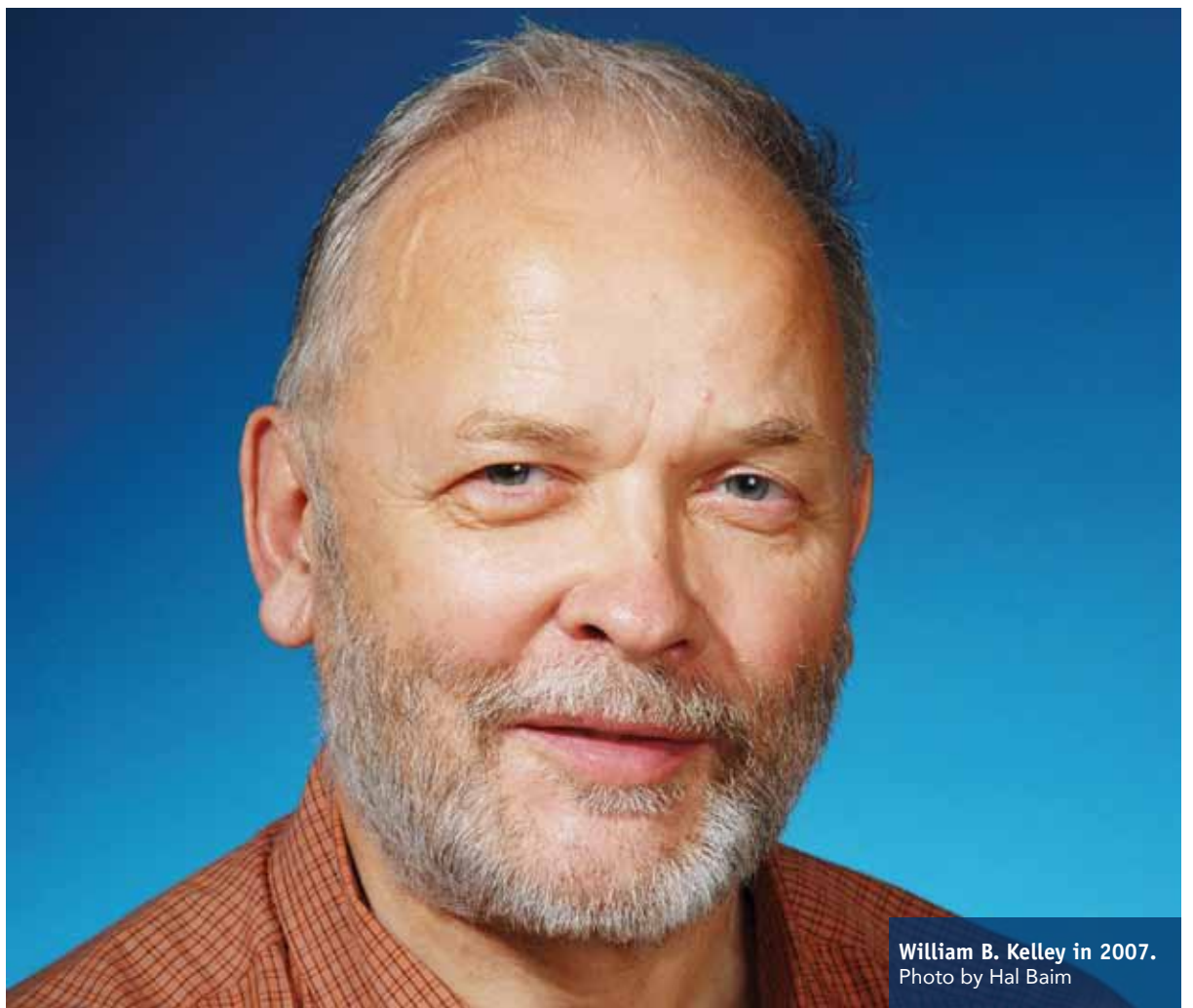


WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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William B. Kelley in 2007.
Photo by Hal Baim

William B. Kelley, gay pioneer, dies

BY TRACY BAIM

William B. Kelley, 72, who in 2015 was marking 50 years as a gay activist, passed away peacefully in his sleep the morning of May 17, according to Chen K. Ooi, his partner since 1979.

There were very few LGBT Chicago activists who stayed as consistently engaged in community activism as Kelley. He was part of the Mattachine Midwest chapter and wrote for and edited its newsletter. He helped organize the first national gay and lesbian conference—the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations—in 1966, co-founded the Chicago Gay Crusader newspaper, and attended the first White House gay-rights meeting, in 1977, under the Carter administration.

In Chicago, he was a critical player in numerous organizations as a founder, member and sometimes leader. He chaired the Cook County Commission on Human Relations for its first 10 years. He co-chaired Illinois Gays for Legislative Action in the early 1970s, the Illinois Gay Rights Task Force in the late 1970s, and was inducted into the first class of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1991.

This summer, he was planning to attend the 50th anniversary of the Philadelphia Reminder Days for gay rights; he had marched there during the 1960s.

State Rep. Greg Harris said he was “totally shocked to hear the sad news. Bill always had the most amazing perspective and guidance on events of the day because of his deep grasp of our community’s written and lived history combined with his legal knowledge and his kind, gentle way. What a loss for us all.”

“The LGBTQ community lost a life-long activist and great legal/political mind,” longtime businessman Chuck Renslow said. “We all owe him for decades of service in the cause of equal rights. I loved him a lot and I will miss him terribly. I really don’t have the words to describe the loss we’ve collectively suffered. My heart goes out to Chen.”

“An extraordinary individual,” wrote historian and author John D’Emilio. “There were so few who had the courage in those pre-gay liberation years to be ‘out there’—and there were even fewer who made the transition as activist from pre-Stonewall to post-Stonewall. In his quiet and unassuming way, Bill was extraordinary.”

“He was the face and voice of gay liberation in Chicago for so long,” said Chris Riddiough. “I first met Bill about 40 years ago—in the midst of a controversy over gay marriage—as always he spoke with reason and thoughtfulness in the midst

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Meet Mr. Chicago Leather 2015 Luis Tipantasig.
Photo by Chester Munro

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AIDS Foundation of Chicago marks thirty years with gala.
Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

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{SHE CREW}

Helpings to empower Chicago girls.
Photo of Jessica London-Shields

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WCT30

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To mark the 30th year of Windy City Times, we are partnering with some amazing business to raise \$30,000 to help us cover the editorial costs of producing Windy City Times as a free weekly newspaper each week, and free online daily.

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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TWO TO TANGO
 Former X Factor winners Alex and Sierra (left) are feeling the LGBT love. Also, check out WCT's interview with Matt Johnson of the duo Matt and Kim.
 Photo by Jerry Nunn



I THINK ICON
 The legendary Rita Moreno was in town recently, delivering a speech at Northeastern Illinois University's graduation ceremony.
 Photo by Jerry Nunn

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP
 A tour of some Andersonville stores yielded many treasures—material and informational.

PIT BY PIT
 Bent Nights takes a look at concerts by Leon Bridges and Passion Pit.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT
 Find out the latest about Cynthia Nixon, Perez Hilton and Calvin Klein.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**



RIBBITING PERFORMANCE
 For a different sort of diversion, check out "Amphibians" at Shedd Aquarium.
 Photo courtesy of Shedd Aquarium

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 The official guide to International Mr. Leather 2015
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Missouri HIV case gets national attention



Michael Johnson.

In Missouri, a former college student has been found guilty of exposing one of his sex partners to HIV as well as attempting to expose four others to the virus.

Prosecutors said ex-Lindenwood University student Michael Johnson, 23, allegedly continued to hook up with various men, and even reportedly lied to them when asked about his HIV status. Felony charges state that Johnson—who won the 2012 National Junior College championship before transferring to Lindenwood—infected two men and endangered four others before his October 2013 arrest.

Johnson was found not guilty on a sixth charge of exposing another man to the virus.

Medical experts as well as several HIV and LGBT groups condemned the development. The Missouri HIV Criminalization Task Force issued a statement saying, in part, “Today is not a victory for Missouri. It is not a victory for our

citizens or our communities. It is not a victory for public health policy or for Missourians who potentially are living with HIV but have yet to seek testing or treatment.

“This case highlights the need for improved sex education as well as access to that education, increased testing for sexually transmitted diseases, and the availability of prevention tools.”

Catherine Hanssens, executive director of The Center for HIV Law and Policy, said in a separate statement, “Michael Johnson’s conviction for exposing one of his sex partners to HIV and ‘attempting to expose’ four others to the virus reinforces both an ‘ignorance is bliss’ approach to sexual health and personal responsibility, and public hysteria and misconceptions about HIV.”

Dr. Wendy Armstrong—professor of medicine at Emory University School of Medicine, vice chair of the HIV Medical Association and a member of CHLP’s Positive Justice Project—said, “Failure to disclose, or outright lies, about one’s sexually transmitted infections or sexual past is extremely common. ... But the hang-them-high response seems to be reserved for discoveries of HIV non-disclosure and is based on misguided and outdated information about HIV and treatment.”

Isaiah Wilson, external affairs manager for the National Black Justice Coalition, said, “Michael testified that he did in fact disclose to his partners, but under this law it doesn’t matter because the word of his accusers supersedes his. This is beyond offensive and all people of good will should be able to recognize the alarming problem with the enforcement of these discriminatory laws that disproportionately impact Black men.”

The St. Charles County jury suggested a 30-year prison term for Johnson, whose sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 13.

Laramie OKs ordinance 17 years after Shepard’s death

In Wyoming, the Laramie City Council approved a local anti-discrimination ordinance—17 years after gay student Matthew Shepard’s death took place in the same town, The Chicago Tribune noted.

The council voted seven to two in favor of the measure that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment and access to public facilities such as restaurants. Wyoming Equality Executive Director Jeran Artery said, “What a day for Wyoming—and what a day for the city that became synonymous with Matthew Shepard’s murder—to now step up and do this right thing.”

Shepard’s death was considered a watershed in the gay-rights movement, resulting in a national hate-crimes measure.

In a statement to Windy City Times, Matthew Shepard Foundation Executive Director Jason Marsden said, “The people of Laramie deserve congratulations for their defiance of hatred and their embrace of diversity in the wake of tragedy and under the world’s scrutiny.

“This is a community that looked inward and found that it values all of its people regardless of difference. What happened in 1998 could have happened anywhere. What’s happened since then is what Laramie is all about. We applaud the city for showing Wyoming and the world what they’re made of.”

On a personal note, Marsden added, “I can add that Matt was a friend of mine and I am truly touched by the council’s vote. It is very much in line with Matt’s own interest in equal rights and, particularly, his belief in grassroots

activism, of which this effort certainly was a tremendous example.”

—Andrew Davis

Gay engineer involved in Amtrak crash

The engineer involved in the May 12 Amtrak train crash in Pennsylvania has been identified as gay activist Brandon Bostian, Gay Star News noted.

Bostian, 32, has told authorities he can’t remember what happened when the train jumped the tracks, killing at least eight people and injuring more than 200.

The engineer has been vocal in his support of gay rights, even being interviewed at a marriage-equality protest in 2012.

His LinkedIn profile says that Bostian has worked at Amtrak since 2006, first as a passenger conductor for four years and an engineer for almost five years. The train was traveling at 106 mph shortly before the crash—twice the limit for the section of curved track north of Philadelphia where the accident occurred.

The original article is at <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/engineer-who-caused-amtrak-crash-identified-gay-activist-brandon-bostian140515>.



Brandon Bostian.
LinkedIn photo

Reproductive Justice at the Intersections

BY GAYLON B. ALCARAZ



Homeless youth and reproductive justice

In the early ‘90s a group of women of color came together to caucus at a primarily white pro-choice conference here in Chicago. Obviously abortion was the theme and primary agenda.

Abortion legalized in 1973 ensured that a woman had the right to determine whether she wanted to parent or not. Yet, in the ‘90s most women impacted by the restrictive reproductive laws were some of the most vulnerable and marginalized in society. Clearly the fight to keep abortion legal was not working for many. Being legal did not ensure that poor women could access this right.

This is why those forward-thinking women activists took it upon themselves to step outside the silo of the pro-choice movement. These women knew even then that focusing on a single-frame issue was not the answer to the underlying questions and concerns of many women’s lives. Fighting for one’s right to have an abortion yet ignoring the systemic and structural issues that intersect and contribute to a poor person’s inability to pay for a legal procedure was an injustice. It is a privileged mindset at work. Needless to say that meeting in the ‘90s was sorely needed.

and social well-being of women and girls, and will be achieved when women and girls have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, sexuality, and reproduction for ourselves, our families, and our communities in all areas of our lives.”

This is why youth homelessness is a reproductive justice issue and why reproductive justice is an important framework. It encompasses all individuals as they demand their right to full autonomy. You cannot have full autonomy if you do not have your basic needs met. You cannot control the body you live in if you are homeless on the street. Affordable and accessible housing is crucial to healthy and fulfilling lives.

It is in this ideology that we, as a society, should not only believe but fight for the basic rights for all human beings. The lack of housing, food, quality education, safety, healthcare and choice are injustices that are ignored. Without these basic needs many fall thru the cracks and are exposed to the dangerous elements that lurk around the most vulnerable. All these injustices affect a person’s reproductive health.

Anytime a young person finds themselves without stable housing they are in danger of being victimized or sexually assaulted. Without adequate support and stability it is hard to have a healthy life. That is why being homeless is a reproductive justice issue. When we broaden our view of how so many injustices impact the lives we live, we can see and understand why the fight for re-

productive justice is a critical component to changing the systems. Dismantling the problem at the core is the only way to go.

Help a young person with stable housing today. Their reproductive lives are at stake. Support The 750 Club Apartment Adoption Project. It seeks to provide private apartments for youth moving out of transition housing. We have a responsibility to give back and make the world a better place for us all.

See tinyurl.com/ApartmentAdopt.
Wikipedia: [Reproductive Justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reproductive_justice)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reproductive_justice

“You cannot have full autonomy if you do not have your basic needs met. You cannot control the body you live in if you are homeless on the street. Affordable and accessible housing is crucial to healthy and fulfilling lives.”

What they came away with was Reproductive Rights + Social Justice. This idea merged the Human Rights Declaration, social justice principles and reproductive rights into a framework that recognizes these basic tenements:

- The ability to terminate a pregnancy
- The ability to carry a pregnancy to term; and
- The ability to parent the children you have without governmental interference

However, there is much more to this framework than meets the eye.

“Reproductive Justice is the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, eco-

Gaylon B. Alcaraz is the former Executive Director of the Chicago Abortion Fund, a community organizer and staunch reproductive justice advocate. You can follow her on twitter @gaylonalcaraz and contact her at gabtalks@gmail.com.

Author Nikki Rashan Jenkins dies

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Lesbian author Nikki Rashan Jenkins, 42, died May 4 of complications from breast cancer.

She wrote four novels; Double Pleasure Double Pain, You Make Me Wanna, Cyber Case and The EXchange. She also wrote Sugar on the Side, which was included in Carl Weber's Full Figure series and Crossing Layne which was featured in the anthology Les Tales: Tempted to Touch book.

Rashan Jenkins was born Aug. 18, 1972, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and spent her childhood there. She graduated from North Division High School in Milwaukee and went on to take writing courses at Concordia University Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

She came out publicly on The Oprah Winfrey Show in 2004 and was featured in Milwaukee Magazine, Swerv Magazine, Studs Magazine and on the Fab Femme website. She also took part in the GayNeighbor.org campaign highlighting LGBT families in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Rashan Jenkins is survived by her wife Brandy Jenkins and three daughters; Courtney Ward, Jasmine Ward and Brianna Jenkins. She is also survived by her mother Patricia Evans, father George Pumphrey and a sister, Bonita Rodriguez.

"Nikki always gave of herself. Even while battling her own illness and pain, she talked, encouraged and comforted so many who were going through similar illnesses or life's hardships," said Shenay P. McCrary, Rashan Jenkins' cousin and lifelong friend. "This world has lost a beautiful daughter, mother, sister, wife, cousin, friend and author but gained a sweet, sweet angel. Rest in heaven my cousin."

"It's not often that people come into my life and immediately catch me off guard with their beauty, sincerity, intelligence and humility, but Nikki did just that when I met her back in 2008," said Tamara Allen, friend and B.BLYSS! co-founder. "She was not only an amazing author, but she was also a loving mother and wife. She was an activist in her own right and helped to open doors that she may not even know that she opened for so many people in the community. She was a great role model for women, especially women of color who might be struggling with self-acceptance or balancing motherhood with a career and a relationship."

"Just knowing that she has written her last line is difficult to accept, but I know that she left me and so many others with a clear understanding of what it means to be a lover and a fighter. She and her wife shared their love story before and during Nikki's battle with cancer, and I have to assume it was because they wanted us to know that if we ever lost hope in love, we could always look at them and see that it's possible. I thank God for bringing her into my life and into the B.BLYSS! family. We miss her dearly and we will continue to honor her memory whenever and however we can."

"Nikki's fight was admirable and she touched the hearts of the masses," said Monique Chandler, Rashan Jenkin's publicist and friend. "Albeit her physical presence will be truly missed but her delightful spirit will forever reside in our hearts."

A public visitation took place on May 15 at Northwest Funeral Chapel in Milwaukee.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that all monies be directed to a fund (which is in the process of being set up) for her daughters. Fund information can be accessed at www.facebook.com/authornrashan.



Michael Nixon. Photo from AVER (Chicago chapter) newsletter

PASSAGES

Michael Nixon

Army Specialist Michael Nixon died April 7 in Fort Knox, Kentucky. He was 27.

Nixon was born March 5, 1988, in Park Ridge, Illinois. He had been stationed in Korea from February 2014 to March 10, 2015.

Nixon had been featured in the October 2014 newsletter of the Chicago Chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights.

He wrote, "After the repeal of DADT, I first came out to my then unit at Fort Benning, then my family. I have been open ever since. In my free time I enjoy building and creating new things with legos, writing and watching good movies. I guess you can say that I'm a kid at heart. I have future plans to join the Army National Guard and to get a degree in Photography."

He was the son of Julianna Nixon-Handy and NaVerris (Jean) Nixon. Funeral Mass was held April 14 at St. Zachary Catholic Church 567 W. Algonquin Rd., Des Plaines.



Nikki Rashan. Photo courtesy of Brandy Jenkins

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At inauguration, Emanuel pledges future for Chicago's lost youth

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Inclusion was a theme of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's inauguration to a second term held at the Chicago Theatre May 18. The invocation, prayer for guidance, prayer for peace, blessing and benediction were provided by Monsignor Kenneth Velo, Pastor John Hannah, Professor Inamul Haq, Pastor Lynette Santiago and Rabbi David Wolkenfeld, respectively.

Former Mayor Richard M. Daley, former President Bill Clinton and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin were included on the guest list. Chicago poet Harold Green III provided a stirring rendition of his piece *Something to Live For*, Lyric Opera Creative Consultant Renée Fleming sang "America the Beautiful," and the Apostolic Church of God Praise Team and Chicago Children's Choir lent their energetic music to the program.

The Chicago Gay Men's Chorus were also incorporated into the agenda as prelude entertainment for people while they were taking their seats in the packed auditorium.

City Clerk Susana A. Mendoza administered the oath of office to the 50 incoming and returning aldermen—10 percent of whom identify as LGBT.

Emanuel's inaugural address centered upon the inclusion of what he termed a "lost generation of our city's youth."

"We all know who they are," he said, "although it is easier and sometimes more convenient to ignore them. Many are born into poverty. Many come from broken homes. And

many have been on their own from early on."

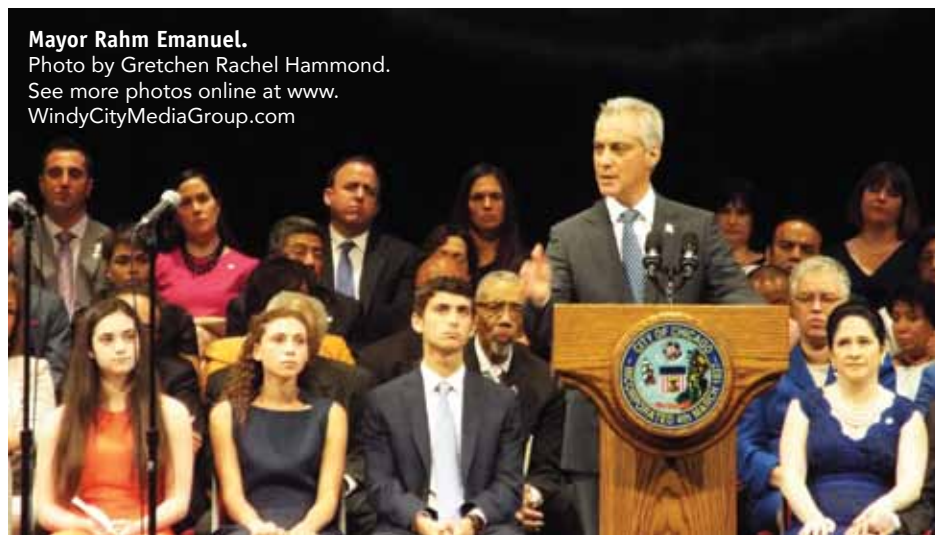
While extolling the invaluable work of youth programs such as *Becoming a Man (BAM)* and *Working on Womanhood (WOW)*, Emanuel asserted that they only reach a fraction of the city's disaffected youth "who remain invisible until we see them in a mug shot as the victim or perpetrator of a senseless crime.

"Their existence is avoided rather than confronted," Emanuel added. "They live in the shadows of our cities—and in the recesses of our minds. But we must make them ever-present in our conversation. They may have been born in poverty, but poverty was not born in them."

In an acknowledgement of forgotten neighborhoods on the South and West sides, Emanuel noted that "years of silence and inaction have walled off a portion of our city. It is time for each of us to start breaking down those walls."

After vowing that over the next four years "I will do everything in my power to spark hope in the eyes of every Chicagoan" through increased wages, employment opportunities, safer streets and stringer schools, Emanuel challenged the city to "be a role model for the young people in your life. Give an adolescent who was born without a prayer his first prayer at getting ahead.

"A generation of children needs our city to stand up for them," Emanuel concluded. "For those children, and for our city, let us today answer that call."



Mayor Rahm Emanuel.
Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond.
See more photos online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com



Chief Judge Tim Evans swearing in Emanuel.



(L-R) Richard M. Daley, Dick Durbin, Pres. Bill Clinton.



Renée Fleming.



Harold Green III.

Missing Chicago trans woman located

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

A 28-year-old Chicago transgender woman named Sherry Berry who had been missing since May 6, 2015 has been located, according to her father Jerry Nicholas Sr.

However Nicholas believes she remains in an extremely dangerous situation both medically and in terms of her surroundings.

Nicholas and family friend Derek Banks said that Berry had undergone brain surgery at Rush University Medical Center April 27. The surgery followed an incident which Banks said Berry vaguely remembered as being pushed down a flight of stairs.

Nicholas told Windy City Times that the family noted multiple injuries and lacerations to his daughter's face and body when visiting her following surgery. He stated that on May 6 an individual who was not a family member visited his daughter at Rush. Shortly after, she was permitted to sign herself out and left the hospital.

On May 15, Nicholas told Windy City Times that the individual who accompanied Berry out of the hospital had seen fliers and reports about her disappearance and immediately contacted the family to inform them that she was alive and currently staying with a relative. However Nicholas remains extremely concerned because he maintains his daughter has refused to return to the hospital for treatment for what he characterized as a "life threatening problem."

"According to Rush as of May 15 x-rays [of Berry] determined blood clots in her lungs that have spread to her stomach," he said. Nicholas

also believes that whomever initiated the attack on Berry still presents a grave threat to her safety.

In an earlier interview with Windy City Times Nicholas detailed Berry's life—one fraught with challenges that began when she was 6. "She was taken from school and arrested by the CPD when she was 6," he said. "They took her and put handcuffs on her. They took all six of our children away with juvenile arrest warrants."

The arrest reports Nicholas provided Windy City Times were issued on July 26, 1993, for each of the six children, and listed neglect as the offense.

It would be 10 years before Nicholas and his wife saw her again. "She was 16, going to school, working at Burger King and as a life guard," he said. "When she first saw us, she couldn't believe it. Then she told us what had happened to her."

Nicholas said that, as a child, Berry was placed in the home of a relative. "How they obtained custody, we don't know. [She was allegedly raped], Sherry got chlamydia and a respiratory infection. The Children's Advocacy Center knew about this and they did nothing."

According to Nicholas, Berry was instead admitted to Michael Reese Hospital on Chicago's South Side. "She was in the psychiatric facility," he said. "Sherry told us they restrained her and she got electroshock therapy. But she didn't have psychotic episodes. Never tried to kill herself. She just kept saying 'my parents are going to save me.'"

At 16, Sherry began her transition. "She was discriminated against," Nicholas said. "They



Sherry Berry.
Facebook photo

denied her low-income housing. Workplaces were mistreating her. She was treated like she didn't deserve to be equally protected. The streets just took her over. She turned to alcohol, smoking, cocaine. She became homeless. But she never came to us. Our daughter would write us off saying 'we don't love her.' I kept saying 'We do. We accept you. We don't accept what happened to you. We don't like it.' She didn't want to stay with us."

Nicholas said that Berry survived by engaging in the sex trade.

On April 25, 2015, Berry left her sister Caroline's home at 4 a.m. "We don't know why," Nicholas said.

Two days later, she was admitted into Saint Bernard Hospital on the South Side. At 3 p.m., she was transferred to Rush where she underwent brain surgery the same day.

Nicholas stressed that he was very clear to

the CPD that Berry is a transgender woman. The CPD report issued and then reprinted by the Chicago Sun-Times May 7 listed her as male.

He noted that he is also angry with the Sun-Times. "The reporter did not contact us as to who Sherry is instead of just writing this sample," he said. "I'm upset about it. The police wanted to put the picture of her in the paper of Sherry in the hospital with a bald head."

Banks confirmed Nicholas's story of what occurred between April 27 and May 6 at Rush. He added that when Berry was in the hospital she had begun to slowly remember details of what had happened to her. "She told me somebody threw her down the stairs," Banks said.

"I don't think anybody should be leaving the hospital a week after brain surgery," he asserted. "Even as an adult a family member should be contacted from the hospital for you to be able to sign out and they should have to come and pick you up."

Ald. Leslie Hairston (5th Ward) and Affinity Community Services had released fliers appealing for the community's help in locating Sherry.

"The system has failed Sherry completely—from childhood to this very day," Affinity Executive Director Kim Hunt told Windy City Times. "I talked to her father and he did go into the DCFS stuff but also talked about how when Sherry made her transition she was not able to find resources to support her. Even though she apparently has a very loving family they couldn't find resources either. Because of this, there was no role model for her."

Windy City Times reached out to Rush University Medical Center in order to determine why a woman was allowed to sign herself out a little more than a week after having brain surgery, in her condition and with a stranger despite the visitation restrictions Nicholas said were supposed to be enforced. Their only response to these questions was "the patient was medically cleared for discharge."



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JUNE 21

- 9:30 am CoorsLight PrideFest Parade
- 12:00 pm Pride Rally



KELLEY from cover

of swirling arguments over the impact on the movement for gay rights and women's rights of an attempt by two women to obtain a marriage license from Cook County. After that I worked with Bill on many campaigns ranging from the opposition to Anita Bryant to the effort to pass a gay rights bill in the Chicago City Council.

"Working with the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Metropolitan Chicago, Bill was able to draw many diverse parts of the gay and lesbian community from bar owners to lesbian-feminist activists like myself. His work with the Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force was paramount in the move to pass legal protections for gay men and lesbians. Bill, of course, was in the fight before I was ... His courage in stepping forward at a time when so few of us were willing to be identified as gay, led the way to the movement and victories we see today. ... His droll wit, interesting posts [on Facebook], comments about Chicago always brought back those heady days in the 1970s when we were forging a new era for the gay and lesbian community."

"For the final 10 years of my syndicated gay-press career, Bill was my editor, my proofreader, my fact-checker, and my all-around advisor. In both English and Spanish," said journalist Rex Wockner. "I don't think I know anyone else who knew so much about everything, including the entire history of our movement. One of the most remarkable, amazing people I ever have known, and a dear friend. He would do things like spend two hours reading the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, at midnight, in order to tweak one sentence in one of my international news briefs. As gay news became more complex and more intertwined with legal things, I couldn't have continued as long as I did without him. This is a huge loss—for me, for Chicago, and for brainiac first-hand memory of LGBT history nationwide and beyond."

"I loved and admired Bill Kelley, and I will miss him and his wry smile and his quiet grace," said writer and editor Jorjet Harper. "The old saying that 'when an elder dies, a library burns to the ground' is more true of Bill Kelley's passing than of anyone else I know. His deep and finely detailed knowledge of LGBT history was rooted in his personal experiences as a creator of and a witness to that history."

"Bill and I worked closely together as co-editors on a number of Tracy Baim's books, including *Obama and the Gays*; *Out and Proud* in Chicago; *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*; the Chuck Renslow biography *Leatherman*, Jim Flint's biography *The Boy From Peoria*, and Vernita Gray's biography *From Woodstock to the White House* (the last three co-written with Owen Keehnen). At the time of Bill's death we had just finished editing the first biography of gay activist Barbara Gittings. I thought we made a great editing team; I have always enjoyed working with him, and I relied on his expertise, his eye, and his impeccable mastery of Associated Press style. Bill's vast knowledge of people and events in the community was often astonishing to me, and he would tease out fine points of historical accuracy that I would never even have been aware of."

"He truly has been a Chicago icon for decades in the struggle for LGBT equality, yet his manner was softspoken and unassuming. I am still in shock that he's gone, along with that part of our living history that has gone with him."

Israel Wright, a longtime friend and fellow Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame board member, was among activists who had just spent time with Kelley at the Hall of Fame's bowling event May 9.

"I am so at a loss for exact words to express how important Bill Kelley has been to me and believed in all that I have done with the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame and otherwise," Wright said. "At times when it seemed there was no one in my corner I could always count on Bill to be my great support. The last time we were together was at our most recent Celebrity Bowl and once again he provided invaluable support to make sure the event went



Kelley (third from left) at the first White House meeting on gay issues, in 1977. Midge Costanza (back to camera) hosted the meeting. More photos and video with the online edition of this story at www.windycitymediagroup.com

well.

"Bill and Gary Chichester are the reason that the structure and sustainability of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame exist today. He would often say in the last year he was looking forward to the day he could relax from all of the efforts he was expending. Well, Bill the heavens just opened again for a real angel to take his place among the stars."

"Bill and Chen were a world-traveled couple who often shared their adventures on Facebook. I was often in wonderment of the gardens in the back of their house and how much dedication they devoted to being caretakers of nature."

"This news is devastating," Gary Chichester said. "I have known Bill for over 45 years and have always found him to be someone who would have great insight regarding the issues that have faced our communities. He was a wonderful friend and mentor. We have lost a great leader and one of the most important individuals creating change in the fight for equal rights for LGBT people."

"Bill Kelley was incredibly generous with his time and insights and so helpful to me in my work for Windy City Times and beyond," said writer Chuck Colbert. "Just this morning [May 17] I received an email from him that came through at roughly 4 a.m. on my end. His passing is a great loss for our community."

As the Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame website states: "His influence behind the scenes cannot be overestimated. His knowledge, intellect, and steady, reasoned approach have earned him the trust and respect of community activists on all sides of issues."

"Kelley has been an initiator of a large number of community projects; his involvement has included Mattachine Midwest, the Chicago Gay Alliance, Homosexuals Organized for Political Education, the Gay and Lesbian Pride Week Planning Committee, Illinois Gays for Legislative Action, the Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Metropolitan Chicago, the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, and the National Gay (now Gay and Lesbian) Task Force. ... He has represented lesbian and gay concerns while actively participating in such groups as the 1980 White House Conference on Families and the implementation committee for the 1980 startup of the Illinois Human Rights Commission. In 1987, after many years of concern with lesbian and gay legal rights, he realized his personal dream of becoming a lawyer."

Dick Uyvari said he had "the distinct pleasure of serving with Bill the last four years, on

the board of Friends of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. Bill was certainly 'one-of-a-kind'—an intelligent, kind, and generous man, and extremely competent in all matters legal. He was unequalled when it came to writing technical opinions and responses."

In the 1990s, Kelley was a law clerk to Justice William S. White of the Appellate Court of Illinois. He was on the board of directors of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois and was a board member and officer of the Chicago Access Corporation. He was a founder of the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association and a member of the Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago, Asians and Friends Chicago, the Cook County State's Attorney's Task Force on Gay and Lesbian Issues, the City of Chicago's Advisory Council on Gay and Lesbian Issues, and the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties, according to the Hall of Fame.

In a 2005 interview with Windy City Times, Kelley discussed growing up in Southeast Missouri in the 1950s. "It was legally segregated and practically segregated, for the most part. When I entered high school, it was the first year it had been desegregated," Kelley said, adding that reading influenced his view on civil rights. "The consciousness of rights was grounded because it was the McCarthy era. I was reading books about free speech, [about] not accepting the religiosity of the day, and about racial justice. It was a combination of those three types of readings that began to make me rights-conscious. In fact, I was an ACLU member when I was in high school."

Kelley moved to Chicago in 1959 to attend the University of Chicago. "As far as gayness was concerned, it gave me a chance to see whether being sexual in a different environment [would still result in me] being gay," he said. "I needed to check things out; I didn't know if my gayness was a function of social vectors in high school or my orientation. It turned out to be [the latter]. ... That was two years before Illinois officially abolished its law against same-sex activity and, even after that, it was quite a while before authorities stopped trying to enforce laws that did not exist or enforce other laws that did exist in a discriminatory way."

Kelley went to the first public meeting of Mattachine Midwest, in August 1965. "I was interested in finding such a group for a couple of years but didn't know how," he said. "I wrote the Mattachine Society in New York, which I read about, and they apparently kept me on their contact list. When some people started a group in Chicago, they enlisted the coopera-

tion of the New York [branch], which gave them my name. ... I got interested because of my consciousness regarding sexual discrimination and progressive laws. I remember when I had to read about [these issues] in the Rare Books Room at the University of Chicago; that's where they kept gay books, or at least the first one I read, *The Homosexual in America*."

In 1964 in the Chicago area, there was a series of very public police raids on gay bars that resulted in peoples' names and addresses being put in the front pages of newspapers. "That really made me think that something should be done. It took me getting this mailing [about the meeting] to get me in contact with others who were involved in activism," Kelley said. "I was about 22 or 23. That's not as young as people have started since then. It just seemed like the thing to do. I had always been a little outspoken, politically. Even back in the 1950s, I wrote letters to the editor—about segregation, not gayness."

Kelley was involved with Mattachine Midwest from 1965 to roughly 1970. "By that time, I found Mattachine to be too lethargic and the personalities to be too irritating; we also had arguments about various issues. So I got together with another friend who was in Mattachine; we formed an organization to do a political-questionnaire project for political candidates—that became HOPE (Homosexuals Organized for Political Education)," Kelley said. "About that time, Chicago Gay Liberation had come onto the scene after Stonewall; shortly, Chicago Gay Alliance came out of that. CGA was more to my liking than GGL, so I went there and stayed until it evaporated. We lobbied Democrats, City Council and the Illinois Fair Employment Practices Commission, which has been superseded by the Human Rights Commission."

"When CGA dissolved in about 1973, I met a lover. He was an energetic CGA person [Mike Bergeron] who organized a newspaper [Chicago Gay Crusader] and community center; I helped him with that for a few years. At that time, so many organizations were being formed to accomplish various goals. In 1976, I started working with Chuck Renslow in his office, which was an opportunity to really stay involved. I [wasn't] a professional gay activist as we've had since then—but that was the closest I came to being one. That pattern persisted throughout the '70s. I was involved in organizations that did anything that was political and activist. Social service groups were not my cup of tea."

See page 9

KELLEY from page 8

“One day he walked in to my office and the next thing I knew he was the smartest legal assistant who had not yet gone to law school that I could ever find,” said longtime attorney Ralla Klepak. “After years of nagging—a talent of mine—he went to law school. Historian, lawyer, administrative judge, intellectual, warrior, chronicler, Solomon-like attributes, the world is diminished by his loss and we are greater by his life, cut too short. We collectively mourn.”

In 1987, while still working for Renslow, he received his law degree from Chicago-Kent Law School.

“I’m personally deeply grateful that even then [in the 1960s], when the movement’s prospects looked so bleak, Bill had the foresight to hold on to so many obscure scraps of paper,” said historian Timothy Stewart-Winter. “He soon became a national leader in the homophile movement. My heart goes out to his dear partner of many years, Chen Ooi, who tolerated the weeks I spent going through Bill’s papers on the living room. Rest in power, sir.”

Mark Segal, founder and publisher of Philadelphia Gay News, said he knew Kelley since the early 1970s, when Segal came to Chicago to speak at Gay Pride. “Bill was passionate about LGBT history, and was humble about his part as a pioneer,” Segal said. “He marched when few would, he spoke up when few would, for all this he was to be honored in Philadelphia this July 4th on the 50th anniversary of the 1965-’69 Independence Hall ‘Equality for homosexual’s’ picket line, [among] the first LGBT public demonstrations in the nation. Today’s LGBT activists for equality should honor and equal his passion and bravery.”

Kelley spoke to Windy City Times about his participation in the historic White House meeting. “The National Gay Task Force was behind getting it set up. That was done through contacts cultivated between Jean O’Leary, the co-executive director of NGTF, and Midge Costanza, President Jimmy Carter’s assistant. Bruce Voeller, the other co-executive director, had become familiar with Chuck Renslow, because Chuck was considered a mover and shaker and Bruce kept in contact with [those people]. I

was invited because I had been acquainted with Bruce. I was asked to write a paper, and I did. It was about tax-exemption problems of gay groups; that was one of the issues that we wanted to bring to the Carter administration’s attention. So, basically I went to Washington one day, lugging my IBM typewriter. I finished writing the paper in the hotel and went over to the White House.”

Asked his advice for younger activists, Kelley said this in 2005: “Patience ... which is always hard for young people to accept. Also, they should learn from history; I always did. When I was a child, I related better to older people; I was interested in what had happened before. History is such a useful tool for activism; you learn what to expect in terms of opposition and opportunity. Lastly, don’t write off older people. They still can be very helpful, not only in terms of intellectual resources but in terms of ideas.”

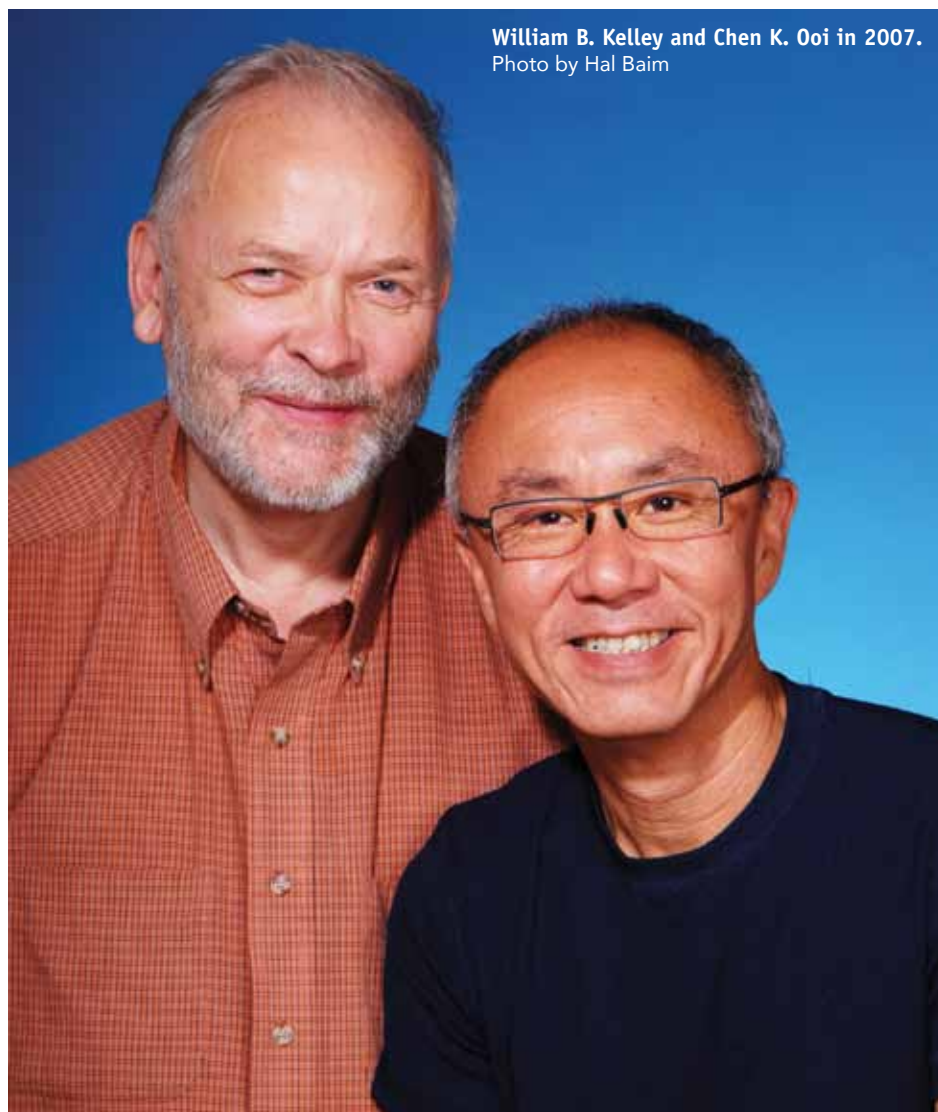
Kelley said if it had not been for his partner Ooi, “I wouldn’t have been able to do a lot of things, such as attend law school (because of the support he offered me). Also, I can bounce a lot of things off of him; he’s much better at understanding human nature than I am. In addition, since he’s a little more conservative than I am, he can offer different viewpoints that I would never consider. Overall, the relationship has benefited my activist involvement more than my activist involvement has benefited my relationship.”

Visitation will be Wed., May 20, 3-9 p.m. Drake & Son Funeral Home, 5303 N. Western Ave. On Thursday, visitation will be at the same location 9 a.m., with procession to Wunder Cemetery at noon, 3963 N. Clark, Chicago.

See Kelley’s interview with the Chicago Gay History Project here: chicagogayhistory.org/biography.html.

See interview with Kelley and Chen here: www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Bill-Kelley-and-Chen-Ooi-on-their-lives-and-volunteer-work/38019.html.

Also see this 2005 interview with Kelley: www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Talking-History-with-Longtime-Activist-Bill-Kelley/8607.html.



William B. Kelley and Chen K. Ooi in 2007. Photo by Hal Baim



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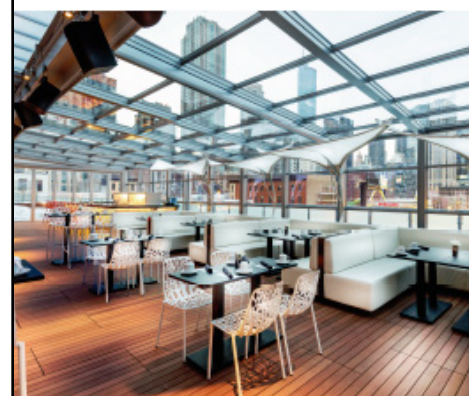
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Affinity marks 20 years of grassroots accomplishments

PART TWO OF TWO
BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

When Affinity began work in 1995, at its helm was a group of true idealists determined to do whatever it took to ensure that an under-represented Black LGBTQ community on Chicago's South Side was given a voice and the confidence to express it in a challenging political, social and philanthropic world.

For the next 20 years the women who led Affinity took it from an all-volunteer grassroots organization that had to fight for recognition and precious donor dollars to one that is now forging partnerships and initiatives that span LGBTQ issues across the city and nationwide.

They don't have a massive staff or an inordinately large budget. A great deal of the work Affinity accomplishes is still completed day-by-over-12-hour-day through its volunteers, board and small number of employees. Yet Affinity continues to expand its reach.

Two of the organization's leaders—Executive Director Kim Hunt and Board Vice-President Anna DeShawn—sat down with Windy City Times late one Wednesday evening to discuss Affinity's work both present and future.

Hunt was an independent grant-writer when she discovered Affinity during an INCITE Color of Violence conference in Chicago—Chris Smith was a panelist at that conference. "I had



Anna DeShawn.
Photo courtesy of Affinity

recently come out and I had walked past Affinity many times and never went in," Hunt said. "So when I saw [Chris] at the conference I was like 'let me just introduce myself and make my services available.'"

Hunt's work with the committee to bring the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago had provided her with plenty of contacts, "folks who were on the front line across the city in the LGBT movement," she said. "But to know someone

involved with this organization on the South Side working with Black women in particular was intriguing."

After Hunt finished grad school, Smith and Pickens took her out to dinner. "[They] put the moves on me to be on the board," Hunt recalled with a laugh. "They kept asking so eventually I said 'yes' and was on the board for a couple of years before I became executive director."

Ten years ago, DeShawn was an undergraduate at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa—a place she referred to as a PWI (predominantly white institution). "I was looking for people that looked like me and they just don't exist in Des Moines," she said. "I was following Affinity's website for quite some time. I had come home for a break and I was like, 'I'm going to go.'"

She showed up to Affinity's XPU youth leadership institute and was encouraged to join despite an initial reluctance. "Major peer pressure, good old Affinity style," DeShawn said. "I started doing the drop-ins and found community. When I first started working with Affinity there was no full-time staff. Everything was run by board members. Everything was a volunteer-based system. The capacity has grown exponentially over the past 10 years."

For Hunt, the challenge was to broaden Affinity's initial focus on community building and providing a safe space. "That was hugely important and very attractive to funders," she said. "Over the years focusing on that alone wasn't enough to bring funding in and it really wasn't meeting the needs of the community either."

While those communities and spaces still exist in the form of Affinity's volunteer-led programs such as Trail Blazers, 40+, Proud Parents and Chi T* among others, Hunt recognized the need to have more structured programming over a longer period of time. Born from that need, the three-year Youth Scholars Program was developed by DeShawn and her fellow XPU members. "We have 12 alum from that group who are out doing amazing things," Hunt said.

She added that peer-to-peer education and advocacy has become a quintessential element of Affinity's work in social justice, direct services and programming such as HIV prevention.

In 2010 Affinity began a dramatic shift toward public policy efforts. "By that time a lot of the organizations across the country that were created around the same time as Affinity were dying, they were just starved for funding," Hunt recalled. "We knew that we needed to step up our game in certain areas."

Nevertheless in terms of funding and support DeShawn said that a great divide still exists between the North and South sides of Chicago.

"Inherently larger non-profits that have million-dollar funders can of course serve more people," she said. "And often times when you have grants based on the number of people you serve, then they automatically get more funding than smaller nonprofits like ourselves, even though we have proven to be financially stable [with] pages and pages of good work."

DeShawn said she credits Affinity's community as among those who have helped the organization navigate through a difficult philanthropic world with priorities that seem to be in a constant state of change. "We have people who continue to give their five dollars every month," she said, adding that Hunt's ability to build relationships and find new sources of funding has been just as invaluable.

However, 2012 proved to be a year when Affinity ran a perilous gauntlet. "Ironically that's the time when we were growing," Hunt said. "[It] was a weird year. It started out on a really high note, and then, towards the middle of the year, it became apparent that some of the new foundation donors we were cultivating were going through some changes in interest areas and leadership, and it all happened at once. Money that we anticipated even conservatively just disappeared."

Affinity's leadership was left with a heartbreaking but inescapable decision.

"At our high we had three full-time and two part-time staff," Hunt said. "By the time we laid people off, there were two of us left and we were paid part-time but continued to work like before because there was so much to do."

"Affinity is always [operating under the pretense that], 'We're going to get through this,'" DeShawn said, referring to the board. "We're all a strong-minded, opinionated group of people but at the end of the day the main goal is what's best for the organization. That's what we all agree on."

Neither the board nor Hunt allowed the somber days of 2012 to consume Affinity. Three years on, they now boast an operating reserve and an auditor, which is very rare for an organization of its size.

Today it is difficult to find an LGBT fight in which Affinity has not played a significant role, whether in marriage equality or the myriad of issues faced by the transgender community, those living with HIV, homeless youth, immigrants — all people which the organization proudly calls "constituents." To further its reach it has forged partnerships with organizations from the Chicago Urban League to the AIDS Foundation of Chicago.

"We've been working closely with Affinity probably for the last five years," AFC President and CEO John Peller told Windy City Times. "When we say, 'Hey, we need your help with something' the answer's always 'Yes'. The level of grassroots engagement that Affinity is able to bring is incredible. It's an organization that is deeply rooted in the community and exceptionally well run. Kim and the board have done a phenomenal job in making Affinity a small but incredibly mighty organization."

According to Hunt, a person can travel anywhere in the country and will find someone who knows about Affinity or has been affected by the organization's work.

"I remember talking to one constituent who said that Affinity saved her life," Hunt said. "She had gone to a health forum on breast cancer and one of the things they had talked about was self-examination. She went home and did that for the first time ever and I saw on Facebook that she has been cancer free for five years."

On July 18, Affinity will hold Jazz 'n July at Gallery Guichard on the South Side. Jazz 'n July is an event that hasn't been seen since 2009.

Hunt and DeShawn said that it will be a moment for nostalgia but also one which looks forward to accomplishing new goals.

"The biggest thing that we all would like to see happen really soon is a community center on the South Side where we can provide even more direct services and have even more programs available," DeShawn said. "A starting



Kim Hunt.
Photo by Matt Simonette

place where we can do so much work."

"There's also a desire to connect the dots around the Midwest when it comes to LGBT organizations," Hunt added. "I've talked to several organizations in different parts of the Midwest who want to come together to do something bigger. Those are seeds that we've been planting for the last three or four years now."

When Affinity's first co-chairs Chris Smith and Lisa Marie Pickens planted the seeds of the organization in 1995 they could not have dared to imagine it would become so critical to the community.

Yet according to Smith one of the reasons that has occurred is because then and now Affinity's leadership stayed true to the founding vision and mission of the organization.

"I'm proud of them," Smith said referring to Hunt and the current board. "I mean, they not only moved beyond the challenges [of 2012] but they doubled the budget. They've done an outstanding job and they always reached back to ask about the principles specific to the structure of the organization and how to carry those philosophical pillars forward in their work. They are some powerful sisters."

Note: Affinity Community Services, Chicago, will benefit from the Saturday, June 13, Artemis Singers Pride concert/dance at Beverly Unitarian Church, 10244 S. Longwood Dr., at 7 p.m. The nonprofit chorus, celebrating its 35th anniversary, specializes in performing music written or arranged by women. Visit <http://artemisproudbeverly.brownpapertickets.com>.

State rep lauds Scout for LGBT project

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, praised David Fite, a soon-to-be decorated Eagle Scout, on the completion of his Eagle rank assignment. Fite tied the last fabric strip onto the colorful fence outside of Nettelhorst Elementary School in Lake View.

Feigenholtz said in a statement, "David chose this as his Eagle Scout assignment after successfully lobbying the Boy Scouts of America to accept openly gay members. I couldn't be prouder to know this amazing young man."

Nettelhorst students have completed the Fence Project for the past seven years.

An article about Fite and his contribution is on the Windy City Times website at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Teen-Eagle-Scouts-projects-focuses-on-LGBT-community-/51470.html>.



SAGE takes initiative on LGBT elder housing, policy

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders (SAGE) has an active year planned, starting with the launch of its national LGBT elder-housing initiative.

"It is very safe to say there is a housing crisis among LGBT older adults in the country, but we cannot build our way out of this crisis," said SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams during a recent visit to Chicago for the national conference Aging in America. "The crisis is of a scale that's enormous."

SAGE was established in New York City in 1978. Today, it serves as the country's oldest and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults and their aging experience.

Adams has been at the head of SAGE for about nine years. He gained a personal lens into the challenges of aging when he and his partner witnessed close elder family members aging and having health issues. He recalls being drawn to the work he does as he saw how aging and being LGBT intersect.

"I'm seeing the significance of this work and how the country is graying, so to speak," Adams said. "It's just as true in the LGBT community and yet historically we've paid very little attention to older people. We have a lot of catching up to do."

Adams pinpoints isolation, health disparities and lack of financial security in the later years, as causes for a greater need for LGBT older adult services, supports and greater reliance on what he calls the so-called safety net within the federal government.

A big emphasis for SAGE's work, Adams said, is collaborating with various organizations across the country as the small organization has what he details as an ambitious national agenda. One of its partners is the Equal Rights Center.

According to the Equal Right Center's 2014 report, "In a recent national investigation, 48 percent of older same-sex couples experienced at least one form of adverse differential treatment (as compared to heterosexual couples) when inquiring about housing in a senior living

facility, including receiving less information about additional available units and receive advice with additional fees, higher costs and a more extensive application process."

Also, as detailed in SAGE's 2014 report Out and Visible: The Experiences and Attitudes of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Older Adults, Ages 45-75, when searching for housing, 13 percent of LGBT older people report they have been discriminated against based on sexual orientation, while 25 percent of transgender older people report discrimination based on their gender identities.

Due to the statistics caused by problems such as economic insecurity, housing discrimination, lack of legal protections and racial and gender disparities, SAGE's LGBT Elder Housing Initiative is a national strategy to address the issues within LGBT elder housing, ensuring a welcoming housing option for LGBT older people.

"There are a lot of issues—lack of cultural competence, a lack of welcoming environments. Some of that is about the program designs, staff, etc. Some of that is unfortunately about other older adults programs," said Adams.

SAGE's initiative is made up of five steps to increased and improved LGBT housing for older people: building housing, training providers, changing policy, educating consumers and expanding services.

"I think perhaps the most important component is the training component," Adams said. "So, we have made a commitment to build a national training program to provide cultural competency training to senior housing providers across the country. The focus there will be working with senior housing providers to equip them to do a much better job in creating environments for older members of the LGBT community that are welcoming. Our belief in this national initiative is that if we can provide good quality training, we can provide senior housing facilities with the information and skills they need to do a better job working with LGBT older adults."

In the United States, there are four affordable LGBT older adult housing facilities; Center



SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams.
Photo by Tracy Bain

on Halsted's Town Hall Apartments is the newest. SAGE is now preparing to build the next facility, which will also stand as New York City's first LGBT-inclusive older adult housing. The housing will be located in the Bronx and is still in the preliminary stages.

"One of the elements that is very important is that they're all designed to provide services on-site for people who are struggling with financial security, health issues etc.," said Adams. "You can't just build a building. It's got to be a community. There have to be services available."

Along with the new housing project, SAGE also looks forward to the 2015 White House Conference on Aging happening later this year. The conference, which happens once every 10 years, focuses on key issues and determines federal aging policy for the next decade. Adams said this year's conference is a dramatically different experience from the 2005 conference, when no LGBT content was included. Adams said that 10 years ago, SAGE secured just one official delegate slot and they were the only LGBT representation at that conference of 3,000 delegates.

Adams explained SAGE was invited to the table to the planning process for the 2015 conference, so far having had multiple meetings and conversations with the staff organizing the White House Conference on Aging.

According to Adams, LGBT elders will be present at five summits across the country to speak

and share their experiences, which will lead into the conference.

SAGE's policy recommendations for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging fit into four themes of the conference; so far they have had retirement security, healthy aging, long-term services and supports and elder justice.

"The Obama administration has indicated that they intend this year's White House Conference on Aging to announce some policy breakthroughs, which is different from past conferences, which have only been about conversation and talking about the things we're going to do over the next 10 years," Adams said. "The Obama administration says, 'Yes, we'll do all that, we're going to talk about what's going to happen in the next 10 years, but we also want to talk about what we're going to do now.' So we're hopeful one or more of those policy announcements will be about LGBT older adults."

For more information on SAGE and the National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative, visit <http://sageusa.org/lgbthousing/#overview>.

Sidetrack hosting OUTspoken! June 2

Nightspot Sidetrack will again host the LGBTQ storytelling event OUTspoken!—this time on Tuesday, June 2, at 7 p.m. David Fink curates the event.

The storytellers will be Lyric tenor John Concepcion, Chicago Public Media's Tyler Greene, writer Re'Lynn Hansen, writer/performer Holly Hughes, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Associate Professor of English and Latina/Latino Studies Ricky Rodriguez, writer/designer Denise Ruiz and interfaith chaplain Zac Willette.

Visit <http://outspeakchicago.com/>.

Corrections

In the May 13 article about the LGBT veterans' memorial, one individual should have been identified as Ronald E. Walters, interim undersecretary for memorial affairs. In addition, the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus is slated to perform, not Windy City Gay Chorus. Also, an RSVP is needed for the bus. A free bus will be provided, boarding at 11:30 a.m. at the Center on Halsted on a first-come, first-served basis. Those wishing to ride may RSVP to jamesdarby@aol.com or (773)752-0058. No RSVP is needed to attend the ceremony.

Windy City Times regrets the errors.

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Chicago couple builds arts-empowerment program for girls

BY ROSS FORMAN

Meredith Montgomery has been working as a teaching artist for almost five years—first in Austin, Texas, and now in Chicago—which is both incredible and challenging, she said.

"I created my own method of devised theater as a junior in college; I call it a 'journaling to performance method.' It values the art of journal writing and original self-expression, while honoring collaboration, and teaches how to translate an original journal piece into something that can be put on stage," Montgomery said.

In Chicago, she has used the method mostly for teens.

"I have worked for a number of organizations in [Chicago], and there are some awesome and necessary artistic educational programs out there, but I felt that my method would be better suited for a smaller class size," she said. "After teaching in several classrooms and settings, I saw that there was one constant in all of them: negativity around the female gender. That is when I decided that I wanted to use my method to address this negativity by creating something empowering, artistic, and community-based, all for a demographic that is so often forgotten about: adolescent girls."

In the fall of 2013, Montgomery and her partner, Jessica London-Shields, started creating their concept, and they soon launched {she crew}—an arts empowerment program for Chicago girls, ages 12-14.

Montgomery added, "Our empowerment message is meant to be preventative; to give girls tools, artistic outlets, and a grounding sense of self as they move from childhood into young adulthood. Adolescent girls are at an age where they are instantly objectified, questioning their own identities, and having to deal with major transitions. Talk about stress. We are here to give them a safe, artistic, and empowering space to throw everything about identity against the wall and see what sticks for them."

"We provide a six-week summer intensive [June 23-Aug. 1], which included transit cards and one free meal a day prepared and shared as a community, fall and spring after school programming, one day workshops, and a student-to-intern growth program, all of which have accessible tuition for participants. We feel that by-donation only tuition is crucial, so girls in all communities, affluent or not, are guaranteed equal accessibility. Therefore, admission is decided through a short online application, not an ability or inability to pay tuition. This ensures a diverse group of girls who become a part of a greater community through {she crew} programming."

London-Shields, 28, who grew up in San Francisco and has been living in Chicago for

the past 10 years, said such a program definitely would have helped her.

"We were total weirdos [growing up] and now we're theatre people," she said. "At that age, being different, or weird, or fun can often land you with a lot of isolation or the subject of harassment and bullying. We wanted to create a positive, creative, and empowering space for girls that would make them value what makes them unique, while respecting the uniqueness of others."

Montgomery, now 26, said when she was growing up that she was "lucky enough" to have speech and debate teams, coached by the theatre teachers, "so we were basically a competitive theatrical bunch of misfits."

That was her salvation.

"Though this was a creative and structured outlet for me, I was still left feeling in the dark about a lot of things surrounding my gender and my identity," Montgomery said. "The discussion surrounding gender and identity were few and far between before I attended college. But these are not things that can just be studied in high learning; it makes us who we are."

"We wanted to give girls a safe and positive space for them to discuss and explore their identities at the age when these questions arise."

{she crew} this past summer offered three performances of devised theatre, written and performed by the 2014 inaugural class—and its five performers, ranging in age from 12-15, completed the {she crew} Summer Intensive. The performances were held at three venues in late July and performers came from such neighborhoods as Woodlawn, Avondale, Englewood and Pilsen.

London-Shields said {she crew} is now offering programming all year. For instance, an after-school programming by {she crew} was at Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center in Hermosa this past fall, and is currently at Melody STEM School in Garfield Park.

"{she crew} began as a dream of mine, and when I told Jess about it, she said, 'Well, let's do it!' Everything from its conception, to the girls' playwriting together in the classroom, to the late-night grant-writing are all reflections of women working together," Montgomery said.

London-Shields added, "I think any job that is something you started and something that is connected to the change that you want to see in the world is going to be more emotionally charged than a day-job. And it should."

So what's with the name, {she crew}?

"We wanted a title that gave a glimpse towards our priorities," London-Shields said. 'She' to imply anyone who identifies as 'she,' a feminine word that we both felt had a greater potential for diversity than say 'woman' or 'girl' and wouldn't be exclusively applied to female



From left: Jessica London-Shields and Meredith Montgomery of {she crew}. Photo from London-Shields

bodied individuals. And 'Crew' to imply community."

London-Shields said the program "is obviously queer inclusive, but not exclusively queer."

"We talk an awful lot about gender in the class, breaking it down to what it means to us, what it means to other people, how gender factors into our own expectations for ourselves, and most importantly, how to be kind of ourselves," she said. "This is very important to queer-identified youth and straight-identified [cisgender] youth alike, because gender roles are absorbed so thoroughly at this age. It is important to have a place to discuss them, so as not to internalize damaging gender expectations upon oneself. This is important for all people, no matter who you are."

Montgomery added, "Adolescents are extremely insightful. They understand a lot more than I feel our society gives them credit for. Though our female-positive message is a major factor that brings us together, it is the diversity that makes us a community. We value each other's differences because that is basic respect. Girls enjoy talking about their families, their lineage, and their unique personality

traits because those are things that everyone should be able to find value in. We also discuss how diversity, or a lack thereof, can affect our communities. We encourage togetherness through respect and understanding, not assimilation."

The relationship of Montgomery and London-Shields is not discussed in the {she crew} classroom—because that's when they are instructor and facilitator.

"One of our long-term goals is to really flesh out our student-to-intern growth program," Montgomery said. "We want {she crew} to expand organically and from within. We eventually want to turn the instruction of {she crew} over to the girls who went through the program. The longevity of {she crew} will only be possible if the instructors stay young, current, and knowledgeable of the specific needs of the girls. And the young women who will be the most capable of teaching this method will be the girls who grew up with it and benefitted from it."

For more information about {she crew}, visit shcrew.org.



Girls in {she crew}. Photo courtesy of Jessica London-Shields

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Being named Mr. Chicago Leather this past January 24 at The Leather Archives & Museum was extra special for Luis Tipantasig—that also was his birthday.

“I went into the competition ready to open up and be myself, [which] sometimes can be scary,” Tipantasig said. “It means a lot to be selected to serve a community that embraced me with open arms and hearts.”

His leather approach is simple: “Be true to yourself and feel comfortable in your own skin,” he said.



Tipantasig will be front and center when the leather world makes its annual pilgrimage to Chicago for IML over the extended Memorial Day weekend.

“I am looking forward to going through this experience with amazing men from all over the world. I have heard this experience can be life-changing,” he said. “I just keep telling myself, ‘Do not trip and fall of the stage.’”



in the LIFE

Luis Tipantasig

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN

PHOTOS BY CHESTER MUNRO,

ANTHONY MEADE AND KIRK WILLIAMSON

- **Age**
37
- **Neighborhood**
Andersonville
- **Roots**
Originally from Bronx, New York; has lived in Chicago for five years
- **Relationship status**
Single
- **Job title**
Senior software analyst for a software hosting provider
- **Hobbies**
Bowling, concerts, movies, traveling and cooking
- **Favorite TV shows**
“American Horror Story, Orange is the New Black and anything that will make me laugh.”
- **Favorite pizza topping**
Sausage
- **Favorite drink**
Vodka and sugar-free Red Bull
- **Orientation**
Gay
- **Little-known fact**
“I am a big country music fan. I used to live in the South and that’s the only thing that would be playing on the radio ... plus I have a thing for cowboys.”



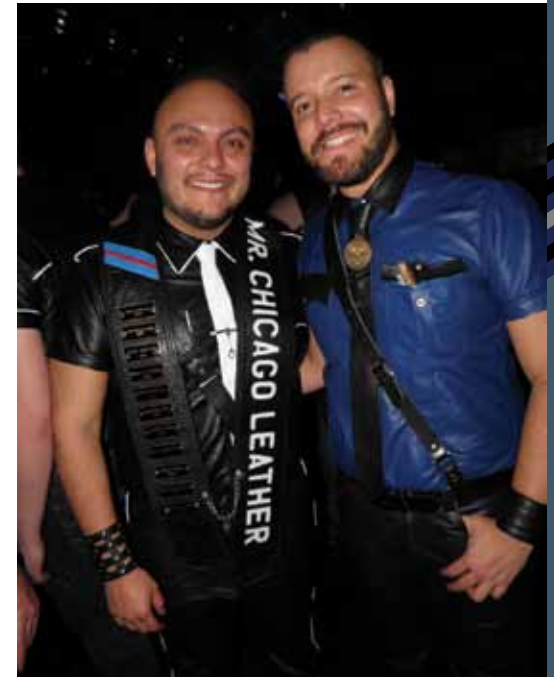
Tipantasig’s goals for IML are simply to “have fun and enjoy the weekend.”

Tipantasig’s leather-less work involves trouble-shooting databases and helping to maintain a stable litigation software platform that is used for e-discovery.

He said the best part of the being Mr. Chicago Leather is the interaction with others, many of whom have reached out to him simply to talk about the community.

“The worst part [of being Mr. Chicago Leather] would be not having enough time to attend all the community events that I would like to support,” he said.

Tipantasig is, for instance, a volunteer for Mr. Friendly, an organization that fights to end the stigma associated with HIV.



Mr. Leather64TEN also to compete for IML

Michael Pacas has been chosen as the first Mr. Leather64TEN. Pacas will represent Leather 64TEN, Chicago’s custom-made leather shop. He will be entered into International Mr. Leather 2015, to be held Friday, May 22, through Monday, May 25, 2015 (Memorial Day weekend), in Chicago.

A resident of Chicago, Pacas is a founding member of BLUFChicago, Chicago’s premiere social club for men who are into wearing breeches and leather uniform. He is a volunteer for the Leather Archives & Museum; The Lakeview Food Pantry; The Windy City Empire and The Night Ministry. He

enjoys being able to travel extensively to promote the leather community and organizations in which he is active. Leather64TEN will launch its new website (www.leather64TEN.com) and mark the store’s eighth anniversary in Chicago on Thursday, May 21, from 5 to 8 p.m.



Michael Pacas.
Photo by Israel Wright

Just a few International Mr. Leather 2015 weekend events

Wed., May 20
IML Best of Chicago Welcome Party Hosted by Mr. Chicago Leather 2015 Luis Tipantasig. Berghoff beer tastings, free Chicago Red Hots (those are hot dogs). 9 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St., www.touchechicago.com

Friday, May 22
MACHO Dance Party Come out and dance the night away with the hottest men in Chicago! DJs, go-go

bears, and YOU! OH MY! With DJ Dennis Murray and David Charles. \$15 with an IML or Bear Pride pass, \$20 without. \$1 from each ticket sold will go to Leather Archives & Museum. 9 pm, The Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake St.

Saturday, May 23
Furball Chicago Celebrate IML/Bear Pride weekend with DJs Hifi Sean and Ron Geronimo. \$16 advance tickets at www.metrochicago.com;

\$20 at the door. 11:30 pm, Metro Chicago, 3730 N. Clark St.
Sunday, May 24
International Mr. Leather Contest See who takes the sash as International Mr. Leather 37. Sponsored by Miller Lite. 6-9 p, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph Dr., www.imrl.com

Monday, May 25
The Black and Blue Ball Presented by IML in conjunction with Spitshine Promotions. DJs Barry Harris and Steve Henderson, and host Mr. Chicago Leather 2014 Miguel Torres. Purchase tickets at Full Kit Leather, 5025 N. Clark St. 8 pm, Sound-Bar, 226 W. Ontario

See more calendar events on page 28

download **nightspots** the official guide to **INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER 2015**
www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com



letters

A plea to the pope

An open letter to Pope Francis

Pope Francis, you need vibrant parishes and the parishes need you!

Pope Francis, your vision of the Church moves us: a Church following the path and the spirit of Jesus; united in respect and candor, as equals, as true fellow travelers—squarely facing those who are marginalized and most in need of solidarity. Instead of deepening rifts, you bring us together. Instead of judging, you seek to understand. Instead of closing doors, you open hearts. Here, the original model of the Church, as Jesus has shown us through his own life, is finally perceived again.

Countless people throughout the world cheer you on because they share this vision, very much in line with the Second Vatican Council. Even more, they live up to it as well as they can—at home, in the local parishes at the grassroots basis of the Church. Here, in the everyday life of the people, the Church exists—or not. Here, and only here, the Church experiences its day-to-day *raison d'être*.

Pope Francis, you need the parishes to bring your vision of the Church to life. Without active parishes, your vision lacks the foundation and the necessary strength to overcome opposition. Our parishes are the future of Jesus' church, but it is exactly the future of these parishes that is massively threatened.

Around the world, our bishops increasingly respond to the priest shortage by merging active and vibrant parishes into anonymous and unmanageable superstructures. Merging seems to be the formula of the hour. But in the new mega-parishes, personal contact between people and ministers is lost. The sacraments and the priests are removed ever further from the everyday life of church citizens. And where the wellspring of the community, the celebration of the Eucharist, is celebrated less and less often, communion falls by the wayside. Instead of caring for souls, priests are busy with coordination and administration. While they are supposed to be everywhere, they find themselves nowhere fully at home. In such parishes, the living breath of Jesus cannot be found; instead, God's people feel alienated, unsettled and insecure. Here, the Church is no longer close to the people, but consciously removes itself from its base.

We, concerned priests and deacons, ministers and committed Church citizens in the parishes of this world are no longer willing to walk this path. Together, we seek new paths to a future of our Church with vibrant parishes; parishes where everyone is welcome—without exception. And such ways exist! Many parishes have long shown by example how things can be done differently.



Francis DeBernardo, one of those signing an open letter to Pope Francis.

Photo from DeBernardo

There are women and men, married couples, divorced and remarried, homosexual and heterosexual partners, young and old, those in the center and those who have been pushed to the side—there are dedicated people who want to put an end to the merger of their parishes into ever larger units. By their personal dedication, by the strength of their baptismal calling, they assist in relieving the priests of their increasing responsibilities in order to continue offering vital services to the people. In parishes that no longer have priests, they are developing creative solutions to ensure the cohesion and the day-to-day management of their parishes. In many cases, this has resulted in sustainable structures and models for the future from which we can learn. There is still much motivation at the base to strive for a renewed Church in the spirit of Jesus.

Pope Francis, we—priests and deacons, ministers and Church citizens, women and men—need you! We appeal to you to clear the way for new forms of parish life, their ministry and management. Let us open the priestly office to everyone who has the charisma. Let us develop new management models and forms of pastoral ministry so that parishioners can participate according to their charisms. Let us establish a new culture of co-responsibility and joint decision-making in all structures of our Church. Let us remember how Jesus understood and lived community. God's spirit compels us. Let us be courageous and tackle this together!

Pope Francis, you need vibrant parishes for your vision of Church to come to life. And the parishes need you. We—the priests and deacons, ministers and many engaged Church citizens in parishes around the world—stand ready to share our experiences and ideas and actively support you and the bishops in realizing your vision at the base.

Signed

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ASSISTANT PUBLISHER Terri Klinsky

MANAGING EDITOR Andrew Davis

BUSINESS MANAGER Ripley Caine

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SENIOR WRITERS Bob Roehr, Tony Peregrin, Lisa Keen, Yasmin Nair

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(773) 871-7610 FAX (773) 871-7609

e-mail: editor@windycitymediagroup.com or

Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

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Pope Francis on the cover of *The Advocate*.

WINDY CITY TIMES

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'Girl,' interrupted

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WCT reviews the disturbing production *Our New Girl*.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Coming soon: More 'Sweet Tea'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

A lot of Southerners will argue about the perfect recipe or the proper method for making sweet tea. In a similar vein, professor/playwright/performer Dr. E. Patrick Johnson has made many adjustments in his pursuit of finding the right formula for his stage play based upon his award-winning 2008 scholarly book titled *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*.

"We've had various permutations of the show and it has really grown," said Johnson, who is bringing *Sweet Tea* back to the Chicago area for a run at Northwestern University in Evanston at the end of May. "One of the ways that it has grown is that my own story as a gay Black man has framed the play now such that my story is sort of the conceit of the show."

"Patrick's work is so rich. But when you read his scholarly book, none of the men are talking to each other, so I thought in performance it could actually be a conversation between the men because they are all part of a community," said Jane M. Saks, the president and artistic director of the socially conscious non-profit collective known as Project&. "And then of course adding the richness of Patrick's story and narrative to make an even deeper conversation."

Johnson originally intended *Sweet Tea* just to be a printed collection of narratives from Southern Black men. But along with the encouragement of Saks, Johnson refashioned his book so that the stories could come alive by being performed aloud. Saks has continued to champion *Sweet Tea* because it is one of those rare instances where a scholar is actually staging his research. But finding that right mix for the stage has been a continuous adjustment.

An early adaptation was titled *Pouring Tea* and was simply performed in the manner of reader's theater. Later, the retitled *Sweet Tea* became a more fully realized staging in a 2010 Chicago co-production by About Face Theatre at the former Viaduct Theatre complete with an onstage tree coated in Spanish moss and hanging illuminated jars. This production later played the Tony Award-winning Signature Theatre in Arlington, Va.

Understandably, *Sweet Tea* has had to become more simplified scenically as Johnson and Saks have toured the show extensively throughout the country, most recently in Los Angeles. But Johnson feels *Sweet Tea* digs a lot deeper now, especially since he says there is much more sugar in the show's recipe now.

"In this version, sugar takes on a more symbolic role connecting to all the different ways that sugar is connected to African Americans in this country from historically working on sugar cane plantations to sugar being a part of folklore," Johnson said. "Also sugar being a euphemism for diabetes which also plagues African-American communities to sugar being part of all of the rituals that happen in the play. It's not sugar for sugar's sake, it is sugar with a purpose—and of course some of the terms that are used to describe gay people like 'sugar in the tank.'"

Not only is Project& helming the Evanston return of *Sweet Tea*, but also its upcoming tour to the National Black Theatre Festival this August in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Saks said this engagement is particularly important, since queer works haven't typically been staged at the festival.

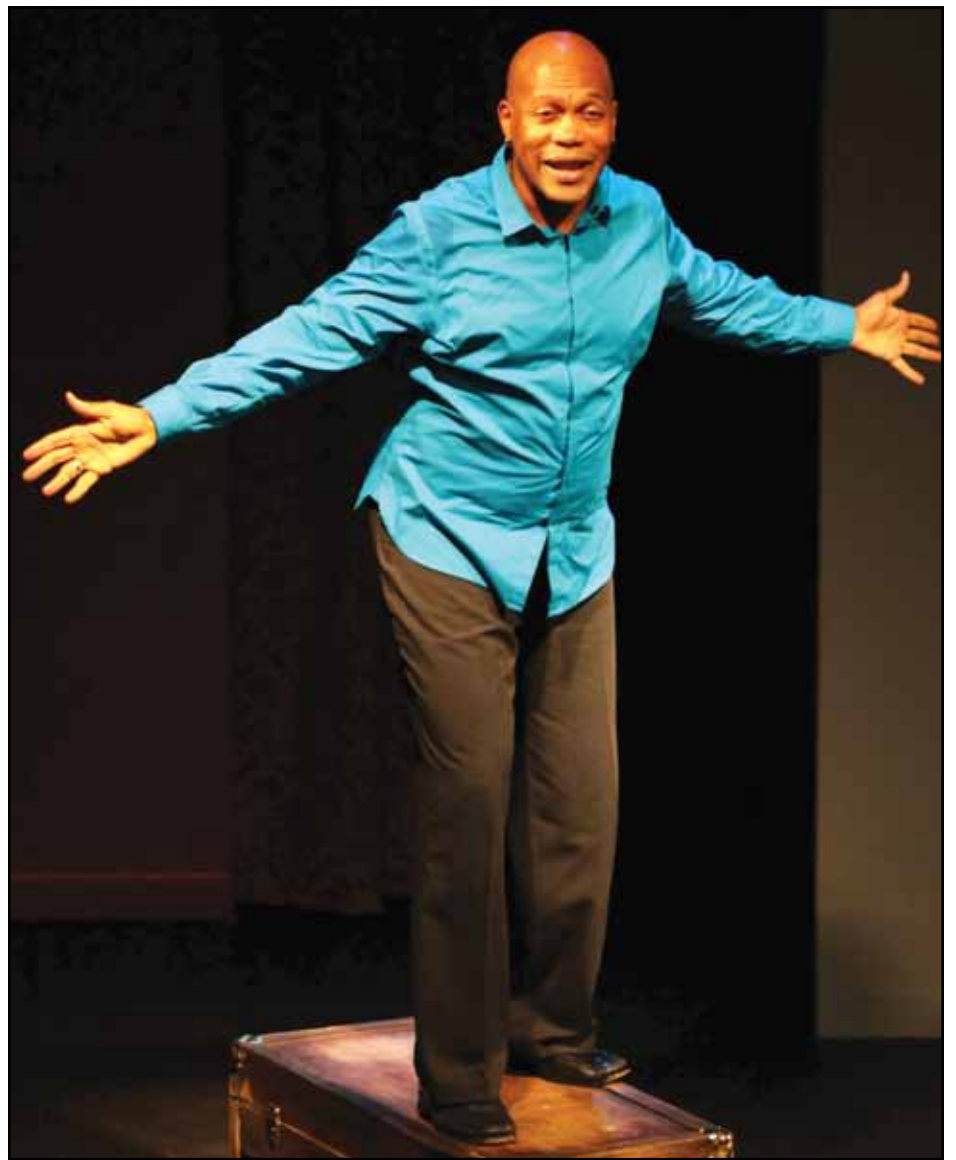
Although Johnson has his hands full with touring *Sweet Tea*, he's also in the midst of creating a companion text called *Honey Pot*, which is about the lives of Southern Black lesbians. It's a subject that Johnson didn't feel qualified to tackle as a man. Johnson also thought that once his *Sweet Tea* book was published, another colleague would pick up the mantle for her own scholarly book on lesbians.

"But it didn't happen," Johnson said. "I kept having women come to see *Sweet Tea* and during the Q&A session saying, 'When are you going to write our stories?' or 'When are you going to do *Pink Lemonade*?'—which I did consider for a title."

Johnson was understandably nervous about being able to get women to open up to him with their life stories—particularly if there were histories of sexual violence perpetrated by men.

"I did 77 interviews for *Sweet Tea*, but I did 81 for *Honey Pot*," Johnson said. "So they outtalked the men. So my plan this summer is to finish the book and to really start to think about a script."

Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South plays May 28-June 7 at Northwestern University's Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theatre, 1949 Campus Dr., Evanston. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays with 2 p.m. matinees Sundays (no show Saturday, May 30). Tickets are \$15; \$10 for seniors and students. Visit www.projectand.org or www.communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz/special_events.



E. Patrick Johnson in *Sweet Tea*.

Photo courtesy of Keisha McClellan

Harris Theatre unveils 2015-16 dance season

The Harris Theater for Music and Dance President and Managing Director Michael Tiknis announced the dance performances for the 2015-16 "Harris Theater Presents" season.

The 2015-2016 season at the Harris will begin with the Harris debut of AXIS Dance Company on Thursday, Oct. 8, at 6 p.m. and Saturday, Oct. 10, at 2 p.m. AXIS Dance Company has become one of the world's most acclaimed and innovative ensembles of performers with and without disabilities.

Jessica Lang Dance will perform Wed., Nov. 6, at 7:30 p.m. Lang will create a new dance

for her company in collaboration with architect Steven Holl.

Hamburg Ballet will perform Tuesday-Wed., Feb. 23-24, at 7:30 p.m. with its interpretation of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. The company will also perform Third Symphony of Gustav Mahler on Friday-Saturday, Feb. 26-27, at 7:30 p.m.

Lucky Plush Productions will present "Trip the Light Fantastic: The Making of Super-Strip" on Thursday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m. Mark Morris Dance Group will perform Morris' masterwork *Dido and Aeneas* on Tuesday-Wed., April 5-6, at 7:30 p.m. Lastly, Miami City Ballet will make its Harris Theatre debut Friday-Saturday, April 29-30, at 7:30 p.m.

Visit HarrisTheaterChicago.org.

Northern Trust Company is the season sponsor.



Demetrios Troy in *Inana*.
Photo by Lara Goetsch

THEATER REVIEW

Inana

Playwright: Michele Lowe
At: Timeline Theatre Company at Baird Hall, 615 W. Wellington Ave.
Tickets: 773-281-8463;
www.timelinetheatre.com; \$39-\$52
Runs through: July 26

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Technically, the McGuffin driving our plot is a graven idol, but this is no Maltese falcon, coveted by its pursuers solely for its material value. Instead, Michele Lowe's play opens in 2003, in a London hotel room where Mosul museum curator Yasin Shalid and his new spouse have arrived for their honeymoon. Our first clue that something is amiss is the husband recounting to his bride (who has barricaded herself into the bathroom), how his boyhood chum had his fingers amputated as punishment for gathering the shards of artifacts ubiquitous to ancient civilizations.

The significance of the mysterious suitcase mingled with the couple's luggage, and the secret behind his wife's reluctance to remove her wedding dress, are also forthcoming, but only after we have learned that the statue precipitating international intrigue is a 3,000-year-old stone representation of Iraq's Mesopotamian mother goddess Inana, the twin of another effigy destroyed centuries earlier by Mongol invaders. Faced with thuggish religious zealots determined to eradicate purveyors of "decadent" art, as well as the imminent threat of war between the United States and Saddam Hussein, Shalid has vowed to protect his country's precious icon from the hostile factions and rapacious looters associated with foreign occupation.

So is this a political drama designed to elicit horror at the atrocities of Middle Eastern dictators—a bookseller whose fingernails are ripped out by vigilantes offended at his displaying a nude Botticelli cherub in his store window, for example? Is it a romance of lovers on the lam, and a father's desperate scheme to secure the safety of his daughter? Or is it a heist thriller of smuggled treasure, meant to keep us guessing the extent of each character's involvement in the subterfuge? In a mere ninety minutes,

Lowe combines elements of all three genres to present playgoers with their choice of narrative entryways onto paths all ultimately leading to wonder and admiration at the sacrifices undertaken by humble citizens to ascertain the perpetuity of their culture.

These multiple dimensions—did I mention the flashbacks and the double-casting?—could easily descend into vertigo-inducing chaos, but director Kimberly Senior ensures that all transitions are executed cleanly and crisply. She is assisted by the precision reflected in the environmental design, and by an ensemble delivering unexaggerated, immediately sympathetic, portrayals of lone individuals caught up in extraordinary circumstances demanding courage, however microcosmic the range of its expression.

CRITICS' PICKS

Billy Elliot, Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace, through June 7. Director/choreographer Rachel Rockwell works wonders at staging Elton John and Lee Hall's 2005 musical adaptation of the acclaimed 2000 British film. SCM

Three Sisters, The Hypocrites at Den Theatre, through June 6. The stage picture may be gilded-age Russia—albeit with an expressionist palette—but Chekhov's frivolous aristocrats speak a briskly modern idiom in Geoff Button's radical interpretation of this classic. MSB

Twisted Melodies, Congo Square Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, through June 14. It takes a brave actor to put himself into the mind of a frightened man preparing to commit suicide, but Kelvin Roston Jr. does it for 90 minutes in his solo portrayal of R&B musician Donny Hathaway. MSB

The White Road, Irish Theatre of Chicago at Den Theatre, through June 13. True story: Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton snatches triumph from the failure of his 1914-1916 expedition by overcoming natural catastrophe and bringing every man home alive! It's a tad long but good, manly stuff. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Our New Girl

Playwright: Nancy Harris
At: Profiles Theatre's The Main Stage, 4139 N. Broadway
Tickets: 773-549-1815;
www.profiles theatre.org; \$35-\$40
Runs through: June 28

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Irish playwright Nancy Harris knows how to grasp an audience's attention in her 2012 play *Our New Girl*, now making a powerful Midwest debut courtesy of Profiles Theatre. Harris' modern-day drama opens with an unsettling sequence of an 8-year-old boy preparing to cut off his own ear.

The rest of *Our New Girl* flashes back to the fractured family dynamics to potentially explain why this moody boy, named Daniel (in a calculated and creepy performance by Killian Hughes), would even consider this shocking act of self-mutilation. In the process, Harris uncovers a lot of ambivalence and outright hostility by characters who are deeply unsatisfied at how their lives have don't measure up to societal templates of traditional, happy family lives.

Daniel's pregnant mother, Hazel (a believably harried and constantly agitated Sarah Chalcroft), is thrown for a loop when an Irish nanny named Annie (an initially pleasant Miriam Canfield) shows up unannounced in her posh London kitchen. It seems that Hazel's jet-setting humanitarian plastic-surgeon husband, Richard (an appropriately full-of-himself Layne Manzer), has hired An-

nie without any spousal consultation. But you can see why Richard thought he was helping as the self-admittedly hormonal Hazel is run off her feet by simultaneously starting a home business selling Sicilian olive oil and dealing with her willfully disobedient son.

Things don't get any better when Richard arrives home, with Annie becoming an added complication by alternating as both an ally and foe to the family's already heated factional battles. Just whose side you're supposed to take continually shifts, as Harris makes vigilantly sure to point out how her characters are all filled with very human flaws. Harris also gives her characters a chance to elaborate on their own personal unhappiness (particularly Hazel, who gave up a high-powered career as an attorney to become a stay-at-home mother).

Director Joe Jahraus and his fine quartet of actors keep the tension simmering throughout *Our New Girl*. So the boiling-over outbursts are expected, but still also very disturbing. My one quibble is that Jahraus and his cast don't capitalize on the (very) few moments in Harris' script that offer any sort of comic relief, so there is almost no escape from the play's relentless unease.

Now some might try to write off *Our New Girl* as just a domestic drama involving overly privileged people. But Harris incisively explores the different kinds of scarring that can occur when parental instincts stubbornly refuse to kick in and how difficult it is to be caught up in all that. If anything, *Our New Girl* should make anyone rethink the risks when it comes to starting a new family, no matter how poor or privileged you may be.

THEATER REVIEW

Twisted Melodies

Playwright: Kelvin Roston, Jr.
At: Congo Square Theatre at Athenaeum Studio 2, 2936 N. Southport
Tickets: 773-935-6875;
www.congosquaretheatre.org; \$19.50-\$37
Runs through: June 14

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

The reel-to-reel tape recorders, the old radio and the hero wearing modified Superfly clothes were sufficient evidence that *Twisted Melodies* was set in the '70s. Then the hero began to sing and it was clear that it was Donny Hathaway, a titan of soul whose music was part of my young adulthood, but whose voice and name I'd not conjured in several decades. Eventually the play reminded me that Hathaway died young in 1979, only 33 and at the peak of his success as a Grammy-winning composer, arranger, singer and producer. What I didn't know is that Hathaway was a paranoid schizophrenic who committed suicide.

This world premiere hopes to bring attention to issues of mental health, and to dispel the social taint still far too often associated with emotional illnesses. Instead of being about mental health, however, it's a one-man portrait of Hathaway as patient and victim of an insidious illness. It's written and performed by musical-theater veteran Kelvin Roston Jr., and one couldn't find a more outstanding actor and singer to channel Donny Hathaway. Roston more than has the musical and dramatic chops to ignite Hathaway's musical hits and suggest his difficult personality. He's assisted by a wonderful multi-media production pulled off in a tiny, tiny theatre (lighting, scenery, projections, video and dance by Richard Norwood, Andrei Onegin, Paul Deziel, Dre Robinson and esteemed choreographer Joel Hall). It's rich, complex, beautiful.

Despite these strengths, the show feels long at about 100 minutes straight through. The symptoms of Hathaway's illness—researched by Roston and accurate, according to the accounts we have—quickly become repetitive.



Kelvin Roston Jr. in *Twisted Melodies*.
Photo by Sam Roberson

Each cycle of attack and recovery becomes a cue—perhaps merely an excuse—for Roston to perform another song. Also, Hathaway was not the first artist who had to choose between taking his meds and losing his muse through drastic personality change, or skipping the meds to remain a creative and productive artist. It's a horrendous choice, to be sure, but not entirely unique. Roston and director Samuel G. Roberson Jr. need to be severe with themselves in order to make *Twisted Melodies* as effective as it might be.

My mother had a close first cousin who was a pioneering psychiatrist and hypnotherapist in Chicago. Because of him, I grew up in a home that understood emotional illnesses were not signs of weakness or cowardice or self-indulgence, and that they could be as terrifying as they sometimes are inexplicable. Indeed, my grandfather committed suicide. A wise man once said to me that it takes a brave individual to confront his/her emotional issues and seek help for them. *Twisted Melodies* serves as a potent reminder of this as we ride Donny Hathaway's roller-coaster.



The Little Foxes.
Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW
The Little Foxes

Playwright: Lillian Hellman
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: 312-443-3800;
www.goodmantheatre.org; \$25-\$81
Runs through: June 7

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Lillian Hellman never pulled her punches, instead calling out advocates of injustice and inhumanity with a ferocity that made producers nervous, hence the frequent bowdlerization of her more candid dramatic themes (e.g., lesbianism in *The Children's Hour*). The standard formula for rendering "safe" her microcosmic exhortation of post-bellum morality and greed has been to reduce its heroine to a fairy-tale wicked queen, or to muffle its ethical arguments under a haze of Chekhovian nostalgia.

To be sure, Hellman's play set at the end of an age—1900, when the former confederate states were chafing under, not only the humiliation of having lost a war, but the devastation of seeing their lands seized and workforce decimated. The Hubbard clan, though, as befitting a family of merchants, see in their neighbors' misfortune an opportunity to expand their dry-goods business. Younger brother Oscar marries the heiress to a cotton plantation, while sister Regina weds a gentleman with his fortune salted away in investments. The latest scheme involves elder brother Ben inviting a Yankee industrialist to open a textile mill nearby, where the cheap labor often found

in depressed economies will expedite processing of the raw product. The catch is that the prospective outsourcer demands a deposit to seal the deal, but Regina's husband Horace is less enthusiastic than his in-laws regarding the potential profit-making venture.

These are not anemic Prozorovs and Ranevskys lamenting a genteel past, but ruthless upstarts who could give the Borgias a run for their money—especially for their money, the undisputed focus of Henry Wishcamper's direction for this Goodman Theatre production. Though its emotional level may border on operatic, when the conversation turns to pecuniary matters, the voices of the Hubbard sibs abruptly assume the intractability of cold steel (sometimes in mid-sentence), while the abuse they inflict on others, whether recounted after the fact or occurring right before our eyes, is located full-front or far downstage where we can't pretend to ignore it, however we may look to Todd Rosenthal's museum-accurate deep-south decor for comforting stereotypes.

Wishcamper's dream-team cast is led by Shannon Cochran as a seductively calculating Regina who taunts Ben with her superior height and playfully smacks Oscar on his bald head (echoing the latter's mistreatment of his alcoholic wife), despite the Machiavellian menace that veteran villains Larry Yando and Steve Pickering exude. John Judd's Horace provides our moral compass, as do Cherene Snow and Dexter Zelicoff's wise servants and Rae Gray's remarkably mature Alexandra. One-percenters might want to exercise caution departing the theater.

SPOTLIGHT



The company that launched the acclaimed *Stonewall Riots* drama *Hit the Wall* is getting experimental with their latest world premiere called *The Salts*. The Inconvenience debuts an experimental contemporary dance project by collaborators Erin Kilmurray and Molly Brennan that also features pre- and post-show entertainment by a roster of local bands. The Inconvenience's *The Salts* continues through Sunday, May 24, in Room 300 of the Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 W. Milwaukee Ave. Tickets are \$10 for the preview and \$25 for the regular run; visit www.theinconvenience.org.

Photo by Matthew Gregory Hollis/
The Inconvenience

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BY RORY KINNEAR

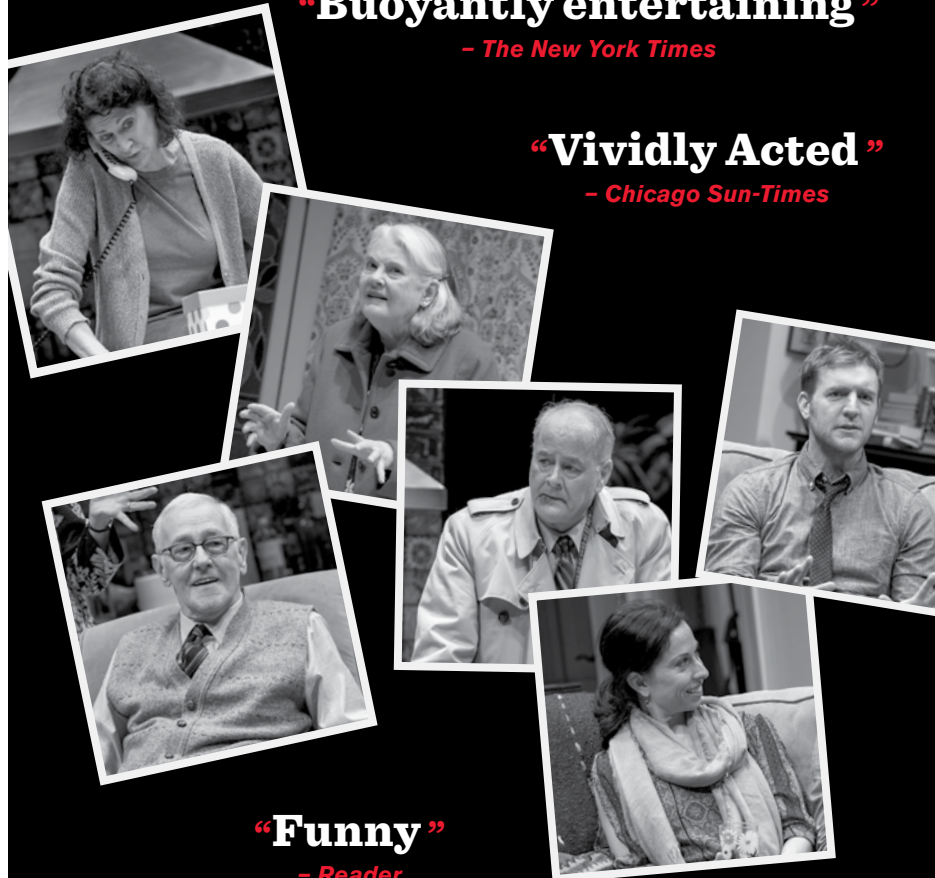
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KNIGHT at the movies



BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

The Rose is still THE Rose

Mary Rose Foster aka **The Rose** (Bette Midler) gives a *tour de force* performance in Mark Rydell's 1979 movie of the same name, which the Criterion Collection has just released in a new, remastered version. The Rose—a fictional queen of rock loosely based on Janis Joplin—is a cyclone of conflicted feelings as she embarks on what will prove to be her final concert tour, ending up in her hometown.

Joplin often cited not just the commanding presence and blues wail of Bessie Smith as an inspiration but also her hard-living, take-no-prisoners lifestyle. Smith's stormy life is chronicled in Dee Rees' biopic **Bessie** (now playing on HBO), starring Queen Latifah, who is tremendous in the title role. Smith's forthright bisexuality was also embraced by Joplin (Going Down with Janis, by her female lover Peggy Caserta, was a must-read for Our People back in the day.) The Rose, too, has her own lady-in-waiting—a prim, English lass who uses a sensual shampoo as an attempt at seduction and turns her nose up at The Rose's latest male conquest when he walks in on the women.

That scene, Midler reveals in a new interview included among the special features in Criterion's Blu-ray of the film, was unfamiliar territory for her. It was also one of the few aspects of the character that didn't harken back to her own life, so closely does Bo Goldman's rewrite job on the script weave in aspects of Midler's curious path to fame. For example, when The Rose and her new beau—a down-to-earth chauffeur (a marvelously understated Frederic Forrest) who is AWOL from the Army—visit a drag bar, Midler's rise to prominence via her gay bathhouse and bar gigs can't help but underscore the scene.

This segment is just one of the film's many electrifying sequences. (It offers a rare glimpse of disco singer Sylvester, who impersonates Diana Ross.) And in a movie filled with more than its share of melodramatic ups and downs—mostly downs—it's blissfully joyful. As the camera whirls around the room, capturing both the performers and the patrons (a delightful collection of freaks and geeks) galvanized by the music and the shared camaraderie, the feeling of outsiders united in a fabulous and shared secret underworld is palpable. There it



Bette Midler in *The Rose*.
Photo by Frank Masi/HBO

was on the screen more than 35 years ago for all the world to see—the exhilaration of a gay drag bar in all its unapologetic glory. That's one of the reasons why *The Rose* remains such a singular movie.

The first and foremost reason, of course, is Midler's sensational, powerhouse performance (which, as I've stated in print at least a dozen times, should have netted her the Best Actress Oscar for which she was nominated). The movie, directed with a tremendous feel for the rock 'n' roll milieu it artfully captures, was helmed by Mark Rydell. He guided Midler to what remains her crowning movie achievement (and in 1991 he would guide her to her second-best performance in the underrated *For the Boys*). This remastered edition looks spectacular. For the uninitiated, familiar only with Midler's comedies and delightful onstage antics, it will be a revelation. It's available now.

Speaking of bisexuality...

Jack Black and James Marsden play a nebbish loser and the dreamy object of his obsession in Jarrad Paul and Andrew Mogel's very dark comedy **The D Train**.

Taking charge of his 20-year high school reunion, Black and his cohorts aren't having much luck convincing their former classmates to join. But when Black spots Marsden (who was the class jock) in a suntan lotion commercial, he decides that getting him to the reunion

will convince everyone else to attend and in the process elevate his own popularity. What ensues is a bromance that goes beyond bromance when, after a drug-fueled night on the town, Black and Marsden hook up.

The movie has gotten a fair amount of critical drubbing for not being laugh-out-loud funny—a valid criticism—but that view doesn't take into consideration the film's fascinating central focus on Black's discovery that his sexual boundaries aren't what he always assumed and that the hook up is presented without the usual gay panic. The movie, from IFC Films, is now in theaters. <http://www.d-trainmovie.com/>

The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name

That's the name of a new film series devoted to Victorian era queer themed movies. The Queer Film Society (of which I'm president) and the Chicago Public Library are presenting a quartet of movies the first four Mondays in June at the Bezazian branch, 1226 W. Argyle Ave., at 6 p.m. as a celebration of Pride month.

The screenings include 1945's classic *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; the 2009 Italian lesbian romance *Purple Sea*; 1995's *Total Eclipse*, with Leonardo DiCaprio and David Thewlis as lovers; and 1997's *Wilde* with Stephen Fry as author (and gay icon) Oscar Wilde and Jude Law as his petulant lover. The screenings are free. <http://queerfilmsociety.org/pages/events.html#event2>

Upcoming movie calendar

Highlights from films opening in Chicago, May 22 and May 29 (or available digitally)

Beautiful Boxer (5/21)—The fifth annual Cinema Q film series continues at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington ST., with a rare screening of 2023's *Beautiful Boxer*, the jaw-dropping true story of the transgender Thai kickboxer Nong Toom. The Queer Film Society, Reeling, the Legacy Project and the Chicago Cultural Center are presenting the film. http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/cinema_q.html

I'll See You In My Dreams (5/22)—Blythe Danner takes center stage in this story of a widow who improbably finds herself choosing between two suitors—her young pool boy and a courtly gentleman she meets at the retirement center home of her best friends. Sam Elliott, Mary Kay Place, Rhea Perlman and June Squibb costar.

Tomorrowland (5/22)—This sci-fi mystery from Disney Studios is purportedly based on their same-named theme park area. George Clooney, Britt Robertson, Hugh Laurie and Kathryn Hahn co-star.

Poltergeist (5/22)—"They're here..." said little Carol Ann in Tobe Hooper's 1982 paranormal suburban mystery thriller that Steven Spielberg produced. Now, they've been reimagined in what is reportedly a much darker vision of the original. Sam Rockwell, Jared Harris and Rosemarie Witt co-star. Zelda Rubinstein's character, the diminutive psychic Tangina, has morphed into several different characters.

San Andreas (5/29)—The disaster epic, one of my favorite guilty pleasure genres, strikes again with this man-vs.-the-elements big-budget schlock. Wayne Johnson and Carla Gugino head the cast.

Saint Laurent (5/29)—It's a biopic (the second in the past year) of the young gay design wunderkind Yves Saint Laurent, who took the fashion world by storm and whose sexual and drug indulgences later threatened to engulf him and the relationship with his business partner and lover.

Unfreedom (5/29)—Director Raj Amit Kumar's debut, which features a lesbian love story set against the background of a terrorist plot, has been banned in India, Kumar's home country, so that it won't "ignite unnatural passions." The film plays in theaters and will be available VOD. The movie's website contains a link to a Kickstarter campaign and a petition to lift the ban and show the film in India. <http://www.unfreedommovie.com/>

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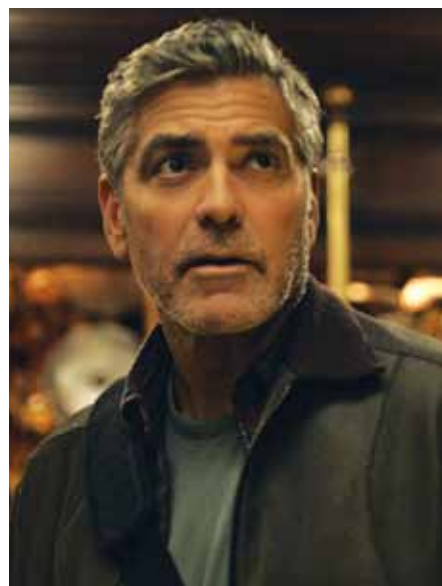
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George Clooney in *Tomorrowland*.
Photo from Walt Disney Studios



Willa J. Taylor
Photo by Jerry Nunn

Goodman expands on education

The group at Goodman Theatre had a stellar week in May with Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* opening, a new education center announcement and a "Puttin' on the Glitz" fundraiser.

After turning 90 this year the Goodman shows no signs of slowing down. A \$15-million project was announced on May 12 with the Alice B. Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement that will connect the current facility at 170 N. Dearborn St. with an adjacent upper-level space. Working with Wheeler Kearns Architects there will be 7,800 square feet of new classroom area.

Director of Education and Community Engagement Willa J. Taylor has inspired major donations by being such a champion for the program. At a press conference she stated, "This space will allow teachers to link theater

with their curriculum. The new STEM learning lab is hands on and the first of its kind."

Mayor Rahm Emanuel attended the meeting reinforcing the goal by saying, "Touching the lives of the community will give students a complete education. This facility will complete the Goodman's mission. Continued donations will provide opportunities to reach deeper into our neighborhoods."

Executive Director Roche Schulfer said, "Learning how theater is made helps learning in general" and Artistic Director Robert Falls explained that how the arts can transform children's lives.

The following Saturday, the Goodman Theatre Gala had Broadway singer Sutton Foster performing her Tony Award-winning hits from her catalog. With a '20s theme, there was a lively cocktail hour and an elegant sit-down dinner. A live band Gentlemen of Leisure played a variety of music and had the crowd jumping to it's feet for a cover of the radio hit "Uptown Funk."

Fundraisers like this one help establish new programs including partnerships with schools and teacher training throughout the year.

For more information on the expansion project and current productions visit www.goodmantheatre.org.

— Jerry Nunn

eta to reopen June 5 with 'Liberty City'

eta Creative Arts Foundation—Chicago's oldest African-American theater production company—will officially reopen Friday, June 5, with the Chicago premiere of the off-Broadway hit play *Liberty City*, written by Tony Award-winning producer/actor April Yvette Thompson and actor/writer/director Jessica Blank.

The one-woman play tells a story of Miami in the 1980s, where race, politics and police brutality spark a community on edge and ignite a city-wide riot. In the midst of it, a 10-year-old girl must get her young brother home safely.

The production will be staged in eta's Gallery

Theater at 7558 S. South Chicago Ave. and is scheduled to run thru July 12, with a possible two-week extension.

Performances are 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 3 p.m. Sundays. General admission tickets are \$20 each; call 773-752-3955 or visit www.etacreativearts.org.



The movie *Beautiful Boxer*.

Cinema Q V Film Series through May

The free film series Cinema Q returns (and celebrates five years) with four film screenings Thursdays throughout May at 6:30 p.m. at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St.

The movies slated to be shown are *Beautiful Boxer* (May 21), the true story of trans female kickboxer Parinya Charoenphol; and the 1971

film *Death in Venice* (May 28).

The Queer Film Society (QFS) is presenting in partnership with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and in association with Chicago Filmmakers (the presenting organization of Reeling: The Chicago LGBT International Film Festival) and The Legacy Project.

This series contains mature subject matter; viewer discretion is advised. Email qfsociety1@yahoo.com or visit www.ChicagoCulturalCenter.org for more information.

'Faster! Monsanto Die! Die!' May 23

The Guild Literary Complex will host New York City-based performance and activist collective Reverend Billy and The Stop Shopping Choir for "Faster! Monsanto Die! Die!" Saturday, May 23, at 8 p.m. at Preston Bradley Center, 941 W. Lawrence Ave.

Tickets are a suggested \$10-12 donation at the door, or \$8 in advance at www.GuildComplex.org.

Reverend Billy and The Stop Shopping Choir will also join the March Against Monsanto May 23 at 1 p.m. at Federal Plaza, 50 W. Adams St.

Pride Fest set for June 20-21

Chicago Pride Fest returns to Boystown June 20-21 with a mix of national headliners and festival favorites.

The annual event, which the Northalsted Business Alliance hosts, is debuting the "Keep Pride Proud" catch phrase.

On Saturday (June 20), Deb Gibson, Jessica Sutta and The Veronicas take to the Main Stage. Sunday (June 21) will feature Big Freedia, Crystal Waters, Estelle, Cazwell and St. Lucia.

The event will take place on Halsted Street from Addison to Grace streets, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. There is a \$10 suggested donation.

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Kenny Porpora writes emotionally wrenching memoir

BY ROSS FORMAN

Kenny Porpora was often told that he should write his memoirs, that his life would be a hard-to-believe, gripping book—and probably a movie, too.

He's only 28, yet lived a life few can comprehend.

He grew up in a down-on-their-luck, fractured family, riddled with addiction and chronic heartache and heartbreak—from many family members. Many have died.

His mom was an alcoholic during his childhood, and her passion was television, particularly Regis Philbin.

There's the beloved dog, his passion for professional wrestling, his dream of making a life for himself, amid a survival-mode life with such jobs as stints at Sizzler and Home Depot. There's a trip to Chicago to meet his idol, Roger Ebert, built on the guise that Porpora was producing a documentary, yet he had no money, no equipment or really anything that would make a documentary come to fruition, other than a dream.

Porpora also is openly gay.

He "never considered" writing a memoir, Porpora said in March during a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles, where he has been living since October 2013.

But, in February, Grand Central Publishing released Porpora's memoir, his first book: *The Autumn Balloon*. It is a witty, emotional, raw book about Porpora, for Porpora, who takes readers in meticulous detail back to his childhood, to his struggle, to his survival.

Every autumn Porpora watched his mom scribble messages on balloons and release them into the sky above his native Long Island—one for each family member who died from addiction.

Despite the dysfunction, Porpora and his family is filled with love—and it certainly rings through in his 295-page hardcover book, which already has received many favorable reviews from mainstream media. Take, for instance, *USA TODAY*, which, in late February, tagged the book among its "Weekend Picks for Book Lovers!"

Porpora—who has been an associate editor at *Man About World*, a gay travel magazine for the iPad, for about four years, and has had a partner, Jesse Cheever, for about two years—is celebrating the positive responses and already working on a somewhat hush-hush second book, which will shift to the fiction genre, he admitted.

Plenty of Porpora's past comes to light in *The Autumn Balloon*, which he started writing while in San Francisco in September 2011. He had nine chapters completed by February 2012, and by that June was shopping it around to agents.

Porpora had a book deal by that August.

"The original book that I wrote [comprised of] those nine chapters started around where part two of the book starts, when [he's] about 14 and a lot of [his] family is already gone," Porpora said. "My editor wanted to know a little bit more about the people who had passed—the balloons, so to speak—so I went back and rewrote for about a year, rewriting



Kenny Porpora.
Photo courtesy of Porpora

the book from scratch. That took me about a year, and that's the book I have now. I didn't end up using all of the original [material], but most of the original is in part two."

When he first started writing, Porpora said things started to appear more episodically than they had before, for whatever reason. "I just started thinking ... I wanted to write and spend time [that way] with family members who weren't with me anymore," he said.

After writing his first two chapters, Porpora emailed essayist Poe Ballantine, who he didn't even know. Porpora simply wanted feedback.

Ballantine replied that what he had read was really special, and that Porpora should continue writing. "That was the inspiration to keep going, and the thought that, yes, maybe I had something," Porpora said.

Porpora admitted that, at times, the book was hard to write and, surprisingly, fun at times, too—due to the intensely personal memories, moments and family members.

"There's a lot of love in the book because I have a lot of love for the people who died, but they died so young that I didn't get to spend a lot of time with them," he said. "There have been millions of times when, ugh, something funny would happen and I wished I could have told my uncle—but he's not here anymore. So [writing this book] was sort of a way to reminisce with them, remember them. It was a way for me to think about things—as an adult."

Truly, the book was therapeutic for the author.

And also trying. There were times, for instance, he'd have to stop writing after 20 minutes, succumb by emotions.

"My brother and I had a conversation after the book was published, and he said that there was not enough in there about Mommy—as we still call her—who would wear terrible shoes, so I could wear nicer jeans. Or, the fact that she sacrificed so much to give us the best possible life," he said. "I tried my very best to make sure that her efforts to give us the best possible life were seen, despite some of the things that we had gone through."

Porpora said he is receiving regular responses from readers that are very personal, be it by email or social media. "I'm very grateful that people who read the book, and see that I have openly shared my story, and they now feel that they can openly share their story."

Porpora was living with his brother in Flagstaff, Arizona, when he was about 17—and it led to his first-ever trip to Chicago, and certainly one of the funnier moments for Porpora.

Porpora, you see, was hooked on the writing of Roger Ebert, who offered his movie reviews for the *Sun-Times*.

Ebert was Porpora's writing hero.

So Porpora reached out to him—by email, as he did with many other celebrities, just looking for a chance, maybe some guidance.

Porpora told Ebert that he was making a documentary about the Motion Picture Association of America.

"I thought he was just going to ignore me," Porpora said.

In reality, Ebert replied the next day—and told Porpora he'd give him 15 minutes.

Problem was, Porpora was no more producing a documentary than he was a world champion pro wrestler—the sport that was Porpora's escape, salvation.

Despite the financial hardship, Porpora flew to Chicago and was set to film the interview on the set where Ebert and Richard Roeper filmed their show.

"He was this gentle, sweet, grandfatherly type of man—everything [favorable] that you would image," Porpora said. "It's often said, 'Don't meet your heroes,' but he more than lived up to his reputation."

At the end of their meeting, Ebert told Porpora that another filmmaker was making a movie about the MPAA.

Nonetheless, he encouraged Porpora to keep going, "which echoed through the words of my father and the words of this [inspirational] Columbia University professor.

"[He said that] not everything is going to go the way it should, but you still have to keep going—and you'll find out later why it had to go this way. And I certainly have."



2015 SCHEDULE

JUNE 2015

Fri. 5	Indiana	7:30PM
Wed. 24	Atlanta	11:30AM
Tue. 30	New York	7:00PM

JULY 2015

Fri. 10	Minnesota	7:30PM
Sun. 12	Connecticut	5:00PM
Wed. 15	Washington	11:30AM
Sun. 19	San Antonio	5:00PM
Tue. 21	Atlanta	7:00PM
Fri. 31	Los Angeles	7:30PM

AUGUST 2015

Sun. 2	Washington	5:00PM
Tue. 4	Indiana	7:00PM
Fri. 7	New York	7:30PM
Sun. 9	Phoenix	12:00PM
Fri. 21	Washington	7:30PM
Sun. 30	Connecticut	6:00PM

SEPTEMBER 2015

Sun. 6	Seattle	5:00PM
Fri. 11	Tulsa	7:30PM

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Grunt dating app to be redesigned for watch

The people behind gay-dating app Grunt plan to capitalize on the new Apple Watch toward the end of this year as part of a plan to "reshape the dating landscape for men," according to a statement.

"I couldn't stand all the junk apps out there, that didn't care how the user experienced meeting and dating other guys on their app" said Grunt co-founder Mike Mendoza in a statement. "I am the frustrated consumer, I am the guy that didn't just want a random hook up, but a meaningful interaction with other users."

Mendoza and some others have completely redesigned Grunt for the iPhone and plan to introduce a new, straightforward, simple design for the Apple Watch.

Visit www.gruntapp.com.



Rendering of Grunt on Apple Watch.
Photo courtesy of Grunt

Gay HIV-positive singer lives life out loud

BY TERRI-LYNNE WALDRON

As a back-up vocalist, out singer/songwriter Billy Newton-Davis has worked with Gloria Gaynor. As a Broadway performer, he has appeared in shows such as *Eubie!* and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, the Canadian resident is a four-time Juno Award-winning—Canada's version of the Grammys—R&B and house music artist. Diagnosed with HIV in 1986, Newton-Davis lives his life on his own terms.

Windy City Times: Tell me about being in your first music group, *The Illusions*.

Billy Newton-Davis: I was one of the vocalists, but I was really the meat of the organization. It was a band with piano, bass, drums and guitar.

WCT: While working on Broadway in the musical *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, you were told to hide your orientation onstage?

BN-D: It was really odd because I was told, "You're just too gay for the audience—leave that backstage. When you're on stage, you're a man." I have always been rebellious against things like that, and it bothered me.

WCT: How did you handle it?

BN-D: You can only be who you are. These kinds of things lead you to hiding and having secrets. That was the interesting thing about HIV/AIDS—because at that time, that's what was going on. We guys were going out and people didn't know it and it wasn't so talked about. I hung out in the club atmosphere more than I did the bar atmosphere because I didn't want to associate myself—for some odd and strange reason—with those types of people. People were always concerned about my femi-

nine ways and to this day—I am who I am.

WCT: You moved to Toronto in 1980 to be part of the revue, *Eubie!* and you released two records in Canada in 1986 (*Love Is a Contact Sport*) and 1989 (*Spellbound*). Were you out during that time?

BN-D: My manager knew but my record people didn't know.

WCT: In 1986, your doctor told you that you were HIV-positive. Is that something you kept close to the vest?

BN-D: That was kept close to the vest. I did this documentary called *Centre Stage Chronicles* and I was interviewed by Olympian Sylvia Sweeney. We had discussions about disclosure and everything had to be approved after it was filmed and scripted. In the middle of filming she asked me about my HIV status and it caught my breath, and I came out with it. There was a tearful shocking moment, because—on one hand she just outed me.

We just kept rolling with it and it was at the end of the filming. She sent my partner and me footage and we looked at it and we thought, "How beautiful is that?" If I can let go of that and express my feelings about it, then maybe I can change somebody's life and thoughts about what they are going through as one that has been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

WCT: Tell me about some of your activism.

BN-D: When Sylvia and I did have that conversation, it opened the door for me to come out and really talk about it and be a part of different events. I became very active with ACT—a Canadian organization that empowers adults and young people living with HIV—and the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto. I have helped to raised thousands of dollars for



Billy Newton-Davis.

the cause because I can be that person.

WCT: Did you see the Bruce Jenner interview with Diane Sawyer?

BN-D: I missed it and I'm very unhappy that I missed it. There needs to be more celebration around it and he needs 150-percent support on all his decisions. He is saying things that we've heard before—I was a woman living in a man's body, and I don't want to stay there anymore. I truly understand it. I am fascinated by this new acceptance of transgender. It's really amazing.

WCT: What was it like being a part of the Canadian a capella group *The Nylons* in the early '90s after being a solo artist?

BN-D: It was a great moment in my life. When I left Broadway—even though I was a principle—I was a member of the ensemble. Being in *The Nylons* was a good opportunity; [ex-member] Marc Connors had died, I was with the management company and the group

liked me and I liked them. My dad had been a quartet singer and I was in a choir in high school so I knew about group singing.

WCT: You are now known for being a house-music artist.

BN-D: I love it. It's a very difficult genre of music because there is so much of it. I've gotten to work with Deadmau5 and some other amazing people. But right now, I want to go back to my R&B roots and put a bit of EDM in it.

WCT: Have you ever been to Chicago?

BN-D: Chicago is a hot city and I have performed there many times in the past. They are very forward with the LGBTQ community. My hopes are to keep recording and get my music out there. I would love to work in the Chicago dance scene.

Keep up with Newton-Davis on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/billynewton-davis>.

Midler touring, in Chicago June 18

Grammy-winning singer and legendary performer Bette Midler's first major tour in a decade, "Divine Intervention," has launched.

She started her tour with shows in the Florida cities of Hollywood and Tampa, and she's slated to stop by Chicago's United Center on Thursday, June 18.

Accompanied on stage by a 12-piece band as well as backing vocals by the Harlettes, the show features a stage production courtesy of stage designer Michael Cotton. Midler counterbalances the two-hour set of songs with a skewering of social media, in which Midler mocks Facebook and Twitter with commentary and punchlines.

For complete tour and ticket information, visit bettemidler.com and www.liv-entertainment.com.

Memorial Day-dedication for LGBT vet monument

AVER, Chicago, IL -- The first federally approved monument honoring lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) veterans will be dedicated at 2 p.m. Memorial Day, Monday, May 25 at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois, one hour southwest of Chicago.

The monument was made possible by the Chicago Chapter American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER). It is intended to redress the history of disregard and disrespect for LGBT veterans with a lasting symbol of recognition.

LGBT service members have served throughout the history of the U.S. military, some of that time under an outright ban supported by regulation and some under Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), a policy supported by law.

DADT was instituted by President Bill Clinton in late 1993, after the long-time anti-gay policy was challenged and became an issue of public debate. Before the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 was signed into law by President Barack Obama, nearly 14,000 service members were discharged. Work on open trans inclusion continues today as does work to reexamine and upgrade discharges made under DADT.

The monument will consist of a black granite center block holding a pink granite triangle, centered in a pink granite wall displaying, in bronze, the service seals of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marines. It will read: "Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have served honorably and admirably in America's armed forces. In their memory and appreciation of their selfless service and sacrifice, this monument was dedicated by Chicago Chapter American Veterans for



Artist's rendering by Tod Tatsui

Equal Rights 'AVER' (... with liberty and justice for all)."

The monument design and approval was spearheaded over several years by Stanley J. Jencyk, junior board member of the Chicago chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) and was approved late last year by Ronald E. Walters, interim undersecretary for memorial affairs.

The ceremony will take place at 2 p.m. along and within the Memorial Walkway and will feature music by the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus; blessings from Rabbi Cindy Enger, Fr. Chris Myers and Rev. Wayne Bradley; remarks from elected officials, including former Governor Pat Quinn and U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly, and a Flag Line led by members of Organized Chaos Chicago (OCC), some of whom are active duty or veterans of the military.

A free bus will be provided, boarding at 11:30 a.m. at the Center on Halsted on a first-come, first-served basis. Those wishing to ride may RSVP to jamesdarby@aol.com or (773)752-0058. No RSVP is needed to attend the ceremony.

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The wild life of Joe Putignano—Olympic dreams, drug addiction

BY ROSS FORMAN

Joe Putignano is a talented performing artist and contortionist who has toured with Cirque du Soleil. He was, in fact, the main character (Crystal Man) in the touring Cirque show Totem and has performed in more than 1,000 shows.

Putignano also has performed in a number of stage productions with the Metropolitan Opera, and his gymnastics resume is nothing short of impressive. Dating back to 1987, he won numerous state and regional championships and was on the fast track to Olympic stardom through the U.S. Olympic Training Center.

But that's only the tip of the Putignano story—the awe-inspiring portion.

Putignano also has been homeless, a cocaine user, a heroin addict, disowned by his parents and twice has been declared dead. And, he's gay and was bullied while growing up. He also has attempted suicide.

The Putignano story certainly sounds like it should be a script written in Hollywood ... but it's the real deal.

"My life ... it's somewhat exhausting," he said, pausing to reflect, before breaking into laughter. "There was an immense amount of work to hit the highs and the lows—and to get out of them. But when I look back, I wouldn't change it because the road has definitely humbled me and gave me compassion, which I feel is now one of my bigger strengths.

"With a deeper sense of suffering and pain [that I endured], it now allows me to better connect with people, more on a soul level, which is really amazing. And there was a time when I didn't have that; I know I was an arrogant gymnast teenager."

So what's the high point for this 37-year-old, muscle-filled New York resident?

He doesn't hesitate with his answer: Just getting sober.

"I know that might not look like the [high point in my life], if you look at some of the things I've done on paper. But I never, ever thought I could get sober—and was never able to, from age 19 to 30, [regardless of what] I tried, and I tried everything, including four rehab [stints], [time in] homeless shelters, a 12-step [recovery] program, addiction specialists," and more.

Putignano was an elite, competitive gymnast, training for the Olympics. But he stopped and simply quit the sport due to his drug addiction. He didn't return to gymnastics until he was in his late 20s because he was trying to get sober and thought going back to something that he once loved would help.

"All of those years in between [after quitting gymnastics], I wasn't exercising; I was basically smoking cigarettes and shooting heroin," he said.

"When I look back in retrospect, I can't believe I did that—and knowing what I know now, I probably wouldn't do it again because it was so much harder than I thought."

Putignano's wild, roller coaster life is chronicled in his can't-put-down addiction memoir, *Acrobaddict*, which tells of his truly amazing odyssey—amazing that he's still alive to share his story, that is.

"Writing a book and actually getting it published was a personal high and definitely an important part of my life. Writing this book made my past not so much in vain and was able to help people through that," he said. "It certainly was tough to write all of these terrible things that I've done for the public [to read and know]."



Joe Putignano.
Photo by Thomas Synnamon

The 370-page book, published by Las Vegas-based Central Recovery Press, took him about four years to write. Dr. Sanjay Gupta, the chief medical correspondent for CNN, issued a statement when the book was released, calling it the most candid book of the year.

"Prepare to be frightened and taken to the depths of despair and then lifted up triumphantly," Gupta stated. "It is never too late to hit the reset button on your life—that is what you are about to learn from Joe Putignano. He is equally adept at taking you through the remarkable journey of his own terrible addiction as he is in the world of acrobatics, descending from the Cirque du Soleil big top as a human mirror ball—the figurative spark of change in humanity ... It is proof that with hard work, anything is possible."

Putignano said that one of the biggest woes in his life was quitting gymnastics, and he did so because drugs were getting in the way. "I basically wanted to party all of the time," he said. "I was trying to do both when I was in college, but was hooked on cocaine, among other drugs."

Consequently, he was getting injured often.

He was, admittedly, at a "very dangerous level."

So he simply stepped away from the sport, which he now tags as "one of the lowest points" in his life. After all, gymnastics was his passion, his church, "what kept me alive." But he had fallen in love with the drugs.

"That was truly sad," he said.

Putignano's drug-fueled spiral landed him in and out of homeless shelters in the Northeast for two years. There also were times he stayed at the home of his drug dealer.

"It's a real terrible thing, sleeping outside with no one to call [for help]. That was the absolute worst," he said.

Putignano also had stays in mental institutions.

And this was before he discovered heroin.

Putignano said his parents disowned him because, when he was home, he'd be strung out on drugs, thus paramedics had to be called, or,

he got violent and thus the police were called. And when he phoned his parents, from a pay phone, they'd hang up on him. "That is the worst thing in the world; talk about feeling unloved," he said.

Putignano said his drug addiction was not impacted by being gay. "Addiction is greater than sexuality; addiction does not discriminate [based on sexual orientation]," he said.

Putignano was bullied for being gay while growing up, which he now says "definitely had a huge impact on the way I saw myself [and] the world ... it changes almost every decision that you make; it's almost as if you feel alienated from the planet. That really destroyed my self-esteem and my self-worth.

"Being gay did not cause my addiction, but made it worse."

However, recovery is possible, he said, "no matter how far down the scale you've gone, how low you've hit." That's his message, especially for the crystal-meth users, abusers and addicted, which is so prominent in the gay community, he said.

Putignano hit his eighth year of sobriety March 25.

He is now in school full-time, pursuing a career as a physician's assistant, and he also is writing a second book, though it's not about him, rather, in the horror genre. He said the book will be released in 2016.

Chicago Force receiver featured in new football cards

BY ROSS FORMAN

Thanks to her productivity on the field, Jeanette Gray has landed her a pretty cool perk off the field: she is one of the select Women's Football Alliance (WFA) players to be featured in the inaugural 2015 trading card series. Gray appears on card No. 4 in the 18-card base set and one of four WFA players to also have an authentic autograph card, numbered to 100.

WFA cards are produced by the Nebraska-based Doji Malo Trading Card company, named after the owner's family.

Gray was the team MVP for the Chicago Force in 2014 and the 2014 WFA Conference Player of the Year.

"The Women's Football Alliance was a league we were interested in as fans," said the company president, who requested to be identified simply as Doji Malo. "As collectors, we searched for cards to buy. When we could not find a WFA set, we contacted the league to see if we could work with them to create one. The WFA was open to the idea and the relationship is very positive."

The 2015 WFA cards, the first-ever cards for the tackle league, which operates on the same rules as the NCAA, will be an ongoing project. "The league gave us permission to work directly with the teams, but it is a daily process to find the right people to talk with on each team, decide on the players to include, get the images lined up, player bios, stats edited, etc. Our hope is to have players from each team in the set this year, and have the 2016 set mapped out in advance," Doji Malo said.

"The players [in the initial 2015 release] are selected based on input from the teams. Since we are funding this 100 percent upfront ourselves, we can't include every player; it would cost too much to create a set from scratch that way. So, we ask the teams to give us a list of a few players they believe should be included and go with that. Next year, we hope to be funded, so that we can create a more inclusive set."

Gray is the lone Chicago player featured in the initial release.

Kate Sowers, the quarterback for the Kansas City Titans, is card No. 1 in the series—and she also has a separate authentic autograph card, also numbered to 100. Her twin sister, Liz, who plays wide receiver, also has a base card and an autograph card.

"The most important thing for the WFA set is to get cards in the hands of collectors and fans," Doji Malo said. "The WFA needs exposure, and these cards are a time-tested way to create a buzz. Whatever we can do to get WFA cards into the hands of collectors is the top priority.



Jeanette Gray on a WFA card.

The plan is to have the 2016 set in process the day after the season ends in 2015, which is in early August.

The next cards in the works are players from the Everett Reign, Minnesota Machine and Portland Fighting Fillies. There also will be autograph cards for the Seattle Majestics, Orlando Anarchy, and West Michigan Mayhem that need to be reissued.

"New cards for 2015 are just going to be ready when they are ready. The nature of this year's process means we don't have a strict release schedule," he said.

The Hamlin and Gray cards have generated the most interest so far, Doji Malo said.

The base set is limited to 500 cards per player, and autograph cards to no more than 100 hand-numbered cards. Some players may have an ultra-limited run of less than 50 autograph cards and 100 base cards, Doji Malo said.

Robin Lee runs the Girl-Jocks.com website, which specializes in sports memorabilia for female athletes. She purchased the entire first set of WFA cards—and was impressed.

"The new WFA cards are pretty nice looking and are of good quality card stock. I really like the action shots on the front and the head shots on the back with the players stats," said Lee, who lives in Northern California. "It's a good start—the players, fans, friends and family will be very happy with the cards.

"I don't think they're going to be a huge seller outside of that group, but I'd like to be pleasantly surprised."

For more information about the WFA cards, the company can be reached at cards@dojimalo.com.

Chicago Youth Storage Initiative issues report, recommendations

CHICAGO — Health outcomes, safety, the ability to access needed services, and social well-being are all influenced by the inability to safely store belongings, according to the final report of the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative for youth experiencing homelessness in the Chicago area. The report was released May 19 to Chicago-area youth agencies and funders.

The needs assessment and recommendations were written by research leader Lara Brooks with youth advocates Ka'Riel Gaiter, Gregory Slater and Daphnie Williams.

The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative is supported with the leadership of The Pierce Family Foundation and Polk Bros Foundation, and participation of other foundations including The Knight Family Foundation. The project was coordinated by Tracy Baim, publisher of Windy City Times.

Currently, storage access for individuals and families experiencing homelessness is extremely limited in Chicago. In the U.S., no models of community-coordinated or citywide efforts exist to support young people around storage of personal belongings. Looking to adult storage models in Vancouver, San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, Salt Lake City, and New York, many models were explored for feasibility. Chicago would be the first U.S. city to coordinate such an effort for young people.

Key Findings:

- Familial support sometimes extends to storage of belongings but not housing.
- Many young people trust at least one youth worker with their belongings and documents.
- Violence prevention and preventing the loss or theft of personal belongings are con-

nected.

- Storage programs youth can trust is of up-most importance.
- It can be unsafe for young people to carry their belongings with them.
- Constant worry impacts mental health, productivity, and goal completion.
- Lack of storage means taking steps back, even when youth are trying to move forward.
- Loss of belongings is a setback with ripple effects.
- Emerging, “mini” youth networks exist geographically across Chicago and present new opportunities for service coordination.

Recommended actions include:

- Satellite storage program in close proximity to a youth drop-in center.
- Storage program within or in close proximity to a high school or several high schools with large numbers of unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness.
- Web-based documentation project, possibly through a partnership with Google, piloted within an organization with existing case management services and experience engaging young people experiencing homelessness.
- Dedicated storage program located or in close proximity to Chicago’s Loop with clearly defined, capacity-informed service offerings.
- Program similar to the Commuter Student Resource Center (CSRC) at the University of Illinois- Chicago in other post-secondary institutions, such as City Colleges of Chicago.

“How do you get to school or job interviews



Chicago Youth Storage Initiative Research Team. From left to right: Daphnie Williams, Ka'Riel Gaiter, Lara Brooks, and Gregory Slater.

Photo by Pidgeon Pagonis

in clean clothes, manage medicines, books, paperwork or daily needs, when you have nowhere to keep your things?” asked Brooks. “This study gives a path forward for the city of Chicago to be a true innovator on services to these youth.”

“The Pierce Foundation likes to move quickly, and is often able to step up and make investments at the front end of new projects. This effort is something we believe can generate results that matter, within a relatively short period of time,” said Marianne Philbin, Pierce Family Foundation Executive Director. “We are excited about the findings of this report and look forward to working with other foundations in helping address this issue.”

“People who don’t have a stable place to live often don’t have anyplace to store their belongings, which leaves them open to loss or theft of documents, medications, clothing, books and other personal items,” said Debbie Reznick, Senior Program Officer with Polk Bros Foundation. “Storage will not only help prac-

tically, but will be used as an opportunity to engage youth who are not currently accessing services.”

Far from being a trivial issue, homeless youth have identified solving the storage problem as one of the most important ways to alleviate day-to-day suffering and improve the immediate quality of life for individuals in unpredictable and temporary living situations.

The youth storage project addressed issues impacting all youth, even though the impetus came from the LGBTQ Youth Summit hosted by Windy City Times in 2014.

Heather Parish, program director with the Pierce Foundation, Flora Koppel, executive director of Unity Parenting, and community volunteer Michael Mock of Lincoln Financial Advisors also served on the advisory committee with Baim, Philbin and Reznick.

The full report is available here: www.windycitymediagroup.com/pdf/CYSI-Report-Digital-05-15-15.pdf .

In the 2014-2015 school year, the greatest frequency of unaccompanied students attended schools in the following zip codes:

TOP SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS BY ZIP CODE

- 60612 EAST GARFIELD PARK
- 60621 ENGLEWOOD
- 60624 WEST GARFIELD PARK
- 60616 NEAR SOUTH SIDE, BRIDGEPORT, BRONZEVILLE
- 60651 AUSTIN, HUMBOLDT PARK
- 60608 PILSEN, BRIDGEPORT
- 60622 WEST TOWN, HUMBOLDT PARK, UKRAINIAN VILLAGE
- 60643 BEVERLY, WASHINGTON PARK, MORGAN PARK, WEST PULLMAN
- 60609 NEW CITY
- 60617 CALUMET HEIGHTS, SOUTH SHORE

Students living without a parent or guardian also report a home address upon enrollment. By zip code, the highest frequency of unaccompanied students, come from the following Chicago neighborhoods:

TOP NEIGHBORHOODS OF UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS BY ZIP CODE

- 60624 WEST GARFIELD PARK
- 60621 ENGLEWOOD
- 60628 ROSELAND
- 60620 GRESHAM
- 60637 WOODLAWN
- 60651 AUSTIN, HUMBOLDT PARK
- 60644 GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWDALE
- 60623 NORTH LAWDALE, DOUGLAS PARK
- 60636 WEST ENGLEWOOD
- 60629 CHICAGO LAWN, WEST LAWN (NEAR MIDWAY)











In conclusion, Chicago does not possess a definitive, or even approximate, number of young people experiencing homelessness. The Chicago Point-In-Time Count, YOUth Count, HMIS, and Chicago Public Schools point towards vastly differing numbers. However, we do know this: **The number of young people under the age of 24 experiencing homelessness and housing instability is large and far exceeds the number of available beds on any given night in Chicago.** Additional barriers exist for young people under the age of 18 who, in many ways, have almost no self-determined housing options due to their status as minors.

From the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative report.

WHAT STORAGE SOLUTIONS EXIST?

Cities, neighborhoods, and communities across the U.S. and Canada are responding to the storage issues faced by individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Many of these strategies are creative, humanizing, and approach different types of storage needs.

EXISTING STORAGE PROGRAM MODELS INCLUDE:

-  **SATELLITE STORAGE FACILITY IN PROXIMITY TO BASIC NEEDS**
Example: First United Church Community Ministry Society (Vancouver, CA)
-  **STAND-ALONE STORAGE FACILITY: WAREHOUSES & PARKING LOTS**
Example: Transitional Storage Center (San Diego, CA)
-  **MOBILE & DAILY STORAGE**
Example: H.O.P.E. Lockers (Salt Lake City, UT)
-  **COLLECTIVE MODEL**
Example: SHARE and WHEEL (Seattle, WA)
-  **PRIVATE STORAGE PARTNERSHIP**
Example: Homeless Locker Storage Program (Berkeley, CA)
-  **STORAGE PROGRAMS INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING BASIC NEEDS SERVICES**
Example: JOIN (Portland, OR)
-  **WEB-BASED, 'CLOUD' STORAGE**
Example: Springwire/Feeding America (Seattle, WA)
-  **POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION**
Example: UIC Commuter Student Resource Center (Chicago, IL)
-  **HIGH SCHOOL**
Example: Hetrick-Martin Institute (New York, NY)
-  **DOCUMENT & MAIL STORAGE**
Example: Broadway Youth Center (Chicago, IL)

reserved seats). Location: Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. in Chicago. Tickets: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1409967 or 1-800-838-3006. www.pridefilmsandplays.com

JUNE 22 - TELEVISION SHOW - POV "Out in the Night" 10 p.m. on 11.1 WTTW HD. This show deals with an incident in 2009 in a gay-friendly neighborhood in New York City wherein a group of African-American lesbians were violently threatened by a man on the street. The women fought back and were later charged with gang assault and attempted murder. The tabloids quickly dubbed them a gang of "Killer Lesbians" and a "Wolf Pack." Three pleaded guilty to avoid a trial, but the remaining four maintained their innocence. This feature examines the sensational case and the women's uphill battle, revealing the role that race, gender identity and sexuality play in our criminal justice system. This is one of several LGBT-friendly shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 24 - AWARDS CEREMONY - "30 Under 30 Awards"- 16th Annual event by Windy City Media Group, co-sponsored with AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago House and the Center on Halsted at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted in Chicago. 5:30 p.m. The awards honor 30 outstanding young (under 30 years old) LGBT individuals and Allies. www.windycitymediagroup.com 773-871-7609.

JUNE 25 - PRIDE PARTY - "12th Annual Back Lot Bash." women's festival (continues on June 26, 27, and 28). More information TBA. www.backlotbashchicago.com, backlotbash@yahoo.com

JUNE 25 - RACE & PARTY - A Lakefront night 5K (+1) run/walk and post-party. Second annual event by Star Events at Fullerton and Cannon Drive in Chicago. Benefit for Center on Halsted Senior Housing Center. Registration: 6 p.m.; Start: 7:00 p.m. (party immediately following race near Diversey Harbor until 10 p.m.). www.iloveruns.com/pride-5k.

JUNE 25 - TELEVISION SHOW - "Out & Proud in Chicago" 8 p.m. on 11.1 WTTW HD. Encore presentation of the critically acclaimed show featuring historical coverage of LGBTs in Chicago. Narrated by actress and Chicago native Jane Lynch. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 25 - TELEVISION SHOW - "Schoolboy to Showgirl: The Alexandra Billings Story" 10:30 p.m. on 11.1 WTTW HD. The life of the former Chicagoan who is an educator, actress and activist. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 25 - TOURNAMENT - "Pride Classic Ice Hockey Tournament" by Chicago Gay Hockey Association at 3843 N. California (Chicago Park District's McFetridge Sports Center) in Chicago. (Continues through June 28 with social events, etc.) www.chicagogayhockey.org, tournament@chicagogayhockey.org

JUNE 26 - BBQ & BEACH SERVICE - "LGBTQ Jewish Pride BBQ & Beach Service" by Congregation Or Chadash, 5959 N. Sheridan Rd., in Chicago. 6 p.m. Free. www.orchadash.org, office@orchadash.org, 773-870-5921.

JUNE 26 - PRIDE PARTY - "12th Annual Back Lot Bash" women's festival (continues on June 27 and 28). More information TBA. www.backlotbashchicago.com, backlotbash@yahoo.com

JUNE 26 - RECEPTION - "Pride & Joy Reception" by Center on Halsted/Friends of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame at Center on Halsted, Richard M. Daley Rooftop Terrace, 3656 N. Halsted in Chicago. 5:30-9:30 p.m. Tickets: \$20 (includes 3 drinks, light hors d'oeuvres, dancing) available at the door or from members of the Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. www.glhalloffame.org, info@glhalloffame.org, 773-281-5095.

JUNE 26 - WORKSHOP - "Truthful Touch Cuddle Party" Location upon registration (Chicago north side). 7-11 p.m. \$30 per person. www.cuddlepary.com or www.truthfultouch.com, truthfultouchcp@gmail.com, 773-320-7571.

JUNE 27 - LITURGY - "Annual Pride Liturgy" by Dignity/Chicago at Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N. Broadway in Chicago. 5 p.m. All are welcome.

JUNE 27 - WALK & RUN - "Proud To Run"- 34th annual event includes a 10K run & 5K run/walk presented in association with Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago (the area's LGBTQIA running and walking club). Location: just north of Montrose Harbor in Chicago. Benefit for Affinity Community Services, AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, and Chicago House. The races are a Chicago Area Runners Association and USA Track and Field certified event. An awards ceremony follows the runs. For times, fees, etc.: www.proudtorun.org

JUNE 27 - CHICAGO DYKE MARCH - For more info: www.facebook.com/groups/dykemarchchicago/, dykemarchchicago@gmail.com

JUNE 28 - BLACK PRIDE - various events scheduled this coming week for the LGBTQIA Black Pride celebration. www.windycityblackpride.info

JUNE 27 - PRIDE PARTY - "12th Annual Back Lot Bash" women's festival (continues on June 28). More information TBA. www.backlotbashchicago.com, backlotbash@yahoo.com

JUNE 28 - PRIDE PARTY - "12th Annual Back Lot Bash." women's festival. More information TBA (to be announced). www.backlotbashchicago.com, backlotbash@yahoo.com

JUNE 28 - PRIDE PARADE - Chicago 46th Annual Pride Parade, coordinated by PRIDEChicago. More information TBA. www.ChicagoPrideCalendar.org, PrideChgo@aol.com, 773-348-8243.

JUNE 28 - PRIDE FESTIVAL - "Pride North," celebrating pride on the North side. Details TBA. Held along Glenwood Ave. between Lunt and Farwell in the Rogers Park neighborhood in Chicago.

JUNE 28 - TELEVISION SHOW - "Anyone & Everyone" 10 p.m. on 11.2 WTTW Prime. The show features parents who have a child who is gay. It depicts families from all walks of life. Individuals from such diverse backgrounds as Japanese, Bolivian and Cherokee, as well as from various religious denominations such as Mormon, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu and Southern Baptist share intimate accounts of how their children revealed their sexual orientation and discuss the responses. (First aired in 2007, it also shows PFLAG meetings). This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 28 - WORSHIP SERVICE - "Pride Sunday Worship" w/ featured preacher M. Barclay of Reconciling Ministries Network and liaison to United Methodist Alliance for Transgender Inclusion (UMATI) at Broadway UMC, 3338 N. Broadway in Chicago. 10 a.m.

JUNE 30 - CEREMONY - "Salute to LGBT Veterans" by the American Veterans for Equal Rights at Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago. Noon. www.averchicago.org, jamesdarby@aol.com, 773-752-0058.

JUNE 30 - TELEVISION SHOW - "Growing Up Trans" 10 p.m. on 11.1 WTTW HD. The struggles and choices facing transgender kids and their parents are explored. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

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AFC marks thirty years of action

Photos by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

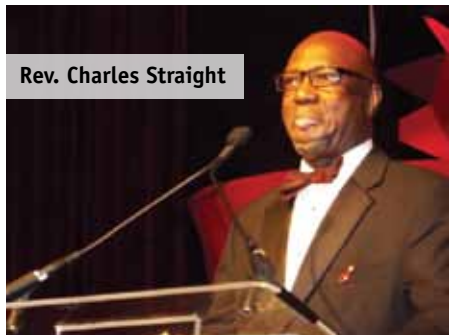
BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND



Amy Landecker.



Ernie Rodriguez.



Rev. Charles Straight



Thomas Kehoe.



Lori Kaufman.

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) transformed the ballrooms of the Chicago Hilton into a crimson Arcadia on May 16 as the organization's gala celebrated thirty years of relentless action which has led to once believed as impossible dreams realized and the ability to look ahead to the most coveted goal of all—the eradication of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Chicago and worldwide.

Flanked by a massive number 30 that had been completely covered on all sides with the signatures in red of AFC's supporters, star of the Amazon Prime Series Transparent and former AFC employee Amy Landecker served as both Master of Ceremonies and keynote speaker for the black-tie evening which was attended by the AFC's past board Chairs, staff members, CEOs and an array of LGBTQ political leaders including United States Ambassador to the Dominican Republic James "Wally" Brewster and Ald. Tom Tunney.

"This is a moment that that sees fewer than 1,100 new cases [of HIV] in Chicago each year," AFC Board Chair J. Ben Stringfellow said in his opening remarks. "I'm proud of what we have accomplished so far and the lives the AFC's work has saved. I believe we're inspired by the impossibility of this moment."

AFC President and CEO John Peller admitted to being "astounded by the progress we've made in the HIV epidemic. New cases have been cut in Chicago by forty percent in the last decade," he said to resounding applause.

However, in looking ahead, Peller was fundamentally clear that "AIDS is still a problem. Our challenges are huge."

High among those challenges is the disproportionate impact of the disease among the transgender population. The discrimination that transgender individuals face in almost every area of their daily lives was the focal point of Landecker's address after she was proudly introduced by her father John.

"The statistics of murders, suicides and HIV/AIDS is extremely high," she said adding that it wasn't just cultural understanding of the transgender community that is needed but "real financial help."

Landecker noted Transparent's hiring of transgender individuals in almost every facet of the show's production both in front of and behind the camera. "Employment is key to the trans community and as a society we have to do more," she said.

Two AFC champions were honored during the gala. Over two-decade long volunteer and HIV/AIDS educator Ernie Rodriguez received the Lori Kaufman Volunteer Award while designer Thomas Kehoe was presented with the Community Impact Award.



the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR: Brunch at Wood

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The website for Boystown restaurant **Wood** (3335 N. Halsted St.; <http://woodchicago.com/>) boasts that the site has noted for three consecutive years as a Michelin Bib Gourmand recipient, which identifies eateries that offer two courses and a glass of wine or dessert for a maximum of \$40, not including tax or gratuity. (A few of the other local restaurants that are 2015 Bib Gourmand selections are Ceres' Table, avec, Hopleaf, Girl & the Goat, Slurping Turtle and bellyQ.)

Indeed, the prices are quite reasonable at the understated Wood, with main items at brunch costing \$10-\$13. And, after eating there, I can say diners are truly getting a bargain.

Feel free to order a cocktail. (As the saying goes, it's five o'clock somewhere.) Offerings include a delicious mimosa (not bottomless), Bloody Mary, Poinsettia (which seems to be an odd choice for this time of the year) and the Corpse Reviver #2 (gin, lillet, combier, lemon and pernod rinse).

As for the food, it's pretty compelling—overall. Unfortunately, Wood stumbled out of



Johnny Cakes (left) and corned beef hash at Wood.
Photos by Andrew Davis

the gate with its cinnamon roll. Our telegenic server said raved about it, correctly saying that one would satisfy both of us diners. It was, fortunately, not too gooey; however, my friend, Arron, and I both noticed a slightly stale quality with the bread that dampened the experience. However, our other appetizer—the Johnny Cakes—was fantastic. The very tasty cakes worked excellently with the maple pork belly, spinach and chive creme fraiche. (Other appetizers include Greek yogurt parfait, soft pretzels, Belgian frites, French toast bites and fried cheese curds.)

The main items were also seriously good.



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CATERING STAFF Busy off-premise catering company now hiring all staff positions. Candidates must be willing to obtain BASSET certification and have a valid IL driver's license. Applicants must be available on 5/23 and 6/6. Saturdays are often required. Some experience in catering or full-service restaurants strongly preferred. All gratuities go to our staff! Looking for responsible individuals with bright personalities! **Please respond with resume and availability to info@connscatering.com.** (5/20/15-2)

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BILLY MASTERS



Jane Fonda has a lot going on, Billy says.
Still from This Is Where I Leave You by Jessica Miglio

"It wasn't a match on a lot of levels. My biggest complaint was the feeling that she kinda shit all over my mother's legacy in her statement on leaving."—Melissa Rivers speaks frankly about Kathy Griffin's disastrous run on Fashion Police.

The Wall Street Journal recently published the findings of a survey showing that 61 percent of Americans would favor a gay president, while only 52 percent would consider an evangelical. Does this mean gays are more popular than Christians? Perhaps. There have been reports that fewer and fewer Americans are identifying themselves as Christian—roughly 10 percent less than a decade ago.

Leave it to Rush Limbaugh to find a way to blame the gays for this, asking, "How is it possible that [fewer] than 1 million gay activists are able to bully and steamroll an entire country on the subject of marriage? By the same token, how is it that 70 percent of the population can be bullied and silenced and coerced into accepting societal evolution with which they disagree because of their religious beliefs?" I'm always fascinated in the private lives of people who espouse the sanctity of marriage—especially since there are far more Biblical passages about divorce than often ascribed to homosexuality. I'm no scholar, but I think the thrice-divorced Limbaugh should really be focused on the salvation of his own soul.

NBC revealed some details about their upcoming live presentation of The Wiz. First, the network will partner with Cirque du Soleil to add a new dimension to the show. Second, Harvey Fierstein will punch up the book. And third, the TV production will be the first step towards a major Broadway revival, which will take place in 2016-17. While the search continues for a newcomer to play Dorothy, the show's original star has joined this new cast. If any of you think I am talking about Miss Ross, stop reading this column immediately. Nope—Stephanie Mills was the original Dorothy on Broadway. For the television version, she'll play Auntie Em. I'm told that she was originally asked to play Glinda, but she felt too intimidated by the long shadow cast by the great Lena Horne.

Elsewhere on ABC, we have the much-lauded Dan Savage sitcom, The Real O'Neals. There will be a mockumentary series featuring the home life of the Muppets. And the network even plans to bring us both Don Johnson and the Bible—although, happily, not together.

News at ABC is not limited to primetime. The View (perennial fodder for this column) is poised to undergo even more changes. As I revealed a few weeks ago, serious negotiations are underway for Raven-Symone to join the cast full-time next season—thus ending talks

with Cristela Alfonso, who was up for the same job. Rounding out the cast may be another familiar face. The brass are quite eager to get Joy Behar back onboard. Despite what you may have heard, she didn't leave of her own accord two years ago. She was jettisoned along with Elisabeth Hasselbeck. But with the subsequent departure of Sherri Shepherd, the show lost a bit of life and spark. Guest spots by Behar have proven popular with fans, and ABC believes her return could help the show find its way.

Fox is getting into bed with Rob Lowe and John Stamos—who could blame them? Lowe appears on Grindr ... er, I mean a show called "The Grinder", which is about a famous actor who moves back to his hometown once his show about a lawyer ends. For those of you who've had daddy fantasies about Stamos, he stars in Grandfathered as a longtime bachelor who finds out that he's not only a father, but a grandfather. And, I bet, eats Greek yogurt.

Obviously, new television shows are not limited to television. Online services are working overtime to crack that nut, and Netflix has

made quite a splash with Grace and Frankie. Alas, stars Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin are not so thrilled with how things have been handled behind the scenes. The ladies may play the titular stars, but they happen to be getting the same salary as Martin Sheen and Sam Waterston. Jane spoke out to the press: "Lily found out Sam and Martin are getting the same salary that we are. That doesn't make us happy." Lily added, "The show is not Sol and Robert—it's Grace and Frankie!" Although there are some cases where the supporting actors do as much of the heavy lifting as the leads (as in, say, Will & Grace), Grace and Frankie has clearly given the brunt of the burden to the ladies. And the ladies have surprising allies in Sheen and Waterston. The men sat down with Kathie Lee and Hoda Kotb and said Jane and Lily should be given a raise. "They carry the show," said Sheen. Waterston added, "I think they're being cheated."

Jane Fonda is full of revelations this week. Elsewhere, she admitted to having dated her fair share of gay men—and could have even married one. "When I was young, I was the female that gay guys wanted to try to become heterosexual with. A very famous actor who's gay—and I will not name names—asked me to marry him. I was very flattered, but I said, 'Why?' This was 1964. And I mean, he wasn't

the only one. It's very interesting. And I lived for two years with a guy who was trying to become heterosexual. I'm intimately acquainted with that." I think it was the "Barbarella" costumes. I mean, the boots alone...

Could it be that the sexy star of a now-defunct second-generation show is inching out of the closet? That's the scoop from people who say the stud showed up at a charity event with his beau in tow. Ironically, this event was perfectly in tune with his most famous character. The couple was clearly on the downlow, but it was still a step up for this closeted cutie. Despite being in the fast lane, our boy is still as skittish as an unbroken filly.

When our blind item is desperately seeking privacy, it's time to end yet another column. Come to think of it, we actually had three blind items in this column. All in a day's work at www.BillyMasters.com, the site that never sleeps. Alas, we didn't have room for an "Ask Billy" question. But you can always write to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Jane Fonda reveals she made a risqué exercise video with Richard Simmons! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Queer Prom marks 10th anniversary

On May 15, The National Museum of Mexican Art hosted "Queer Prom 2015," a celebratory 10th-anniversary event aimed at LGBTQ youth of color. The event featured a buffet dinner, live performances, a tabling section for organizations that serve and support LGBTQ youth, onsite HIV testing and a dance party. The dry event played host to LGBTQ youth who are currently in middle school, high school and college.

Queer Prom began a decade ago as an offshoot of Radio Arte, a public-radio station presented by the museum to fill the need for a safe space for LGBTQ youth. In 2005, it was common for LGBTQ youth to be denied the opportunity to enjoy prom night with their same sex partners and as a result the event was started.

Tania Unzueta, one of the founders of the original prom, attended this year, saying, "There were few options for LGBTQ youth, particularly in the Latino community at that time. Things have changed considerably since then, but there will always be a need for safe spaces."

Among the groups who had tables at the event were Bitch to Quit, QYes, and Fed Up Fest.

Photos and text by Vern Hester



Emmanuel Garcia.



Queer Prom 2015 attendees.

Photos by Vern Hester



Venus Carangi performing at the queer prom.



Brandy Hatcher (L) and Sarah Rogers.

Photo by Ross Forman

Force wins 74-8 over Kansas City

The Chicago Force improved its record to 5-0 on May 16 with a dominant 74-8 win over the Kansas City Titans at Lane Stadium.

Kelsey Casey led the Force with 4 touchdowns, while Brandy Hatcher had 109 yards rushing, 39 yards receiving and one touchdown—and was named the Game Day Offensive MVP. Sarah Rogers (six tackles, four sacks) earned Game Day Defensive MVP honors. Both awards are sponsored by Spin Nightclub and DLG Management.

About 30 members of the Chicago Spirit Brigade performed a lengthy halftime performance. The Force will host defending na-

tional champion Boston May 30 at Evanston Township High School.

—Ross Forman

Griner, Johnson under seven-game suspension

The WNBA has suspended All-Stars and married couple Brittney Griner and Glory Johnson for seven games each after their domestic violence arrests in April.

The two were arrested on suspicion of assault after a fight in the home they recently bought. They were married recently in Phoenix.

WNBA President Laurel J. Richie said in a statement issued May 15, "The WNBA takes all acts of violence extremely seriously. It is our strong belief that violence has absolutely no place in society, in sports or in this league.

"As president, it is my responsibility to protect the league and uphold its values. Our athletes represent the WNBA, and they all must abide by the league's standards of conduct. In this case, Brittney and Glory failed to do so, and that is unacceptable."

Richie also said that Griner pled guilty April 28 in Goodyear City Court to misdemeanor disorderly conduct; Griner has to complete a 26-week course and, upon doing so, the disorder-conduct charge will be dismissed. Johnson's case (transferred to county court) is pending.



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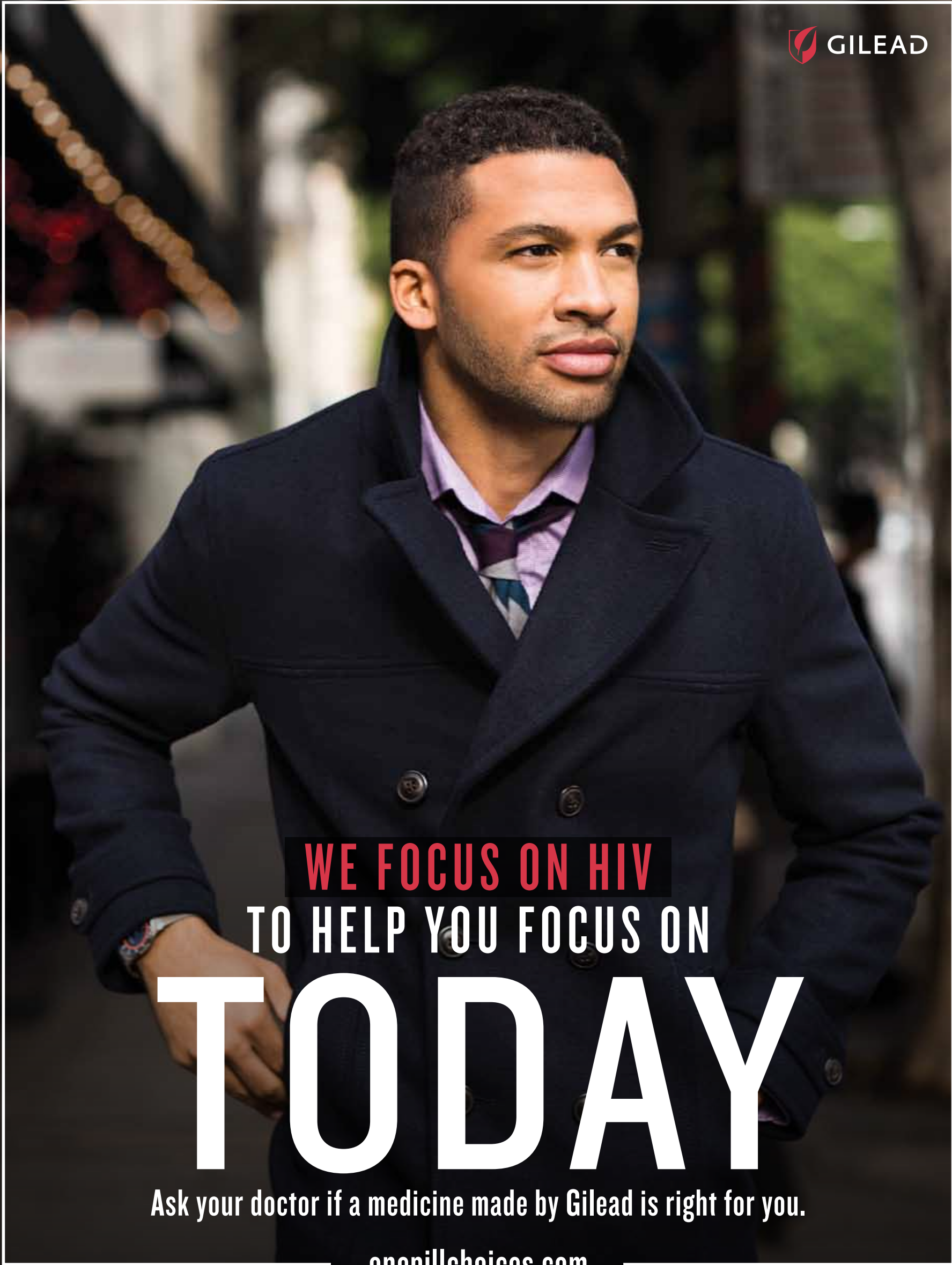
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