Vi Rose doesn’t need to worry about whether she and G.G., with her form-fitting choir robe and matching outfits, are ever going to get along or, heaven forbid, what the outcome of the big gospel competi-

tion will be. Naturally, G.G. will eventually confront Vi Rose and the two will have a big ol’ public bitchfest where the zingers will fly and, with this being Southern-fried hokum territory, both Latifah and Parton will spout one aphorism after another throughout the entire movie. Taking into account the delicate balancing act of having two big stars to please, Graff gives them both musical and dramatic moments in which to shine.

Graff, who started in the business as an actor before graduating to screenwriting and directing, has gotten less original with each of his three feature films. *Camp*—his 2003 debut that looked at a bunch of teenage showtune queens at a Broadway musical camp—remains fresh, funny, poignant and observant while 2009’s *Bandslam*, another teenage comedy (this one focused on high-school rock bands) was much less diverting. Although it’s quite entertaining, *Joyful Noise* is incredibly formulaic and predictable.

Yet, what all of Graff’s movies have in common is not just his talent for assembling expert casts and drawing excellent performances out of them but the forthright love of music in the films. The musical numbers in his movies elevate and energize them, enlarging both his characters and his audiences’ identification with same—a rare gift. (*Glee* could sure use his way with staging and shooting a song.)

This facility with music is front and center in *Joyful Noise*. When, at the climax, Parton, Latifah and company let loose with a long melody wrapped around Sly Stone’s “I Want To Take You Higher,” the audience goes haywire with the exultation of the moment. Suddenly, the mawkishness becomes complete and Graff’s movie more than lives up to its title.

Film notes:

—James Franco goes the queer poet route again after portraying gay icon Allen Ginsberg in **Howl**. This time he writes, directs, produces and stars as Hart Crane, the sailor-chasing modernist poet who committed suicide in 1932 and whose seminal work, *The Broken Tower* gives Franco’s film its title. The movie (which co-stars Michael Shannon and Franco’s brother, Dave) was shot in black and white, and is available now through Focus World’s online digital VOD service (a DVD release arrives at the end of March). http://focusfeatures.com/focusfeatures/film/the_broken_tower

—Integrity Northern Illinois, the Diocese of Chicago’s chapter of Integrity USA, presents **God**

and Gays, a film series focusing on “religious communities’ discovery of homosexuality and how they respond to it.” The series runs Friday, Jan. 13-Friday, Feb. 3. All screenings will take place at the Center on Halsted (3656 N. Halsted St.) beginning at 7:30 p.m. A \$5 donation is asked and refreshments, including popcorn, will be provided.

The line-up:

Jan. 13—*Incompatible with Christian Teaching*, a 45-minute documentary from 2009 centered on The United Methodist Church’s struggle to “change institutional orthodoxy.”

Jan. 20—*Trembling Before G-d*, the excellent 2001 documentary that focuses on gay and lesbian Hasidic and Orthodox Jews.

Jan. 27—*Anyone and Everyone*, a documentary originally broadcast on PBS in 2007 about religious families dealing with their children’s queer sexuality.

Feb. 3—*Love Free Or Die*, a sneak preview of Macky Alston’s documentary portrait of Bishop Gene Robinson that is slated for screening at this year’s Sundance Film Festival.

Further information is at <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>.

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

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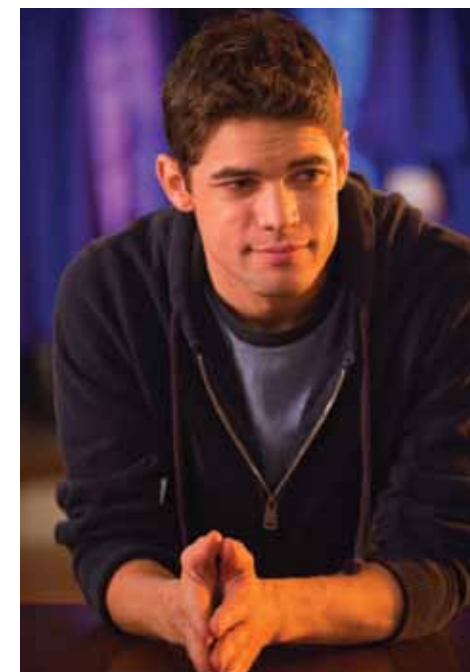
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Jeremy Jordan in *Joyful Noise*. Photo by Van Redin

Winter queer movie preview: DVD, theater

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Winter has officially arrived in Chicago though you can't tell by the temperate weather we've been experiencing to date. At the movies, there's plenty of queer-friendly fare now in theatres (Pariah, Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Sherlock Holmes 2 and Joyful Noise, as just a few examples). In addition, a lot more such movies are on the horizon. A sneak peek at some things to anticipate:

January

Dirty Girl, a road-trip comedy in which an overweight gay twentysomething hooks up with a sluttish party girl, is in theatres and arrives on DVD Jan. 17.

Albert Nobbs, which landed fourth on my 2011 Top 10 LGBT film list, finally arrives in Chicago Jan. 27. Glenn Close stars, produced and adapted for the screen this Victorian-era drama. She plays a woman impersonating a man, working as a genteel butler in a small residential hotel. Janet McTeer co-stars.

That same weekend, the Music Box opens the French transgender drama **Tomboy**, which has been winning raves on the festival circuit and played at last Fall's Reeling Fest.

Pedro Almodovar's twisted drama **The Skin I Live In** begins a one-week return to theatres at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., Jan. 27.

February

Madonna's feature directorial debut, **W.E.**, is a historical romance focusing on the controversial romance of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (played by Abie Cornish and James D'Arcy). The film has drawn wildly divided opinions on the festival circuit (some have hailed the performances, others are calling it the camp movie of the year) and arrives in Chicago Feb. 3.

Two old-fashioned haunted house movies—**The Woman in Black**, an expensive adaptation of a British stage and television movie set during the Edwardian period starring Daniel Radcliffe and the indie suspense thriller **The Innkeepers** with lesbian actors Sara Paxton (wondrous in Martha Marcy Mae Marlene) and Kelly McGillis—both arrive in Chicago on Feb. 3. The latter is now available OnDemand as well.

For classic fans, the arrival of a special edition of the queer-infused classic 1930 Oscar winner **All Quiet on the Western Front** Feb. 14 will be cause for celebration.

J. Edgar—Clint Eastwood's long-winded biopic of J. Edgar Hoover, the controversial one-time head of the FBI, scripted by Oscar-winning queer writer Dustin Lance Black—arrives on DVD Feb. 21. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the title role and Armie Hammer plays Hoover's longtime (and apparently long-suffering) companion Clyde Tolson. Judi Dench portrays Hoover's overbearing mother with typical finesse.

The Music Box Theatre will present Frederick Weisman's sex-rated documentary **Crazy Horse**, about the legendary Parisian stripper palace, beginning Feb. 24.

The **84th Academy Awards**, aka known as the gay man's national holiday, will be presented Sunday, Feb. 26, with the very welcome Billy Crystal ably stepping back in to the hosting duties. Here's hoping that the show's producers have had the sense to also re-sign queer icon Bruce Vilanch as head writer. Look for a lavish tribute to Elizabeth Taylor and other queer audience favorites at some point. Also, here's my official shout-out to the Academy to give Doris Day an honorary Oscar already.

Winter Movie Special

The Australian crime drama **Snowtown**, based on a true story about a murderous crime boss Down Under and his love affair with the 16-year-old son of his girlfriend, appears OnDemand Feb. 29.

March

The campy fantasy-action thriller **Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters**, with Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton, is in theaters from Paramount March 2. I can't wait!

Another crime thriller, **The Raven**, is set in the Victorian era and stars John Cusack as Edgar Allan Poe. British hunk Luke Evans, who is reportedly out, co-stars.

Weinstein releases the thought-provoking documentary **The Bully Project**, which addresses the subject from all sides, March 9.

The queercentric **My Week with Marilyn**, with its luminous title performance by Michelle Williams, arrives on DVD March 13.

Julia Roberts, Lily Collins, Armie Hammer and Sean Bean co-star in the dark comedy fantasy

thriller **Mirror Mirror**. (This seems to be the year for fairy-tale action flicks.) Roberts gets to play the evil queen and seems to have a great time hamming it up. March 16

Nothing is setting the hearts of readers (apparently) and those looking for the next Twilight blockbuster series on fire more than the film versions of **The Hunger Games**. The first movie arrives March 23 so stake your place in line now.

Eating Out: The Open Weekend, the latest in the series of soft-core porn comedies featuring a bevy of muscular hunks and bitchy sidekicks (male and female) from Q. Allan Brocka, arrives on DVD March 27.

April

Just as spring arrives, it's time to go back to sea with **Titanic 3D** (April 6) and TV star (Will & Grace)-turned-Broadway headliner Sean Hayes plays one of **The Three Stooges** the following week. Lesbian actress Jane Lynch co-stars in the latter movie.



Leonardo DiCaprio in *J. Edgar*. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros Pictures

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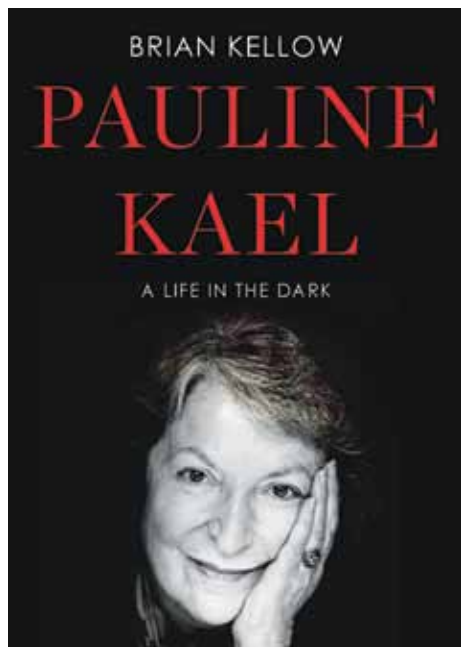
Winter Movie Special

Brian Kellow on iconic film critic Pauline Kael

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

For movie lovers (not to mention critics) of a certain age, the name Pauline Kael—who almost single-handedly raised film criticism to the level of art—is a hallowed one. On paper, her razor-sharp insights, endless wit and willingness to take on sacred filmmaking cows endeared her to millions of readers who read her weekly column (from 1967 to 1991) in the *New Yorker* and her many film collections. Kael reigned during a creative, halcyon period in American movies and a rave from her was strong enough to help kick-start the success of many a financially troubled production.

However, Kael's outspokenness and distrust of East Coast intellectualism, as well as her sometimes overzealous opinions of movies that were of a distinctly lesser quality, also made her a raft of enemies and sometimes mired her in literary controversies. Moreover, she was a woman



of extreme contrasts. Although she was a fierce individual—a single, unmarried mother who had fathered a child with a gay man, poet James Broughton—Kael eschewed any attempts at linking her with feminism.

She presided over a group of budding film critics (many of them gay and dubbed “the Paulettes” by her enemies), urging them on in their own careers, yet kept her daughter Gina tied to her until her death. By the early '90s, when Kael retired due to ill health (she died in 2001), her influence had waned as movie audiences changed. The age of the blockbuster had arrived full force, along with a raft of technical advances in the culture which diminished the power of any single critical voice. However, Kael's life's work—her incredible passion for movies via her exquisite writing—remains as a tribute to her enormous talent.

Now, openly gay writer Brian Kellow—who has previously penned studies of the Bennett acting family and Ethel Merman—has written the first biography of this complicated woman. The book, *Pauline Kael: A Life in the Dark*, has been a critical and commercial hit since its publication last fall.

Windy City Times: Like yourself, I grew up reading Pauline Kael as a lonely teen in Nebraska and was delighted to learn in the ensuing years that so many of my gay friends had done the same thing. Do you think part



Brian Kellow.

of her appeal to gay readers had to do with her pride in being “an outsider” which really comes through in your biography?

Brian Kellow: I suppose one of the things that gay men have always loved about her writing is the sharpness of it and the fact that she is willing to take no prisoners and she writes in a very outsized manner and style. I think that probably has something to do with it. I think, in some ways, she's like a character out of those fabulous old movies who just says whatever comes to mind with no thought to the consequences.

WCT: She was like the literary Thelma Ritter, no doubt.

BK: Yes, exactly. And I think the presence of so much wit and humor in her writing was something that was bound to appeal to a lot of gay men. And the fact that she crossed authority; that she took on not only filmmakers but other critics and even producers who were very, very well established people. I think that might be some of the appeal, too. She certainly spoke to me from a very, very early age.

WCT: Her insight remains very strong and I still point to her review of Mommie Dearest and her championing of Faye Dunaway's balls-to-the-wall performance as Joan Crawford as proof of that. It seems clear that something in that film spoke to her on a personal level. I understand that you had an entire section about the film in the book that was cut.

BK: I wish the *Mommie Dearest* section had stayed in the book because I think you're right—I think she hit on something that nobody else did in her review. All these other critics talked about what a ridiculous, over-the-top performance it is but Joan Crawford was ridiculous and over the top and I think Dunaway really hit that; I think she hit it brilliantly. The other thing that was interesting about that section is that the original script was written—I believe it was the original script—was by Bob Getchell, who had known Pauline very well.

WCT: So did she look at the original script?

BK: I think she must have and as I noted in my cut section of the book, she makes reference to certain things that she could have only gotten from Bob and I interviewed Bob extensively and he talked about the things that had happened with that script. In that sense, I was sorry to lose that section.

WCT: She always had this thing about strong career women like herself and when she took up the cause of Streisand it was as if she were speaking for Our People. [Laughs]

BK: Yeah, right! Exactly.

WCT: Kael, it seemed to me, picked up on the uniqueness and freshness of Streisand's arrival in movies; she looked like no one else and sounded like no one and was defiantly, what I call, the ultimate individual.

How strong an identification could gay men and women have possibly had at the time? Kael intuitively picked up on that. So, it was interesting to see her later chastise Barbra in print when she made those not-very-good movies in the latter half of the '70s.

BK: Oh I think Streisand had undying respect for her and the story that I was told, which I wasn't able to confirm, was that she really gave it to her over *Prince of Tides*. Streisand had arranged for Pauline to see the film and Pauline really leveled with her how disappointed she was in her. And I think Streisand would take it from her; I think she really had that much regard for her.

WCT: There are these intriguing conundrums in her life—this whole thing that she had these love affairs in her youth with gay men and then found herself at the center of controversy with the gay community over what was perceived as homophobic comments in some of her reviews. What I got from your book was that she felt so comfortable in her life with gay men saying stuff like, “Oh, you're a big fag, shut up” with humor, she didn't get that it wasn't okay to write like that in her reviews.

BK: Yes, yes.

WCT: When you read some of her comments on *Funny Lady*, for example, they could be taken as homophobic. Obviously, as a queer film critic writing for a queer audience, I get this. I have had occasions when quotes from my reviews at Rotten Tomatoes have been taken out of context from people who don't know I'm a gay man and they are apoplectic—assuming that I'm a homophobe.

BK: I don't think she was homophobic. I think that in her review of *Funny Lady* and the way she

references Liza Minnelli at the end of it—and I think it's one of the funniest things she ever wrote in her life: “What are you going to do now, eat the audience?”—I think what she was really saying is that she was afraid that this very, very limited gay perspective on Streisand was going to become enough for Streisand. She thought there was so much more to her than being this sort of big, outsized, egomaniac, bitch diva—whatever that made her so entrancing to gay men on a certain level. I think she had it in her to be a great artist and she shouldn't settle for being the darling of the gay bars. I think that's what she meant.

WCT: Some of the reactions about the book and to some of her reviews when she was alive criticize her supposed obsession with her erotic response to a film; that she sexualized the movies. But at heart, isn't that the primal power of movies—they're about objectification? Certainly this is something that queer audiences have long been aware of.

BK: Absolutely. My partner and I were watching an old Joan Bennett movie the other night—not a good one, Fritz Lang's last one—and I turned to my partner and said, “My God, can you believe how simply beautiful Joan Bennett was?” I gasped—she literally took my breath away at one point. And I do think that's how we're conditioned to react to film. Film brings out a kind of beauty in people—a kind of magic that I don't think any other art form does.

WCT: And that is, I believe, another secret to the enduring power of Pauline's writing. She articulated that and a lot of other things better than anyone.

BK: That was just one of the many tangents I wanted to go out on in more depth. But that's what happens when you have a great subject like Pauline.

See <http://www.briankellowwriter.com>.



Hannah Free re-release

Wolfe Video is re-releasing *Hannah Free*, the Chicago-made lesbian film starring Sharon Gless (Cagney & Lacey, *Burn Notice*, *Queer as Folk*), with a new cover featuring stars Ann Hagemann and Kelli Strickland. The photo, taken by Kat Fitzgerald, represents the film's couple in their younger years. *Hannah Free* is written by Claudia Allen (and based on her stage play), and directed by Wendy Jo Carlton. The new edition is available Feb. 7 from Wolfe Video. See <http://www.wolfevideo.com/products/hannah-free>.

Kristy McNichol comes out

Actress Kristy McNichol has officially come

out of the closet, according to People.com. McNichol, 49, has lived with partner Martie Allen, also 49, for the past two decades. She “is very sad about kids being bullied,” publicist Jeff Ballard said. “She hopes that coming out can help kids who need support. She would like to help others who feel different.”

McNichol is best known for her roles on the '70s show *Family* and the 1988-95 series *Empty Nest*. She has also starred in several films, including *Little Darlings* in 1980 with Tatum O'Neal.

Director not charged for groping transgender niece

Film director David O. Russell (*The Fighter*, *I Heart Huckabees*) was being investigated for potential criminal battery after he groped his 19-year-old transgender niece, according to the Chicago Tribune. Russell admitted to the action, but also claimed it was consensual.

A rep for the Broward County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office told TMZ that the case was closed. No charges were filed because police did not witness the alleged assault.

Russell, 53, grabbed Nicole Peloquin's (birth name: Nicholas) breasts during a workout in a South Florida hotel gym Dec. 30, 2011. Peloquin is the child of Russell's adoptive sister, Barbara Jane Peloquin.

According to Russell, Peloquin let him “feel both of his [sic] breasts.” Russell then reportedly asked Peloquin “to ‘pinky swear’ about her letting him touch his breasts.” Russell also told authorities that Peloquin is “always causing drama since the transgender transformation and has become very provocative and seductive.”

NUNN ON ONE: WEB

Presta change-o: Oprah alters gay man's life



BY JERRY NUNN

Glenview, Ill., resident Paolo Presta had his life changed by a fairy godmother named Oprah Winfrey when her *Wildest Dreams* show dropped into his family's grocery store, Valli Produce, and gave him a guest spot on the television show *Will & Grace*.

Presta moved to L.A. to be on *General Hospital* and pursue his love of acting.

Lately, he has been filming his web-based show, *A Spoonful of Paolo*, where he interviews stars such as Sharon Osbourne and Florence Henderson. Recently, he reunited with Oprah for her *Lifeclass*.

We met to discuss how the sugar makes the medicine go down.

Windy City Times: Hi, Paolo. You are known for your Oprah moment. Take our readers back to that time in your life.

Paolo Presta: It was surreal. Anything that happens I always go back to that day. If she didn't come into my dad's store I wouldn't be able to do any of this. She opened doors for me and on top of it made my father understand that this is what I want to do. It changed the direction of my life.

WCT: Is their store still in Hoffman Estates?

PP: Yes; I am doing an episode for *Spoonful* where I go back to work at Valli and reuniting with employees and some customers. I went there yesterday.

WCT: You have stayed in touch with Oprah ever since?

PP: With her producers so I was a part of *Lifeclass* on OWN. She sent a *Spoonful* of Paolo to do correspondence work for *Sweetie Pies*, which is another show on the network. Hopefully there are more plans in the works.

WCT: Where do you live currently?

PP: I am based in West Hollywood. I didn't know if I would like it but I love it now. I can walk everywhere.

WCT: Tell me about your experience as a guest on *Will & Grace*.

PP: That was the first time I was on camera on a real show on TV. The minute I walked on set I got a little choked-up. I got to meet all of them one by one. They were all so kind to me. Megan



Paolo Presta. Photo from Presta

Mullally took my to her dressing room and gave me a few pointers on the business. She told me to always be myself and I will always remember that.

WCT: You just did an interview with Sharon Osbourne not too long ago.

PP: That was my first one for *Spoonful* of Paolo. She was so positive and gave great feedback. One thing I asked her was who would she want to have over for dinner sometime that she hasn't and she said Barbra Streisand. She had heard good things and bad things and would be interested on how a dinner with her would go.

WCT: Who would be your dream interview?

PP: I would love to interview Judith Light. She was at The Abbey in California one time and I did say hi. I want to be ready and learn from these other interviews then I will try to set something up. I would still like to sit down with Oprah and tell her how much she has changed my life.

WCT: I think she knows.

PP: I have told her here and there but I want that moment on camera. I originally met her when she worked out at the East Bank Club (Harpo's gym was being fixed). When we were walking out, I got the chance to talk to her and tell her how much her show meant to me. Later, when a producer was showing her a story about me for the *Wildest Dreams* season, she recognized me from the gym. Two weeks later she showed up in the bus and it is all on TV.

WCT: So maybe if you hadn't have stopped, it wouldn't have happened.

PP: Stars hear things all the time but I had to tell her how much I adore her when I saw her that time. So who knows what would have happened? That year was my favorite, not because I was on it but people loved seeing other people's dreams come true. It was a good season.

WCT: How has your family been with you coming out of the closet?

PP: They are still adjusting. I have four sisters and two brothers so it is amazing with all of them. My mom has been great but my dad is still working on it. It is still a battle for me in my surroundings, especially when I come back home. It is hard for my dad. I do have a loving father and I can tell that he cares. He asks me about my partner so he is trying. It was hard for me coming out but I had to tell him.

WCT: So this was recent?

PP: It was just in 2010 on Christmas Eve. He was opening another store and I told him about my life in California. He said that he just wanted

Turn to page 31

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Mary J. Blige shows 'Real Love' for gay community

'Queen of Hip-Hop Soul' talks sequel to landmark album, homophobia and strip clubs
BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

You could say this is Mary J. Blige's second life.

Her first, candidly chronicled on her confessions-of-a-wreck album *My Life*, was an early glimpse into one of the biggest singing superstars in the world, who not only went public with her pain but eventually overcame it. *My Life II... The Journey Continues (Act 1)* is the "Queen of Hip-Hop Soul" 17 years later, after releasing nine other studio albums, taking home just as many Grammys and becoming, as she now calls herself, "the living proof." That's also the title of a song on her latest release, originally recorded for *The Help*, that nabbed her a Golden Globe nomination this year.

In a recent chat, Blige let us in on her life, how she became aware of her gay following and—when asked about pal P. Diddy's "faggot" controversy—why she thinks "people should be careful with their words."

Windy City Times: Your middle initial isn't visible on the album cover. Is there significance to that? Does that symbolize a new era in Mary J. Blige's life?

Mary J. Blige: Nah. Just didn't have any space for it! [Laughs] I'm in the middle of the picture and the J is in the middle of the thing, so it's like, where we gonna put it? But no, I'm not ever dropping the J. That's my name.

WCT: The hair is the problem, then.

Yeah, exactly! That's what happened. [Laughs]

WCT: One of the biggest reasons you turned your life around from *My Life* to *My Life II* was because you wanted to set a positive example for fans who look up to you. A lot of them are gay. When in your career did you know so many gay fans were leaning on you as a source of inspiration?

MJB: Wow, it was a gradual thing that I started to see a lot on Mary and No More Drama. I had no idea and it gradually started happening. I did something at some club—it was a gay club—and it was just crazy. That's when I really knew that I had a gay following.

I love it. I just love my brothers and I love my sisters. I love them all. We're all in this together. And I have gay friends. It's a beautiful thing to be able to heal together the way we've been healing over the years.

WCT: The new album features "Need Someone," a track written and originally recorded by Matt Morris—and he's gay.

MJB: Oh, I didn't know that! See, a lot of things I don't know. [Laughs] That's why I said it's a gradual thing. I'm just finding out. The song is friggin' amazing.

WCT: What about that song drove you to record it?

MJB: Jimmy Iovine brought the song to me, and when he played the song my bones were chilled and my hair on the back of my neck was standing up. It was so haunting because of the deepest part about that record: Not only do we need someone to love us—but why and who that is. I think we've all grown to know that that person is us. We need to love ourselves before anyone else can love us, and that's the message I got from it immediately. I was like, "Wow, I could see myself singing this to my younger self." Jimmy was like, "I want you to do this song"—and he didn't need to say any more.



Mary J. Blige. Photo by Klinko & Indrani

WCT: Seems like a track that you could've used during the original *My Life* era.

MJB: You know, I wish I had the strength to do that song then but I didn't, so I had to give the world the album in the condition that I was in. Somebody asked me a question while I was doing a radio interview: "If *My Life* was to meet up with *My Life II* on the street somewhere, what do you think they would do?" I said, "They would give each other a hug and say, 'Thank you for saving my life.'" *My Life*, the first one, would say to *My Life II*, "Thank you for having the strength to pull us through this."

WCT: Other artists on the music scene around the time you launched your career in the early '90s burned out; you're still going strong two decades later. What's the key to your longevity?

MJB: First, I never denied the fact that God is the reason responsible for every single thing. I remember praying and asking for a "why" to stay alive, and I know that if there wasn't praying and making God first in my life, I wouldn't have the fans that I have. And if it weren't for the fans and the love that they have for my life, period, and not just my career—the fans that really respect my walk and everything I've done—there would be no *My Life II*, or III or IV. There would be no *No More Drama*, no albums.

So also the fact that my fans really mean a lot to me—because when I spoke out on the *My Life* album, they responded and they saved my life—and responded to that album and let me know I wasn't the only one suffering in the things I was suffering in.

WCT: Obviously you're a very spiritual person; you regularly quote proverbs on your Twitter. Because of your faith and growing up in a religious household, was it ever a conflict for you to be as accepting as you are of gay people?

MJB: I'm not a religious person. Religion is religion and I don't need a deep relationship with God to have a religion. That's not why I believe Christ died. I believe he died to give us a deep relationship with God, and in having a deep relationship and walk with God, there is no

judgment. We cannot judge or think we're better than anybody.

I have nothing but love for everyone in the universe. I believe we can all teach each other something, and I believe we can all grow and learn from one another. I'm a spirit, so I need spiritual assistance—that means I need to pray, I need to read *The Word*, I need to share *The Word* with people. That's what it's for. It's not for me to be like, "You're gonna burn in hell." That's not what I believe God wants me to testify about.

The fact that I've been through so much, and my trials and tribulations are out in the open, is to heal other people. And that I've come through it isn't to say I'm better; it's to say we all can do it.

WCT: As someone who's said she won't tolerate homophobia, what did you make of friend/collaborator P. Diddy's recent lash out at a clubgoer, whom he called a "faggot?"

MJB: I can't make the judgment call one way or the other on what Puff was going through that day. All I can say is he apologized, and I know it's a harsh word but I have to speak for Mary J. Blige. We have to all be careful with what our thoughts are so they don't become our words, and that's what prayer and being spiritually grounded [are for]—because if you're spiritually grounded, you put yourself in other people's shoes. I gotta speak for Mary, though. I can't really speak for Puff. As far as I'm concerned, I think people should be careful with their words. You gotta think before you jump out there.

WCT: Especially with how much words hurt and all the bullying we're hearing more about lately.

MJB: Yeah, that's not cool. That's horrible. It's killing people, because you don't understand what they're going through or what their life may be. That's not fair.

WCT: You can relate, I'm sure. You weren't understood by a lot of people early in your career.

MJB: Totally, 100 percent. And I'm still misunderstood by a lot of people. But the one thing that I do know about me that's real is that I have love and respect for mankind, period.

WCT: Tell me about working on the upcoming *Rock of Ages* film, due out in the summer.

MJB: I had a good time! It was a lot of fun going to work when we were shooting *Rock of Ages* because my role as Justice is to be a strip club owner. She's a lot of fun but she's strong, and we sang some of the really good classic songs from the '80s like "Any Way You Want It" and "Here I Go Again." It was just fun, man. The little part that I did with Tom Cruise? Amazing!

Julianne Hough and I became really good friends because she's a sweetheart, and I love [director] Adam Shankman to death. Adam knew exactly what he wanted. He told us what he wanted and he just made me feel like I was already a seasoned movie star. He was like, "Just do what you do." He's so down-to-earth.

WCT: Of course he's lovable: He's gay.

MJB: Yeah, and some of my best friends are. Like Elton John is super down-to-earth and he's not into all that fluff. He is what he is and he's like, "Look, man, you are my friend and I'm your friend." I love him.

WCT: Did you hit up strip clubs for research?

MJB: I sure did, and I had fun doing it! [Laughs] I went to one in New York called Sin City. It ended up being fun because all of my fans were in there. I went with all the guys and they were going to have fun and I'm going because I'm doing, like, homework. I got a chance to see what everything is and do some method acting.

WCT: You recently did *VH1 Divas*. Why is it that divas are always getting pitted against each other like it's a competition?

MJB: They make it a competition because they make it sound like it is. But the bottom line: We get in there, we work together and we're around each other for a couple of hours. We gotta get along and love and respect each other.

WCT: When will you duet with Mariah and make my diva dream come true?

MJB: Whenever she says the word. I love Mariah! I mean, come on. [Laughs]

WCT: You're the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul—don't you have her digits? Call her and be like, "Mariah, let's do it."

MJB: [Laughs] I do have her number!

Old Town opens in grand style

A grand-opening celebration at the Old Town School of Folk Music launched Jan. 9 with the adding of a \$17-million East Building at 4545 N Lincoln Ave.

Recycled products and plants on the roof added to the energy-saving construction and appearance of the green facility. New portraits of musicians, along with music posters, adorn the walls on the multilevel hallways. Artist Margaret Derwent Ketcham was commissioned to provide panels with the word for music written in 28 languages to show diversity in culture in the facility.

New features include three new dance studios, 16 additional classrooms and a 150-seat performance space. Considered one the largest community school of the arts in the country has kept this place bustling and active since its opening of the West Building across the street by the late writer Studs Terkel in 1957.

Executive Director Bau Graves kicked off speeches with such dignitaries as Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, state Rep. Greg Harris and 47th Ward Ald. Ameya Pawar. These speeches mentioned a fondness for the children's classes, dubbed Wiggleworms, and how important this music haven is for people of all ages. Students and teachers launched into singing *The Beach Boys' "Sloop John B"* and *"This Land Is Your Land,"* one of the most famous folk songs ever written, right after the ribbon-cutting.



Mayor Rahm Emanuel at Old Town School of Folk Music's celebration Jan. 9. Photo by Jerry Nunn

More events are planned, with a 55-day long festival to mark its 55th anniversary. To donate, register for classes or attend a concert, visit <http://www.oldtownschool.org> for more information. Look for Scott Free's 12th annual LGBT-focused Alt Q Festival in May of this year in the venue. Text and photos by Jerry Nunn; more pics at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>.



Mary J. Blige makes a big reveal with each album. On her latest, *My Life II: The Journey Continues, Act 1*, the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul revisits her struggles, as she did on her 1994 opus *My Life*. Don't be fooled; Blige is very much in love, as heard on her remake of "Ain't Nobody" and the lead single "25/8." Blige successfully retains her royalty status once heartache returns to the center stage on "No Condition" and "Empty Prayers" as well as her issues with love on "Mr. Wrong" and "Why." The follow-up, *Act 2*, is rumored to come out in May.

On *Weather*, **Meshell Ndegeocello** is in a funk, as if she has been listening to Morrissey records on repeat. The bisexual bassist slowed it down in a sensual way on 1999's *Bitter*, but here she seems more distraught.

"Feeling for the Wall" and "Don't Take My Kindness for Weakness" find the Grammy nominee nearly breathless. "Oysters" is a beautiful break-up song, with its simple piano accompaniment. Despite her trademark bassline missing here, "Oysters" is absolutely outstanding, especially as she chimes, "Sometimes you don't get it right." The ode about an ex-lover, "Objects in Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear," could have been a lost gem by The Cure from 20 years ago. Similarly, "Rapid Fire" would fit perfectly on a reunion album by Talking Heads. On "Chelsea Hotel" she comes across as a severely depressed Prince. Fear not; the Joe Henry-produced album picks up with the bluesy title track and the catchy midtempo numbers "Chance" and "Dirty World."

Ndegeocello cements that she is an evolving artist, making *Weather* one of my top picks of 2011.

Rihanna fires out a new album nearly every year with a lead single that quickly will engrain itself in the listener's head before going stale. Her catalog has not aged gracefully (queue up "Don't Stop the Music" or "Shut Up and Drive" for proof), although the wildly popular material can pack a dance floor.

The Barbados-born pop star sticks with her hit-making formula with her sixth Island Def Jam studio outing, *Talk That Talk*. "We Found Love" is slick courtesy of Calvin Harris' (Kylie Minogue, Tiesto) production and its bouncy beat. "Where Have You Been" lifts its hook from Rihanna's megahit "Umbrella." In the same vein, "Roc Me Out" recalls her chart-topper "Rude Boy." Rihanna is one of the few pop acts who seamlessly can balance having enough credibility to collaborate with heavyweights like Jay-Z and Eminem and resurfacing with a sugary pop ditty like "We All Want Love."

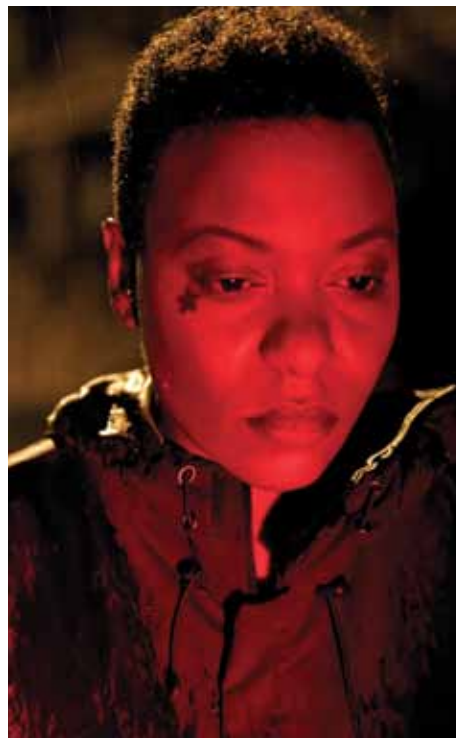
Sure, she has belted out "S.O.S." Now, Rihanna is in the upcoming blockbuster film *Battleship*, which is based on the beloved board game.

British dubstep outfit **Nero** makes quite a splash with its full-length debut, *Welcome Reality*. "Doomsday" and "Fugue State" have big beats that make me want to forget completely about Black Eyed Peas. "Guilt" summons the starlet belting out lyrics with the utmost urgency lost on '90s Euro-dance hits. Nero's party never ceases courtesy of samples from the '80s.

"Crush on You" taps The Jets' classic and Daryl Hall revisits Hall and Oates' "Out of Touch" on "Reaching Out."

But true to dubstep's trademark sound, throughout *Welcome Reality* there are tweaks, as if I spilled champagne on my R2 unit as it handles the DJ duties. Nero keeps the art of music videos alive with its excellent clips found on the band's Vevo channel.

On **Party Groove: White Party 12**, DJ Wayne G. dishes out a scorching hot continuous mix. The set favors covers of hits like Madonna's "Beautiful Stranger," Lady Gaga's "You and I" and Rihanna's "We Found Love." The best revamping is "Bad Things," the theme from *True Blood*, which is remixed for clubland here. Billie Ray Martin's crossover "Your Loving Arms" is updated with an introduction that focuses on her soulful vocals. The remarkable reworking on "Don't Make



Meshell Ndegeocello.

Me Wait" brings me back to the '90s, when I overplayed this cut by Loveland. Make no mistake; the dramatic "Bitch" by Ralphie Rosario and Wayne G. featuring Stewart Who is not a remake of Meredith Brooks' 1997 hit of the same name.

Proceeds from *White Party 12* will benefit Care Resource, Florida's oldest and largest HIV / AIDS service organization. *Party Groove: White Party 12* is out now via Centaur Music and makes a wonderful addition to a workout playlist.

On the second Thursday of each month, Downtown Bar & Lounge, 440 N. State St., hosts **Clock out Rock Out** by Moosebox at 5-9 p.m. This rock n' roll-focused evening makes a great alternative to the usual dance-driven soundtrack at LGBT bars. On Thursday, Jan. 12, my brother and I will be behind the decks as special guests after Moose's set. Expect to hear classics, covers, queer artists and what affectionately is called cougar rock.

This year forecasts a lot of fantastic new releases. Those with material due out include Adam Lambert, Amy Ray, Christina Aguilera, Garbage, Kylie Minogue, Ladyhawke, Lana Del Rey, Madonna, Neneh Cherry, Pet Shop Boys, Robbie Williams, School of Seven Bells, Sinead O'Connor, Sophie B. Hawkins and VV Brown.

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WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES



BY MEGHAN STREIT

Brunch at Nookies Edgewater

Far North Siders, you no longer have to trek down to Boystown to eat at Nookies. The classic Chicago restaurant has opened a new location in Edgewater.

I've always enjoyed the casual and cozy diner atmosphere at Nookies in Boystown, and expected more of the same at the Edgewater outpost. However, I was pleasantly surprised to see that the new Nookies is all grown up. The expansive space in the Bryn Mawr historic district is sophisticated and modern, with soothing neutral colors, rich dark wood and quirky light fixtures that appear to be made of bamboo.

The first thing you'll notice is the massive wooden bar at the entrance. But Nookies hasn't secured its liquor license yet, so the only things coming out of that bar are smoothies and lattes. If you want a mimosa or a Bloody Mary with your brunch (and why wouldn't you?), come prepared with your own supplies for the next few months. A carafe of fresh-squeezed orange juice will set you back \$12, but far less than several rounds of mimosas would cost.

I have a serious fear of long menus, thanks



Nookies Edgewater's egg sandwich with vegetables and gouda. Photos by Meghan Streit.

to a firmly held belief that a restaurant can't cook that many different dishes well. The breakfast menu at Nookies Edgewater is at least eight pages long, with a dizzying list of pancakes, omelets, French toast, breakfast skillet, egg sandwiches and a smattering of lunch salads and sandwiches. I'm happy to report that the length of the menu does not diminish the quality of the food at Nookies. So far, every morsel of food I've put into my mouth has been fantastic. I've only eaten brunch at Nookies, but the restaurant also offers a full lunch and dinner menu. I'll get back to you on those after I burn the calories I consumed at two fabulous morning meals at Nookies.

You'll find several inventive Benedicts that knock the socks off of the typical English muffin and Canadian bacon version (although that is an option as well). The "Dixie" Benedict features poached eggs and ham on top of biscuits and topped with sausage gravy. Another is made with crab cakes atop a grilled baguette with baby greens and tarragon aioli, and all the Benedicts come with nicely seasoned roasted red potatoes. I highly recommend the "Paris" Bene-

dict, which begins with grilled brioche topped with a layer of melted Gruyere cheese. Next comes several slices of thick, juicy Cherrywood smoked bacon and grilled asparagus with two perfectly poached eggs teetering on top. The whole decadent treat is smothered in truffle and chive cream sauce. The Paris Benedict at Nookies is quite possibly the best \$12.95 you can spend on breakfast in Chicago.

If you're not ready for something quite as rich as truffle cream in the morning, try an omelet (there are several options or you can create your own) or an egg sandwich. One simple sandwich called the "B.E.S.T." features bacon, egg over medium, spinach and tomato on grilled sourdough with chipotle aioli. Vegetarians will love the egg sandwich made with spinach, mushrooms, tomato and Gouda, which gives it a delicious smoky flavor without any meat. The sandwich is fantastic on sourdough bread, but next time I'll try it on a croissant.

Don't overlook Nookies' specials menu, where you will find all kinds of gems available for a limited time. On my most recent visit, they were serving carrot cake French toast made with raisin

bread and drizzled with a cream cheese sauce. It's a phenomenal dish that isn't too sweet and somehow manages to taste exactly like carrot cake in French toast form. Another winner from the specials menu that I hope Nookies brings back soon is the Croque Madame. A juicy slice of ham and a runny egg are smushed between two thick slices of French toast and drenched in a mushroom cream sauce. If it weren't so delicious, it would be kind of ridiculous.

I'd say Nookies Edgewater is the best thing to come to the neighborhood in quite some time. I predict that nearby residents will quickly become regulars, and people from all over the city will happily come up north to enjoy brunch at Nookies.



Nookies Edgewater's Paris benedict.

Nookies Edgewater is located at 1100 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.; call 773-516-4188 or visit <http://www.nookiesrestaurants.net/index.html>.

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BOOKS

'God vs. Gay' writer Jay Michaelson on religious equality

BY SARAH TOCE

Jay Michaelson is the author of *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality*. The message encompassed in the 212-page exploratory multidimensional treatise is distinctively precise: Faith exists, regardless of gender or same-sex status and God thinks it's ... quite okay to be gay, actually.

Windy City Times: As the author of *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality*, you articulate the case for religion, faith, sexuality and acceptance throughout historic biblical reference points and into the present mind frame of society in regards to separation of church and state and familial obligations. Why is this book so needed at this given moment in our world's history?

Jay Michaelson: I think we're at a unique moment of opportunity right now. Because of the increased visibility of LGBT people in the media, the changes in law in some places and the continued effort by some on the political right to use gay rights as a scare tactic, this is a defining civil-rights struggle of our time.

It's clear to most people that the stereotypes about gay people are no more true than racist stereotypes or sexist stereotypes. At the same time, we have to have a deeper conversation about these issues than the ones often going on in our public sphere. A lot of people, myself in-

cluded, were raised to believe that religion and sexual minorities were incompatible—that it really is God versus gay. Many of these folks are just starting to realize that isn't true, and [are taking] a closer look at their own religious or ethical traditions. This is how progress happens.

WCT: You write, "At this moment, there are people who are contemplating ending their lives because they believe their sexuality to be a sin, a flaw in the fabric of their soul, or perhaps a curse from God."

So many of us in the LGBT community battle with separating our religious freedoms from the love we feel toward another human being—regardless of how evolved we may be to modern-day scriptural thinking. Why did you feel so strongly that it was the right time to draw the demons out of the closet, so to speak, and confront this issue head-on?

JM: Because if all we have is a secular conversation, we're not going to really reach many people's hearts. Separation of church and state is a principle we need to uphold and fight for—especially if we're religious ourselves, because political power corrupts religious institutions. But that doesn't get to the root of the problem.

Contrast two other civil-rights struggles: that of African-American civil rights and that for reproductive freedom. In the first case, Dr. King and others made civil rights a religious impera-



Jay Michaelson.

—not just a constitutional argument. His message resounded with people because it called up their deeply-held values and called them to conscience. In contrast, reproductive rights have never been more imperiled than they are right now—in part, I believe, because activists have refused to engage in the underlying moral and ethical debates. There are other reasons too, of course, but in general, when we leave these deep concerns unaddressed, our "victories" will be shallow.

WCT: For someone reading *God vs. Gay? who is new to the religious banter between political party lines, can you expand on the top three misconceptions dealing with homosexuality and the Bible?*

JM: 1. That the Bible prohibits homosexuality. It doesn't. Three verses (out of 30,000) limit

a few sexual acts, mostly between men, in the context of idolatry or lewdness. 2. That whatever the prohibition is, it's central to religion. It isn't. The "sin" in Leviticus is the same as eating a shrimp cocktail. Jesus never mentions homosexuality at all. 3. That the "sin of Sodom" is homosexuality. It isn't; it's greed, cruelty and inhospitality. (Ezekiel 16:49-50, Jeremiah 23:14, Amos 4:1-2).

WCT: There is a new generation coming to age that appears to be more open-minded than the past few. Is this a misconception in your mind, or do you believe we will see a new way of thinking going into 2012 and beyond?

JM: It's true in some places, not true in others. It's easy to think that because of a character on a TV show, that everything is fine. It isn't fine. Kids are still being sent to cult-like "reparative therapy" (neither reparative nor therapy); I can still be kicked out of a hotel in many states just for being gay; and gay people are still being disowned and shunned by their families. I know many of these people myself.

WCT: What would a non-religious/non-spiritual person gain from reading *God vs. Gay?*

JM: Most of us have religious people in our extended families or communities, and religion still sets the terms for much of our public debate on issues of sexuality and reproductive choice. So, at the very least, we should know how to "fight back" when religion is used as a weapon. But I hope we can have a more productive dialogue with those with whom we disagree. The book is not about apologizing for being gay, or somehow trying to make everything fit together in the way that I want. It's about knowing the truth, and holding religious people (myself included) accountable to their own traditions, which emphasize the centrality of love and intimacy, justice, compassion and so on.

Turn to page 31

Celebrations

Share your special moments with the community in Windy City Times' new announcement section!

HONORS: Out exec honored

The Corporate Responsibility Group of Greater Chicago honored Richard Turner (center top and lower left), manager of corporate contributions at Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas, as its 2011 Person of the Year recently at The Cliff Dwellers Club. Photos courtesy of Turner



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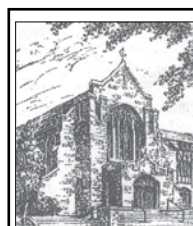
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She was first adopted in 2008 however, unfortunately, she was returned to Tree House in 2011 because the adopter was getting married and her fiance has allergies. Poor Cat Kora isn't thrilled to be back at the shelter after having enjoyed having a home for a number of years. She has put on quite a bit of weight since she returned and is currently in Tree House's weight-loss room.

She's incredibly friendly and a true attention seeker. She particularly enjoys ear scratches and belly rubs. Cat Kora has some hair-loss issues, however it is possibly due to overgrooming. The adoption counselors at Tree House can provide more information.

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MICHAELSON from page 29

WCT: You tackle some pretty heady topics in God vs. Gay?, including the osmosis of traditional values, same-sex relationships throughout time, self-acceptance in present time and the meanings behind very specific popular verses. Was there a moment or moments in the writing of this book where you second-guessed its release for fear of your safety?

JM: Maybe I'm being naïve, but no. I get hate mail like everyone else who works in this area, but there are way more visible targets than me.

WCT: The release of this controversial title has you embarking everywhere from Washington, D.C., to New York, Miami, Detroit and Chicago. As you travel the United States, what has the response been on the book tour so far?

JM: It's been very warm. I've met dozens of parents of gay kids who are sincerely trying to understand their religious traditions on this issue. I've met lots of non-religious people who have never been exposed to this material except through the lens of the bigots. And I've met a few hecklers. Overall, it's been really gratifying to me to see how this work is already having an impact.

The irony of "God versus Gay" is how the dichotomy is just 180 degrees wrong. I thought

GOD vs. GAY?

The Religious Case for Equality

JAY MICHAELSON

"Michaelson shows that 'God versus gay' is a myth and that the overwhelming majority of our shared religious values favor equality for LGBT people." —MICHAEL LERNER, editor of Ethos



that coming out would be end of my religious life—but in fact it was the beginning of it.

Author Jay Michaelson will be appearing at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., on Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. as well as the Limmud Chicago 2012 conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago, 750 S. Halsted St., Feb. 19.

PRESTA from page 25

me to be happy. I think any son or daughter want to hear that from their parents.

WCT: Do you have a lot of people helping you with Spoonful of Paolo?

PP: People ask me on the website for jobs. The truth is it's just me and Patrick. We had someone do the song but Patrick does the editing and the graphics. We have someone help us with the lighting and camera.

WCT: Patrick is your partner?

PP: Yes, Patrick Thomassie.

WCT: Where do you see your show going—maybe on the OWN Network?

PP: Who doesn't? It has been six months and we have done 12 episodes up until two weeks

ago. These things take time. When we interviewed Sheri Salata, the president of Harpo, it was so much fun. She loved the intro when the angel comes down; that is obviously Oprah. I have had a few offers from cable stations to pick it up as a show but, like Oprah says, I have to go with my gut and make the right decisions. So we will see.

[Editor's note: After the interview, Presta explained the title's genesis: "My partner, Patrick Thomassie, came up with the name. We knew we wanted to catch people's attention but in a way for them to know it's just a spoonful (small) amount of me. No 30- or 60-minute interviews—just a spoonful!"]

Episodes of Spoonful are at <http://www.aspoonfulofpaolo.com>.

Mom: A Tribute to Mothers of LGBTs

Windy City Times soliciting people for new photo book

CHICAGO—Mothers of LGBT individuals will be the focus of a new photo essay book from Windy City Times. The Chicago-based weekly newspaper is soliciting submissions from LGBTs in the Chicago area, or those formerly from Chicago, for this new project.

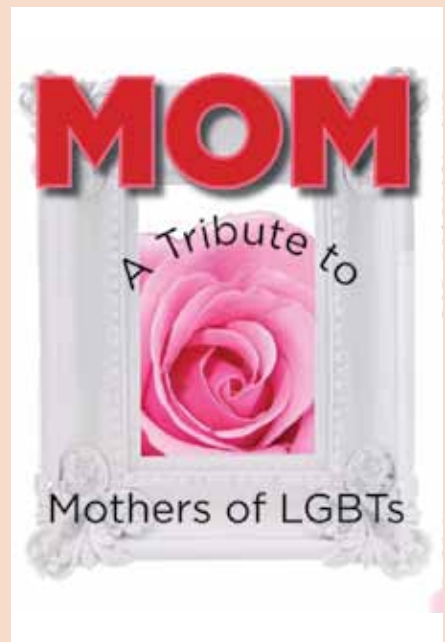
Just in time for the holidays, people can submit photos with their moms via email, Facebook or Twitter through Feb. 15. Windy City Times is looking for diversity in families. Once the winners are selected, a professional photo shoot will be done by Kat Fitzgerald of Mystic Images Photography (of the winning mothers with their child or children), so winners must be available in the Chicago area, although some additional photos may be used. Winners will also be asked to submit a 200-word essay about what their mother has meant to them.

Depending on the reception for this project, other books may be done with fathers, or queer parents, but the focus of this first book is on mothers.

To submit, send photos of you with your mother to: <https://www.facebook.com/>

windycitymediagroup, Twitter windycity-times1 or email editor@windycitymediagroup.com by Feb. 15. You can also submit a short essay about why you think your mother should be selected to be photographed with you. Families with multiple LGBT children are welcome to submit as well.

Images may also be used in Windy City Times newspaper.



Special content from nightspots

Turn to this space each week for all your nightspots-y goodness. Also, "like" our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/nightspots) for even more pictures of all your favorite nightlife denizens.

Look for the next issue of Nightspots, on newsstands January 18, 2012.

On display

Center On Halsted hosted the opening an exhibition of photos by Nightspots' popular nightlife photographer Anthony Meade, Thu. Jan. 5. Photos by Kirk Williamson



Up in the atmosphere

All up in @mosphere. Photos by Dave Ouano



calendar

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WINDY CITY
TIMES

nightspots

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Wed., Jan. 11

3D Karaoke and \$1 Drinks Join Velvet Rope for \$1 drinks, dancing, and karaoke hosted by Lyndon! 5pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 W. Lake St., Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

Neighborhood Night Every Wednesday evening is Palette Bistro's local neighborhood night. Anyone with a 60614 or 60657 zip code gets 15 percent off the bill; 6pm-11:30pm, Palette Bistro, 2834 N. Southport Ave.

\$1 Drink Night Enjoy \$1 cocktails, and beer drafts and wine all night long! Free entry before 9pm, \$7 cover after; 8pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West Take your place in the spotlight as hostess, Honey West entertains throughout! An evening and a diva not to be missed! 9pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St., <http://www.roscoes.com>

Mini University Chicago's hottest new college night, loaded with THE hottest bartenders, barbacks and boys! 9pm, Minibar, 3341 N Halsted St., <http://www.minibar-chicago.com>

Public hearing on North Side redistricting Conducted by Dick Mell; 6pm, Cortelyou Commons, DePaul U., 2324 N. Fremont Ave.

Thursday, Jan. 12

In the Life This episode: First Class Citizens. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of equality, we look back at how LGBT rights intersect with the broader movement for civil rights in this country: A Day In The Life of Honorable Judge Deborah

THE LAUGH OF IT Friday, Jan. 20

Comedian and gay ally Kathy Griffin will take center stage at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St.

PR photo



A. Batts; A conversation with Jonathan Capehart & Julian Bond; and Gay Pioneers, two of the earliest gay rights organizers, Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings. 11pm, WTTW-TV

Sara Paretsky reading Breakdown: V. I. Warshawski 30th-Anniversary Party After three decades' worth of hard-hitting mystery thrillers, V. I. Warshawski is used to facing some serious headaches, but these make for the worst one yet. Breakdown is Paretsky's fifteenth V. I. Warshawski novel and the 30th anniversary of the very first V. I. novel ever published. Champagne and other refreshments will be served. 7:30pm, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

dark play or stories for boys Collaboraction, the award-winning theater-based artist collective, presents the Chicago premiere of "dark play or stories for boys," a play that explores the dangers of venturing into the virtual world at the expense of your real identity. 8pm-10pm, Flat Iron

Arts Building, <http://www.collaboraction.org>

Friday, Jan. 13

Leigh Stein, author of The Fallback Plan Fresh out of college Esther Kohler moves back to her parents' home and begins babysitting for a young couple whose second child recently died. 7:30pm, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., Chicago, <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Spin Shower Contest Join super-cute Victor at Midnight for Spin's outrageous and infamous contest! Get there by 11:30pm to enter, and you could win first prize of \$150 or second prize of \$50. 9pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., <http://spin-nightclub.com>

Bi-Polar Fridays at @mosphere Bar Every Friday the ONLY place to be is @mosphere Bar in Andersonville for Bi-Polar Friday's. Hosted by Regina Upright; 10pm, 773-784-1100, @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St., <http://atmospherebar.com>

Saturday, Jan. 14

CMSA Women's Basketball Two divisions, comp and rec games start. For more info, email Marcia, League Commissioner womensbb@chicagomsa.org; 10:15am-4:15pm, Pottawattomie Park, 7340 N. Rogers, <http://www.chicagomsa.org>

Latin Street Dancing at the Chicago French Market Looking for something different on a cold Saturday afternoon? How about learning a few new dances? The French Market is offering Latin Dance lessons. 11am-1pm, 312-575-0306, Chicago French Market 131 N. Clinton, <http://www.frenchmarketchicago.com>

Dyke Delicious screening South East Asian, lesbian, feminist Sonali Gulati will be screening her collection of shorts: 24 FRAMES PER DAY (7m), NALINI BY DAY, NANCY BY NIGHT (27m), BAREFEET (7m), SUM TOTAL (5m), NAME I CALL MYSELF (5m), WHERE IS THERE ROOM? (7m) and joining us via Skype for some rousing Q&A. Social Hour 7 pm; screening 8 pm; 7pm, Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark, Chicago

Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah "Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah" returns to Chicago's National Historic Landmark Auditorium Theatre for a special tribute to the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For two public performances only, Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012 at 7:30pm and Sunday, Jan. 15 at 3pm; 7:30pm-10pm, Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy

Sunday, Jan. 15

Taverna 750 First Call Brunch Come sample the amazing food and drink of Taverna 750. Spruce up your Sunday as Taverna 750 unveils its tasty creations and wonderful libations. \$20 packages to meet your Sunday Brunch goals! 11am-3pm, Taverna 750, 750 W. Cornelia Ave., <http://www.taverna750.com>

Urban Village Church Spiritual worship is about coming together as community to make space for God to move in us. It's a place to receive God's grace and love and to give of ourselves, as well. 10:15am-11:30am, Urban Village Church, Spertus Institute, 610 S. Michigan, <http://www.urbanvillagechurch.org>

Urban Village Church: Andersonville service Andersonville is a neighborhood full of passion, art, diversity, and eclectic energy, all which makes Urban Village Church thrilled to be joining the community! 10:30am-11:45am, 1602 W. Ainslie (at Ashland), <http://www.newchicagochurch.com>

Prime Timers Prime Timers are older gay or bisexual men (and younger men who admire mature men). Second Sunday of each month. 6pm, Ann Sather - Belmont, 909 W Belmont Ave., <http://www.primetimer-sww.org/chicago/>

Golden Globe Awards viewing party Lobby Lounge located in the ShowPlace Icon Theatre offers five 50-inch HD-TVs and special cocktails, 7pm, ShowPlace ICON, 150 W. Roosevelt Rd.

SIN Sundays Sundays are heating up at Hydrate with SIN Sundays! Just because the weekend is over doesn't mean the party is! Join some of your favorite service industry staff members from all over the city partying it up at Hydrate! 9pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

Monday, Jan. 16

Gay for Good volunteer day Painting of rooms and some light construction. Projects are designed so that anyone, no matter their skill level, can contribute. Sign up on site to be invited to projects. 12pm, North Lawndale community, <http://www.gayforgood.org>

Salsa lessons Join the Velvet Rope for open Salsa Lessons with Anna Marie every Monday. Stick around for open salsa dancing. Bring your partner or come alone; 7pm-11:30pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 West Lake Street, Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

God vs. Gay Religious expert, author, Jew, and gay rights activist Jay Michaelson will be speaking about his new book God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality. 7pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St.

Music Celebrates MLK's Dream of Unity Mei-Ann Chen and the Chicago Sinfonietta continue Paul Freeman's annual tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in this year's concert, "The Journey, The Dream." 7:30pm, Orchestra Hall, 220 S. Michigan Ave., <http://www.chicagosinfonietta.org>

Recovery Over the Rainbow New Narcotics Anonymous sponsored/governed meeting, geared toward GLBTs and open to the public. Questions to Anthony Oltean; 8pm-9pm, Haymarket Health Education, 20 N. Sangamon St.

Tuesday, Jan. 17

Restart4Health 2012 Recover From the "Season of Gluttony" Cook County Hospital Chief Medical Officer Dr. Terry Mason will lead a program that provides information and support to improve eating and lifestyle habits; 6:30pm, Trinity Church of Christ, 400 W. 95th St., <http://www.restart4health.com>

Pow Wow Tuesdays Bring your poetry every Tuesday. \$5 cover, food at 7:30pm, open mic at 8:30pm. 7:30pm, Jeffery Pub, 7041 S Jeffery Blvd, Chicago

Bottoms Up Bingo! Join Miss Tajma Hall every Tuesday as she hosts Bottoms Up Bingo! The balls start rolling at 9:30 weekly.



KING FOR A DAY

Monday, Jan. 16

Mei-Ann Chen (above) and the Chicago Sinfonietta will honor Martin Luther King Jr. at Orchestra Hall, 220 S. Michigan Ave.
Photo by Ken Carl

9:30pm-11:30pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 W. Lake Str., Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

Enron previews One of the most infamous scandals in financial history, a sprawling tragedy mixed with savage comedy. Ambitious men and women in the breathtaking rush of greed and fraud that led to a legendary financial collapse. Cast includes Windy City Media Group's Amy Matheny. Previews through Jan. 26; 9:45pm, Time-Line Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave.

Wed., Jan. 18

3D Karaoke and \$1 Drinks Join Velvet Rope for \$1 drinks, dancing, and karaoke hosted by Lyndon! 5pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 W. Lake St., Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

Rep. Kelly Cassidy fundraising reception Candace Gingrich-Jones will attend. Questions or RSVP contact progressivesolution-sllc@gmail.com or by phone; 5:30pm-7:30pm, 312-399-1902, 551 W. Stratford Pl.

Neighborhood Night Every Wednesday evening is Palette Bistro's local neighborhood night. Anyone with a 60614 or 60657 zip code gets 15 percent off the bill; 6pm-11:30pm, Palette Bistro, 2834 N. Southport Ave.

Thursday, Jan. 19

Reading: Windy City Queer Kathie Bergquist and contributors Aldo Alvarez, Deb R. Lewis, Karen Lee Osborne, Gerard Zozek and Emma Vosicky read poetry and prose from the new literary anthology, Windy City Queer: LGBTQ Dispatches from the Third Coast. Wine, cheese, hot cocoa and cookies will be provided. Free. 7pm, Gerber/Hart Library, 1127 W Granville Ave.

Friday, Jan. 20

Kathy Griffin at The Chicago Theatre Live in concert, Griffin is a self-proclaimed "D-list celebrity," actress, stand-up comedian, media personality and LGBT-rights advocate. 8pm, <http://www.livenation.com>

Saturday, Jan. 21

Transgender Community Social Come in from the cold and join Equality Illinois for an afternoon of socializing with friends old and new, noshing on delightful bites, and sipping cocktails. 1pm-4pm, 773-477-7173, Mayne Stage, 1328 W. Morse Ave., <http://www.eqil.org>

Junk in the Trunk: A Naughty Nostalgia Burlesque A sexy, funny spin on that most American of pastimes: the garage sale, where burlesque performers find some of their best costumes and sexy, sparkly things. Tickets: \$18; 10:30pm, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., <http://www.vaudezilla.com>



BEING FRANK

Thursday, Jan. 12

The late LGBT-rights activist Frank Kameny is one of the subjects of the WTTW-TV series In the Life.

Photo courtesy of Lisa Keen

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online

WindyCityMediaGroup.com
ChicagoPride.com

BILLY MASTERS

"They ask me every year, and I just can't do it. I tell them why: 'You guys keep saying every year you're going to get A-list people and then it's the girl that was with George Clooney!'"—Jenny McCarthy explains why she keeps turning down offers to appear on *Dancing With The Stars*. When Jenny McCarthy thinks she's too good for your show, you're in trouble.

Billy's back in Hollywood, and is already over-booked. In fact, I came back a few days early just so I could settle in before the craziness starts. The week this column hits the street, I'll be attending the Cybersocket Awards, the People's Choice Awards, the Golden Globe Awards, and ... drum roll, please ... the Miss America Pageant. Oh, the glitz, the glamour, the gayety ... the sashes! It's almost an embarrassment of riches.

The only person who could possibly out-gay my schedule is Johnny Weir. But he's got news of his own. On New Year's Eve, the skater and boyfriend Victor Vornov got married in NYC. Weir revealed the news via Twitter, which is how everyone makes announcements these days: "I'm married! No more livin' in sin!" Being Johnny Weir, he's not gonna settle for some little civil ceremony. He's planning a big splashy wedding in the summer.

And as we went to press, a BIG announcement was made—Kristy McNichol is a lesbian. That's breaking news? Have I stumbled into a time warp? What year is it? 1976? Happy Bicentennial!

For years, people have speculated about Robbie Williams' sexuality. The once-and-future Take That singer has certainly done a lot to fuel the speculation. And now he's saying he's available—for a price. When asked how much it would cost for him to have sex with a man, he priced the experience at 2 million pounds, or roughly \$3 million. He did say he'd negotiate for Brad Pitt. In fact, he added, "It's a freebie for Brad Pitt. How much would I have to pay HIM?" And now we know...

Most of the cast of the film version of *Les Misérables* has been announced. As you probably know, Hugh Jackman is playing Jean Valjean, Russell Crowe is set for Javert and Anne Hathaway will be Fantine. Sexy Aaron Tveit (from *Next To Normal* and *Catch Me If You Can* on Broadway) will play Enjolras and Sacha Baron Cohen will play Thenardier. (It's widely assumed that Helena Bonham Carter will play his wife, but that is not official.) Now we hear that Amanda Seyfried will play Cosette and Taylor Swift will play Eponine. *Mon dieu!*

Who have I left out? Oh, yes, Eddie Redmayne will be playing Marius. While he's got quite an extensive resume, you'll probably recognize him from *My Week With Marilyn*. While researching the sexy Brit, I found out that he's done some smaller films where he's shown his naughty bits. Some of these films are hard to come by in the States, but they're front and center on *BillyMasters.com*.

Before leaving this story completely, let me congratulate Jackman, who just wrapped up his one-man show on Broadway and broke quite a number of records. First, it garnered the highest weekly gross ever recorded in Broadway history. Also, it raised more than \$1.75 million for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS! If you missed him on the Great White Way, don't panic. In 2013, he's slated to be starring in a new musical based on the life of Harry Houdini, which is being written by Aaron Sorkin and Stephen Schwartz.

You know how they say when you sleep with someone, you're sleeping with everyone they ever slept with? Well, I guess I now can say I've sexted with Anthony Weiner! I just got an e-mail

from his online buddy, Traci Nobles, and that's leading to my first retraction of the New Year. Actually, it's not so much of a retraction as a "clarification."

I recently recounted a story where the lovely Miss Nobles discussed texts from Weiner asking about having a three-way—preferably with another guy. I also reported that Traci would be discussing this and other juicy tidbits in a book she's working on. WELL ... not quite. I'll let her clear it up herself: "Anthony Weiner is not gay, the information published recently regarding a threesome with another man is not information that will be in the book, 'I Friendd You'. The book is a satirical story about the incident involving myself, Weiner, and the other women as well. I'm apologetic that this speculation and rumor is even out there. I just wanted to somehow defend him if I could. I would appreciate any help in passing this information along." Consider it passed...

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Stan in Kansas City: "I heard that one of the guys on Top



Robbie Williams (above) apparently has at least a man-crush on Brad Pitt.

Chef either posed nude or did porn or something like that. Do you know anything about that?"

Which season? It seems someone on *Top Chef* always turns up naked somewhere! This season we have Ty-Lör Boring ... and let me say that this is the first time in 16 years that an unlaut has popped up in my column! Boring appears to be anything but. (Sorry, I had to.) He's posed nude in a couple of magazines. Last year he dropped trou for *Butt* magazine—obviously showing his posterior. More recently, he revealed a different side of himself in an issue of "Headmaster"—which I believe is self-explanatory. Both pics can be found on *BillyMasters.com*.

When I'm in the middle of sexting with Anthony Weiner and trying to figure out if anyone on "Top Chef" is an actual top, it's definitely time for me to end yet another column. Plus, I have more important things to do—like plan outfits for these four big events. What I want to convey is respectability, sexy, slim, trashy, youthful, sophisticated, older, and powerful ... all at the same time. I think the answer may lie in one word—crotchless. Maybe I'll post some options on *www.BillyMasters.com*—the site with unlimited options. If you've got suggestions, send it along to me at *Billy@BillyMasters.com* and I promise to get back to you before I dress my age (so you've got a while). Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

CLICK TO WIN!



Kathy Griffin
Fri., Jan. 20
@ The Chicago Theatre

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Visit www.thechicagotheatre.com for more information on the show.

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Winner will be selected at random from all entries and will be notified via email.

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Chicagoan among Gay Games honorees

BY ROSS FORMAN

Israel Wright, a member of the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame, was honored as one of two recipients of the 2011 Volunteer of the Year award from the Federation of Gay Games (FGG).

Kate Rowe also was honored during the FGG's annual General Assembly, held in Toronto.

FGG also announced several other awards:

—The Straight Ally Legacy Award went to Brian Burke, president and general manager of the National Hockey League's Toronto Maple Leafs. He is straight and the father of the late Brendan Burke, an openly gay manager for the Miami University (Ohio) ice hockey team.

—The Women in Sport Legacy Award went to Angela James, the first woman in the Ice Hockey Hall of Fame and an open lesbian.

—The Legacy Award for a Local Sports Group was awarded to the Toronto Gay (Flag) Football League.

—Local Hero Legacy Awards: Stephanie Johnstone and Rob Lavery.

—The Legacy Award for an FGG Member Organization went to the International Gay Bowling Organization.

—The Social Justice Legacy Award was awarded to Ndumie Funda and Luleki Sizwe, campaign against "corrective rape" in South Africa.

"I was surprised that I was honored; it was a nice gesture. But I also have mixed feelings," said Wright, 57, who has been living in Chicago since 1975. "I was on the [FGG] board of directors from 2008-2010; prior to that, I was a volunteer with the technology department.

"I have been asked to come back on the board, and am still involved with its technology department."



Israel Wright. Photo courtesy of Wright

The Rogers Park resident was a key administrative official for the 2006 Games, held in Chicago. He was asked to be on the Chicago 2006 board of directors by Tracy Baim, he added.

Wright also has been the FGG's officer of technology, a position he held up through the Cologne Games in 2010. He was a board member in

Cologne. "It was an incredible experience, being a board member at the Games in a foreign country," he said. "Getting the award brings back a lot of wonderful memories."

Wright, who said he is "single and looking," did not participate in any sport in Chicago or Cologne. However, he's ever-present with a camera around his neck.

He also has been an associate director for the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame, and was inducted in 2000.

He had a 20-year career in banking and finance, according to his Hall of Fame bio. His Chicago volunteer work began at Horizons Community Services. Wright's photos have been published extensively and have been exhibited at museum and community venues in Chicago and Milwaukee. Wright also has held leadership posts

in the Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce; ONYXmen, Inc.; Adodi Chicago; Chicago Black Pride 2000; Horizons Community Services; Minority Outreach Intervention Project; Gerber/Hart Library & Archives; Midwest Men's Center of Chicago; and S.H.A.R.P. (Southside Health and AIDS Resource Providers).

"That [Hall of Fame induction] was remarkable, to be recognized by my peers and the City of Chicago for services for things that I really enjoy doing," Wright said. "I'm one of those individuals who you should not tell me about a situation [that needs help]—because I will get involved."

Wright said he's still undecided about attending the 2014 Gay Games in Cleveland, but likely will in some capacity.



CMSA women's basketball has started. Photo from WCT archives

CMSA women's basketball sign-ups

Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association women's dodgeball and basketball leagues are having signups soon.

The women's basketball league will be on Saturdays; the first games are Jan. 14. It is a 10-week regular season with one day of play-offs March 24. Games are at Pottawattomie Park, 7340 N. Rogers Ave., with the first game starting at 10:15 a.m. and continuing until 4:15 p.m.

There are two divisions, competitive and rec. (Those who played college ball in the past 10 years must play in the competitive division.) The team fee is \$400 and the player fee is \$45. All fees must be paid online on the Chicago MSA website.

For more info email Marcia league commissioner at womensbb@chicagomsa.org or visit http://www.chicagomsa.org/cmsa_new/Leagues/Basketball/BasketballWinterWomensLeague.aspx.

SkiBudz going to Midwest Gay Ski Weekend Feb. 3-5

SkiBudz, Chicago's gay ski and snowboard club, will travel to the 2012 Granite Peak/Midwest Gay Ski Weekend Feb. 3-5, 2012, in Wausau, Wis.

This is the Midwest's largest gay ski and snowboard event. There will be a great weekend of skiing/boarding, dinners, apres-ski activities and much more. Last year, 125 people

from throughout the Midwest attended this event.

Special discount rates are available at the Jefferson Street Inn, the host hotel in downtown Wausau. Visit <http://www.skibudz.org> for more trip information.

Contact information@skibudz.org if you have any questions about this event.

'Stars on Ice' at Rosemont March 11

The figure-skating tour "Stars on Ice" will visit Rosemont, Ill., Sunday, March 11, 2012, for a 5 p.m. performance at Allstate Arena.

The tour will get a new infusion of creativity from legendary skater Kurt Browning, who will co-direct and choreograph this year's production.

The event includes Browning; Olympic silver medalist Sasha Cohen; two-time Olympic gold medalist Ekaterina Gordeeva; 1998 Olympic gold medalist Ilia Kulik; and world champion and six-time U.S. national champion Todd Eldredge, among others.

Founded in 1986 by skating icon Scott Hamilton, the Stars on Ice tour has played more than 1,000 shows for over a quarter of a century. Tickets start at \$25 and are available via all Ticketmaster outlets, <http://www.ticketmaster.com>, 800-745-3000 and the Allstate Arena box office.



Kurt Browning. Promotional pic

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CREDIT CARD DEBTS: YOUR RIGHTS AND AN ABSOLUTE DEFENSE

Q. I am receiving calls and letters from a credit collector on a charge card that was closed over 10 years ago. What are my rights?

A. The answer for all consumers with old, unpaid debt is to be aware of the defense of the statute of limitations on your debts prior to any judgment against you by your creditors. The statute of limitations begins to run from the day the debt—or payment of an open-end account (credit cards)—was due. You can double check when your statute of limitations on your credit card debts start ticking by using your credit report as a reference. Your credit report will tell you the date of the last activity for your account. You will have your credit report with the date of the last activity as proof and a defense.

In Illinois the statute of limitations is 5 years on open-end accounts which are revolving lines of credit with varying balances. The best example is a credit card account. That time period begins with the last activity such as a charge or payment on the account.

5 years after the last payment or charge, the statute of limitations begins to be an absolute defense. If the creditor files a suit, the consumer has an absolute defense. It is important that you keep track of the last payment on the account so that you can prove there has been no activity for the 5 years covered by the statute of limitations.

Also, unknowing consumers will make payments on their credit card accounts even when they are not on their credit report. You make a payment and the credit collector gets another 5 years. Finally, the statute of limitations does not cause your debt to go away after it expires even though there has been no judgment against you.

Also, The Fair Debt Collections Practices Act governs how collection agencies must behave with consumers. You can find a copy on the Federal Trade Commission's Web site, www.ftc.gov.

Report problems to your state attorney general's office, which oversees the application of any state debt-collection laws, and the Federal Trade Commission. You can file a complaint at www.ftc.gov or by calling toll-free to 1-877-FTC-HELP.

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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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