

'LESBIAN NUNS' CO-EDITOR DIES

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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

MAY 30, 2012
VOL 27, NO. 32

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com



ACLU, Lambda file for marriage in Illinois



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The plaintiffs in the marriage-equality lawsuits include Angelica Lopez and Claudia Mercado (with their two kids) as well as Carlos Briones, Richard Rykhus and their son Ty (right photo). Right photo by Jennifer Schuman; left photo courtesy of Lambda Legal.

BY KATE SOSIN

Representing 25 couples throughout the state, Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois have filed two separate but coordinated lawsuits against Cook County aimed at winning marriage equality in Illinois.

"We cannot justify waiting any longer," said Camilla Taylor, national marriage project director of Lambda Legal.

The May 30 lawsuits, filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County names Cook County Clerk David Orr (Orr has personally been supportive of LGBT rights for years).

In both lawsuits plaintiffs argue that civil unions, which began in Illinois almost a year ago to the day, have failed to deliver on the promise of equality both practically and symbolically.

"When you're a kid, you don't dream about growing up to get a civil union," said Richard Rykhus, a plaintiff in the ACLU suit. "You dream about getting married."

Rykhus and his partner, Carlos Briones, have been together 11 years. The two were married in Canada in

September 2005 and are raising a son together. But in Illinois, their marriage translates to a civil union, a status they struggle to explain to their seven year-old, Ty.

"It's important for him to know that this family is as important as any other," Briones said.

Briones and Rykhus are one of nine couples represented in the ACLU suit, which opens with plaintiff stories.

John Knight, ACLU LGBT project director, argued that civil unions have had a year to work but have failed to grant the same benefits and protections promised to LGBT families as marriage. Many civil-union couples have had to prove their status to hospitals and other agencies with paperwork, a burden not placed on married couples, Knight said.

"There's just no other way to meet the constitutional requirements," he said.

An additional 16 couples are represented by Lambda Legal, 15 of whom already have civil unions. The couples all attempted to obtain marriage licenses from the Cook County Clerk but were denied. The lead plaintiffs in that case are Jim Darby and Patrick Bova, longtime activists for LGBT veterans' rights.

The case hinges on the assertion that everyone has a right to marry the person that they love and that denying same-sex couples marriage rights deprives them of equal treatment under the law.

"Civil unions brand these couples as worth less than other families, and children feel that," said Taylor.

Taylor added that for many families, the symbolic significance of having a civil union is not on par with marriage.

The couples say that civil unions also fall short in practical ways.

Humboldt Park couple Angelica Lopez and Claudia Mercado keep documentation of their family in their car at all times, in the event that they cross state lines into Indiana to barbecue with friends. Their glove compartment contains birth certificates for their two children, adoption decrees showing that both of them are legal parents, their civil union certificate and power of attorney documentation for each other.

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Photos on cover (left, from top): Rosemary Keefe photo courtesy of Nancy Manahan; Adam Lambert PR photo; photo from IML by Ross Forman; still of Penelope Cruz in To Rome with Love

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Photo from Manchester Pride



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Photo by Jamie Anne Royce



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Photo from Breaking Glass Pictures

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'Lesbian Nuns' co-editor dies

BY TRACY BAIM

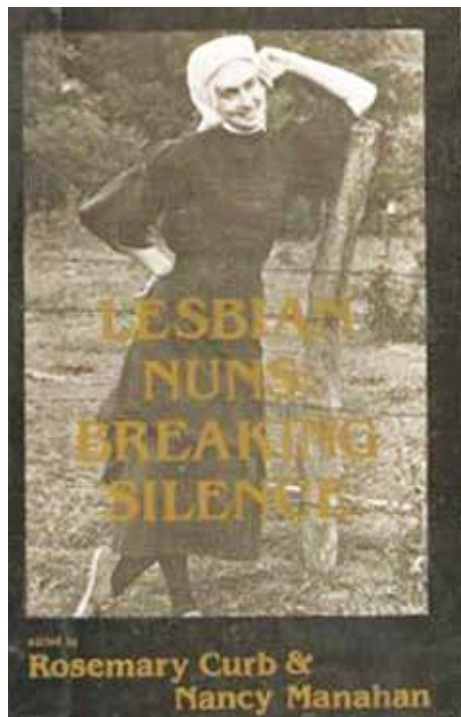
Dr. Rosemary Keefe Curb, 72, co-editor of one of the bestselling lesbian books of all time, *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*, has died of complications from lung surgery. Curb, also known as Rosemary Keefe (her family name), was co-editor with Dr. Nancy Manahan of the 1985 collection of several dozen essays by current and former nuns.

Before retiring and moving to Albuquerque, NM, Keefe Curb was dean at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, and a professor of English and women's studies at the school.

Keefe received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Arkansas in 1977. She had an MA in English from the same school, and a BA in biology from Rosary College, now known as Dominican University, in River Forest, Ill.

The book achieved national attention through media appearances by Keefe Curb and Manahan, and its visibility was raised higher when it was banned in Boston and attacked by representatives of the Catholic Church. The Boston NBC affiliated cancelled an appearance by the co-editors after pressure from the Catholic Church there.

The editors did have a successful appearance on the Phil Donahue show in April 1985, and



went on a national tour for the book, including several stops in Chicago—at the bookstores Women & Children First and Unabridged, and Mountain Moving Coffeehouse.

But it also caused controversy within the lesbian community when its publisher, Naiad Press, sold syndication rights to the *Forum* men's magazine (owned by Penthouse) without the input of the writers of those essays. While Naiad had proper legal rights to do so, many feminists criticized the selling of women's words without their okay. Naiad's owners, Barbara Grier and Donna McBride, defended their efforts, saying it was one way to get the stories out to more women across the country.

Keefe Curb and Manahan criticized the sale of the rights to *Forum*, but it was out of their control. Keefe told *Gay Community News* at the time that she felt "awful" about the *Forum* publication of some of the works.

Manahan, reached from her home in Minneapolis, was emotional about the loss of her colleague. They had stayed friends and were in close touch during their 30-plus years as friends.

"What a smart, passionate, funny, extraordinary social activist she was," Manahan said, "one of the most completely alive, engaged, and



Rosemary Keefe in June 2011. Courtesy of Nancy Manahan

endearing people I've ever known," adding that for three decades they have received letters in response to the book. She said that many lesbians were inspired to come out as a result of reading *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* or seeing the media coverage of the book.

Joanne Passet is doing research on the *Lesbian Nuns* publication phenomenon. As a result of Passet's research, both Manahan and Keefe had spent many hours reflecting on the impact of their book.

"The impact was that for the first time the word 'lesbian' and the concept of lesbianism was discussed openly on TV, very widely, on radio, in newspapers, in the mainstream, and the gay press, here as well as abroad, because it was published in so many countries," Manahan said. "It really was a silence-breaking book, just like the title said."

Naiad went through four printings of the book, and sold the mass distribution and paperback rights to Warner Books in 1986. *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* was translated or reissued in Australia, Brazil, English, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy and Spain. Naiad Press gained visibility, if not large sums of money, from the sale of serial rights to 19 publications, including *Ms.*, *Christopher Street* and *Philadelphia Gay News*, and ABC-TV purchased movie rights (but a film never was made), according to Passet.

"With her immersion in feminist theater, creation of a women's studies program at Rollins College, and active involvement in the National Organization for Women and National Women's Studies Association [NWSA], Curb epitomized the lesbian feminist of the 1970s," Passet said.

"While Curb and Manahan objected to the undercurrent of sex that filled their publisher's promotional copy and dominated a number of the interviews, they nonetheless viewed each interview as an opportunity to educate the public about lesbians," Passet said. "An overnight sensation, their book appeared on the shelves of gay and women's bookstores, but also was a featured display in B. Dalton and Waldenbooks. As sales reached unprecedented numbers for a Naiad Press book, the co-authors jettisoned to near-celebrity status as thousands of readers encountered the book in book racks at drug stores, supermarkets and airport terminals.

"Bookstore signings and presentations at women's music festivals and women's studies conferences kept the book in the public eye, as did the ABC-TV purchase of movie rights and the mass-market paperback release by Warner books

in 1986. Walt Disney Productions even sought permission to use it as a prop in the 1986 film *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. The sale of four stories to *Forum*, a men's magazine owned by Penthouse, Ltd., however, triggered feelings of extreme rage, powerlessness, and grief among lesbian feminists who objected to the thought of a serious work being turned into fuel for prurient readers' sexual fantasies. Ironically, while heated arguments and accusations dominated meetings like *Women in Print* and *NWSA* and filled the pages of lesbian publications, audiences who heard Curb and Manahan speak and the thousands who read the book were captivated, inspired, and touched by its positive message of self-empowerment."

Lesbian Nuns is "the groundbreaking book it is touted to be," wrote reviewer Jorjet Harper in the April 25, 1985, issue of *Chicago's GayLife* newspaper.

"*Lesbian Nuns* was a transgressive, groundbreaking and gleeful publication," said Linda Bubon, co-owner of *Women & Children First* Bookstore in Chicago. "It's hard now to remember what an uproar it caused. Barbara and Donna (from Naiad Press) were beside themselves with all the requests from mainstream magazines and newspapers to interview Rosemary and Nancy. We had them at the bookstore (on Halsted Street, in 1985) on Pride weekend, and as I recall, we were packed. As a former Catholic schoolgirl who 'prayed for a vocation' from second through eighth grade, I found the book absolutely fascinating. I remember Rosemary as brave, vivacious, and funny."

In her introduction for *Lesbian Nuns*, Keefe Curb discussed her own convent experiences, and said she wondered, after she left, just how many women of her generation chose being a nun because they were lesbian and it was a safer choice. She wondered how many became nuns "not only as a response to a call from God but as a refuge from heterosexuality, Catholic marriage and exhausting motherhood."

Keefe and Manahan had previously published their own stories in *The Lesbian Path*. That publication's editor Peg Cruickshank introduced the pair in June 1981, and suggested to Grier that she ask them to edit a book on the topic.

Chicagoans were among those impacted by the *Lesbian Nuns* book. Julie Valloni was partnered for 28 years with Frances Celine Leahy, a nun from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Frances was out to her friends, and the couple both read the *Lesbian Nuns* book. Valloni's mother even purchased it, thinking she would find Frances in it—but she did not appear in the book.


Valloni said that Frances, who died in 1999 at age 85, was happy to be seen at a gay bar or pride parade, but that she also felt most at home in the convent—and as an older nun, her own health and financial security were tied up in the Catholic system.

"At Rosemary's and my 1985 appearance at



Rosemary Keefe (left) and Nancy Manahan on the 20th anniversary of the *Lesbian Nuns* book, October 2005. Courtesy of Manahan


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NATIONAL NEWS



—1,000 protest N.C. anti-gay preacher

—Gay exec Fred Hochberg (left) among Obama appointees

—Gen. Colin Powell backs marriage equality



Women & Children First, several lesbian ex-nuns in attendance connected with each other and began getting together monthly," Manahan said. "In 1997 at a *Women and Children First* reading for my next book *On My Honor: Lesbians Reflect on Their Scouting Experience*, one of the members of that group told me they were still meeting!"

Co-editor Keefe Curb told *The Los Angeles Times*, in a May 1, 1985 article, that the book "opens doors for anyone who's ever felt an outsider, who ever felt they had to pass for mainstream."

Keefe told off our backs magazine in May 1985 that she felt the book received so much media attention because of the "double marginality of lesbians and nuns."

Whatever the reason, the book is still remembered for its groundbreaking effort to "break the silence" on women's sexuality.

Keefe Curb also edited the *Applause Books* title *Amazon All-Stars: Thirteen Lesbian Plays*, with essays and commentary. It was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award in 1997.

Prior to becoming dean and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Superior (she was dean 2000-2003 and professor 2000-2007), Keefe was at Missouri State University (professor of English 1993-1999 and head of the Department of English 1993-1998). At Rollins College, she was an English and women's studies assistant, associate and professor from 1979-1993, and director of women's studies there from 1982-1992.

Keefe is survived by her partner Doris Burkemper, her daughter Lisa DeVore and granddaughter Cheyenne.

See more information and photos online at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Lesbian-Nuns-co-editor-Rosemary-Curb-dies/37855.html>.

Obama campaign reaches out to gay voters

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The Obama campaign said it would be making a determined effort to turn out LGBT Americans in November “regardless of their political affiliation.”

Jamie Citron, national LGBT note director for the Obama for America re-election campaign, made the statement May 23 during a telephone press conference with reporters. Citron introduced outgoing Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese as co-chairman of the LGBT arm of the Obama for America campaign.

Solmonese, too, said the campaign would attempt to convince “every member” of the LGBT community and “Republicans in particular” to support the president’s re-election.

Solmonese said that HRC has and will put a “big focus” on helping members of the LGBT community “understand the distinction” between President Obama and Republican presidential nominee-apparent Mitt Romney.

While there was “some confusion” about Republican presidential nominee John McCain’s positions on gay issues in 2008, said Solmonese, Governor Romney “has very clearly committed” to pushing for a federal constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. President Obama opposes such an amendment and has called for repeal of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which bans federal recognition of same-sex marriages licensed in the states.

The constitutional amendment, said Solmonese, is “the ultimate deal-breaker for us.”

“It’s absolutely the last line in terms of really discriminating against this community,” said



Joe Solmonese. Photo by Rex Wockner

Solmonese. “So it’s incredibly important that every member of our community—including Republicans—understand that distinction.”

In 2010, between 26 percent and 29 percent of LGBT voters supported Republican candidates, according to mainstream exit polls and a Keen News Service examination of heavily gay precinct records. Looking at data going back to 1990, the lowest gay vote for Republicans came in 2008, when only 19 percent of gay voters supported Republican McCain. The lowest gay Republican vote prior to that came in 1990, the first year

the National Election Pool exit poll sought to identify “gay, lesbian, and bisexual” voters. All voters gave only a slight edge to Democrats that year (52 to 48 percent), while gay voters issued a 78 to 22 percent preference for Democrats.

Jimmy LaSalvia, executive director of the gay conservative group GOProud, scoffed at the idea the Obama campaign could win over LGBT Republicans.

“If the left believes that President Obama has the gay vote locked up, they are sadly mistaken,” said LaSalvia, in an email response to reporter. “The truth is that gay people, like all

other Americans, are living in the failed Obama economy.”

Citron predicted a “roller-coaster ride” for the campaign, “particularly in battleground states” such as Florida. He said the LGBT Obama campaign would be doing numerous events at gay pride events around the country next month. There is a “San Francisco East Bay Area LGBT family and friends” event planned for June 17. To find events in a particular area, visit LGBT.barackobama.com/lgbt/events.

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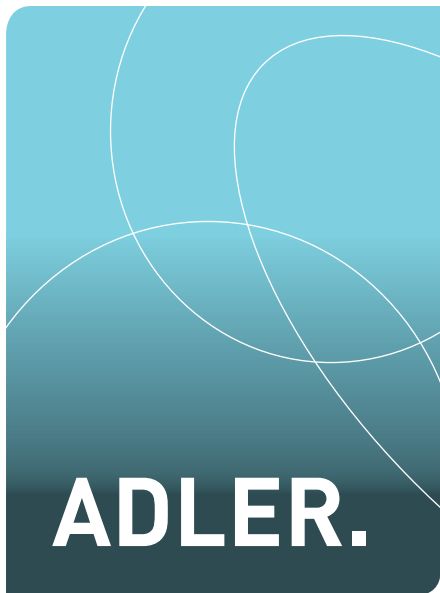


San Diego names street after Harvey Milk

In San Diego, Blaine Avenue was renamed Harvey Milk Street during a May 22 ceremony, SanDiego6.com reported. City officials believe the street is the first in the country to honor the late gay-rights activist, who would’ve turned 82 that day.

Milk was one of the first openly gay politicians to hold public office when elected to the board of supervisors in San Francisco in 1977. Former Supervisor Dan White fatally shot Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone the following year.

Photo by Rex Wockner



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Cynical website tracks homophobic outings

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

"The lady doth protest too much"—at least that seems to be the case with many outspoken anti-gay rights politicians. A new website, GayHomophobe.com, takes aim at these very people in positions of power who spout an anti-gay agenda only to be outed later. It also tracks how many days it's been in between each outing and provides a link to information on the circumstances of the allegations.

The website, which launched last September, started as a humorous way to make a statement about what Sai [no last name] told Windy City Times he keeps seeing play out in the national media, people in positions of power who are voraciously touting anti-gay platforms only to be living closeted gay lives themselves.

He started the site a few days after the outing of Puerto Rican Sen. Roberto Arango. Arango denied posting semi-nude photos of himself on the gay app Grindr, but quickly resigned from his position.

"Of course I do have very serious perspectives on gay rights and so forth. ... That's part of the conversation that is already going on in public, and this is a humorous take on it," said Sai. "It's meant to be very funny."

Sai, who is queer and a former Chicago resident, does not consider himself to be an activist, but he does believe that GayHomophobe.com can add something to the conversation



Sai. Photo by Julia Wolf

through its humorous perspective. He compares the humor of the site and what it is trying to express to that of Ruben Bolling's 2007 "Tom the Dancing Bug" comic announcing the new gay stereotype.

Although the site is meant to make people laugh, Sai said he does hope that it will contribute to the larger picture and make it more difficult for people in a position of power to have a platform of homophobia because it will help add to the increased political and cultural pressure on them.

GayHomophobe.com is not just a site for shaming politicians and others in positions of power who turn out to be gay. Sai uses a star system to indicate a person's actions following his outing. Several people included on the website have actually ended up coming out and speaking in favor of gay rights.

Sai gave the example of John Smid, former leader of ex-gay organization Love in Action; Ken Mehlman, who served as campaign manager

for George W. Bush's re-election campaign; and former California state Sen. Roy Ashburn, all of whom are listed on the website with rainbow-colored stars next to their entry to indicate that they have since completely flipped on the issue of gay rights and become LGBT-rights advocates.

"It's important to show that people can change. That getting outted is not the horrific end that many of these people perceive and you can be a conservative, like Roy Ashburn is, he's still a Republican, you can be a conservative and you can be out, be who you are, and not have to be a closet case."

Still, for all the listings of individuals who have come out proudly and changed their stance on gay rights, there are many more who haven't.

There are also several people who are not on the list that people might expect to see there. Sai points to his criteria. First, the person has to be in some position of power, politically or socially. Second, they have to be using that power to promote or support an anti-gay agenda. And, third, they have to turn out to be closeted. All three criteria have to be met to be included on the list.

As he'd hoped, the site is gaining a nice momentum online, being mentioned often on Twitter as well as garnering almost 400,000 unique page visits and 600,000 page hits. It has also added two theme songs: Katie Goodman's "Probably Gay" and Jonathan Mann's "Gay Homophobe."

Sai is not profiting from the website. Instead, he said that 100 percent of the net proceeds from advertising are donated to Truth Wins Out, "an organization fighting the ex-gay bullshit espoused by so many homophobic closet cases in power." The last donation totaled \$1,520 and he is expecting the next donation to be nearly \$400.

'Be-All' transgender conference thru June 2

The transgender conference known as Be-All will take place May 29-June 2 at the Downers Grove Double Tree Hotel and Conference Center.

Among the scheduled activities are a reception/dinner for new attendees; a golf outing; a hospitality suite; and a 30th-anniversary gala with live bands and fireworks.

There will also be seminars, such as "Veterans' Benefits Basics," "Changing male voice to female voice: Feminization Laryngoscopy" and "Finding Your Inner Beauty," among others.

See www.be-all.org.

Pantoja tribute June 1

A tribute to Dr. Antonia Pantoja will take place Friday, June 1, at the Institute for Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, 3015 W. Division St., 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Pantoja was an educator and social-justice advocate who founded Aspira, "the only national Hispanic organization dedicated exclusively to developing the educational and leadership capacity of Hispanic youth," according to its website. In 1996, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2002, she came out as lesbian in her autobiography. She passed away that same year.

The Legacy Walk will recognize Pantoja and her contributions Oct. 11.

Tickets to the June 1 event are \$10-\$20; see http://legacyprojectchicago.org/Antonia_Pantoja_Tribute_Tickets.html.



LGBT military, veterans, band march in Memorial Day parade

The Chicago chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights (gay veterans) and the Lakeside Freedom Band were joined by two members of The Gay, Lesbian and Supporting Sailors (GLASS) of Great Lakes Naval Base as they marched in Chicago's Memorial Day Parade May 26.

The veterans also paid their respects at the grave of Allen Schindler May 27. Schindler, a Chicago-area native, was murdered in 1992 by his own shipmates because he was gay. Chicago's gay veterans conduct a ceremony there twice a year. Congressman Mike Quigley, fourth from right in second photo, joined the gay veterans for the parade. Photos by Jean Albright; more online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

FILE from cover

Even still, they concede that having a civil union is not a guarantee that their relationship will be recognized.

"It's really confusing for a lot of people," said Mercado. "What is a union?"

Because their second child was born after their civil union, both Mercado and Lopez are legally his parents in Illinois. However, Mercado completed a second-parent adoption for him to ensure she would be a recognized parent in other states. When they went to pick up the birth certificate, only Lopez, the birth mother, was allowed to pick up the certificate.

"Here I am standing in line, watching my partner sit by the person who instructed us that only one of us has to go," said Lopez.

Marriage equality activists have long argued that civil unions set up a "separate but equal" dynamic, in which same-sex couples are denied marriage simply for the sake of setting them apart from heterosexual couples.

Since civil unions went into effect last June, Windy City Times has documented several instances where government entities, hospitals, organizations and employers either failed or struggled to react accordingly to the new unions. The Illinois Department of Revenue initially announced that same-sex spouses would not be able to file joint state tax returns, but later reversed that decision amid protest from LGBT advocates.

Openly gay state representatives introduced a marriage-equality bill to the General Assem-

bly earlier this year, but that measure failed to move.

Both the ACLU and Lambda Legal say that same-sex couples cannot wait any longer.

"We've always said that civil unions were not the end that we were fighting for," said Knight. "We've been talking about this for a long time, but we thought it was important to give civil unions a chance to work."

According to Taylor, the Lambda suit is more than a decade in the making.

Lambda has sued in other states for marriage equality in recent years including in Iowa, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Hawaii, California and Washington.

The Illinois suits seek both marriage certificates for the plaintiff couples as well as a statewide ruling that would allow couples to marry.

While the suits are directed at the Cook County Clerk, their success would presumably set a precedent for the entire state, Taylor said.

The Cook County clerk's office has been the target of an untold number of marriage equality protests over the years, but current Clerk David Orr has also been a longtime supporter of LGBT rights. In an interview last year with Windy City Times, Orr said he had a very difficult time not issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples who asked, sometimes to the point where he wanted to protest with them.

"It was a drag," he said. "And the only thing that really keeps you going is the hope that things will get better."

Gay ex-Chicagoan gets White House post

BY ROSS FORMAN

Miguel A. Ayala—a Whitney Young High School alum who launched the first LGBT student organization in a Chicago public high school and is a member of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame—has been named the deputy director of communications at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Ayala, 33, is now living in Washington D.C. "I am very excited to be serving in President

Obama's administration, and look forward to being able to help spread the word about the great things being done to help protect our environment," said Ayala, who noted that his job goals are to "harness the power of social media and traditional press to make CEQ a name people recognize."

Ayala said he learned of the job online and applied. He admitted that "it also helped to have the support of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Victory Fund's Appointments Project and several of my previous supervisors."

The CEQ post "is an opportunity to continue serving my country and be a part of the great work President Obama is doing, and helping make sure the average American knows about what that work means to them."

Ayala was the co-chair and on the board at large of the Gay, Lesbian and Allies Senate Staff (GLASS) Caucus. "By serving as a resource to LGBT staffers in the U.S. Senate, we were able to create a community for staff, and be helpful to interns and others looking to work in the Senate, while also engaging the Senate community at large on issues affecting our community," he said.

The chair of the CEQ, Nancy



Miguel A. Ayala. Photo by Denis Largeron

Sutley, is one of the highest ranking lesbians in the president's administration.

"Chairwoman Nancy Sutley has dedicated her life to improving and protecting our environment, and has been a leader in the LGBT community," Ayala said. "I look forward to the opportunity to learn from her and to work with her

on achieving the president's goals.

"At some point, I'd like to return to Chicago and find a way to contribute to the city I love so much. Time will tell when and how that contribution will be, because for now, I'm focused on this new role and enjoying my time in D.C."



Evan Wolfson. Photo by David Shankbone

Cheng, married in New York City. They will be riding in a convertible near the front of the parade.

Also, Mayor Rahm Emanuel officially proclaimed June Pride Month. In doing so, he urged "all Chicagoans to recognize the many contributions the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities have made to our city."

Affinity has new board president

Affinity Community Services (Affinity) has a new leader at the helm, as Kelly Saulsberry became the group's third board president at the organization's May 22 board meeting, according to its website.

Saulsberry assumed office from Lisa Marie Pickens, co-founder of Affinity and its board president for the last five years. Pickens will remain on the board of directors and lead The Affinity Archives Project.

Affinity's founding board president, Christina Smith, stepped down in 2007 after nearly 10 years of service.

Affinity is a social-justice organization that works with and on behalf of Black LGBTQ communities, queer youth and allies to identify emergent needs, create safe spaces, develop leaders and bridge communities through collective analysis and action for social justice, freedom and human rights. For more info, visit www.Affinity95.org.

Pride Parade marshal named

Evan Wolfson, founder and president of the marriage-equality group Freedom to Marry, will be the grand marshal of Chicago's Pride Parade that will take place Sunday, June 24.

Before founding Freedom to Marry, Wolfson served as marriage project director for Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund; was co-counsel in the Hawaii marriage case that launched the ongoing global movement for the freedom to marry; and participated in numerous gay rights and HIV/AIDS cases.

After New York state legalized same-sex marriage last year, Wolfson and his partner,

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The panel at Queer Is Community. Photo by Kate Sosin

Queer activists talk racism, transphobia at Center event

BY KATE SOSIN

More than 100 people packed into the Center on Halsted's Hoover-Leppen Theatre May 27 to talk about racism, transphobia and a host of other "isms" that some say are plaguing Chicago's LG-BTQ communities.

"Queer is Community," an evening of conversations and performances, was held as a response to "When in Boystown," a controversial blog that launched earlier this spring. Organizers claim that the blog's play on Lakeview stereotypes is racist, transphobic and body-negative.

The event—which included a speak-out, performances and a panel discussion—also appeared to be fueled by the controversies surrounding crime and race that rocked the neighborhood last summer.

"This neighborhood has a history of excluding people and trying to eject people from the neighborhood," said ellie navidson [sic], an organizer of the event.

Boystown became embroiled in controversy last summer when residents launched a Facebook page called "Take Back Boystown." Many said they believed that violent crime in the neighborhood was on the rise, while others accused residents of unfairly scapegoating queer youth of color.

navidson and co-organizer Nico Lang had discussed the controversy when planning "Queer is

Community." The two said they wanted to preempt the summer's controversies by creating a positive event.

The evening started out with an informal speak-out outside the theatre, followed by performances and then a panel discussion with the performers.

navidson presented a piece that explored transphobia within the queer community. Precious Jewel of the Center on Halsted spoke of the need to move beyond conversations about bullying and same-sex marriage. Brian Turner of TaskForce Prevention and Community Services paid tribute to Paige Clay, a transgender woman from Chicago who was recently murdered, and talked about the intersection of transphobia and racism.

Tony Soto of The Qu website discussed the ways that he was a "blissfully ignorant" gay man before he began to think about gender and queer issues. Yasmin Nair of Gender JUST argued against using stories for political purposes and spoke against relying on same-sex marriage to solve widespread lack of access to healthcare. Performer Rebecca Kling presented tongue-in-cheek apology for being transgender. Jackie Guerrero performed a glittery burlesque piece. Jamie Royce, backed by Chicago's Queer Choir, presented a poem on being queer and femme-identified. The evening was emceed by local comedian Adam Guerino. (Disclosure: Both Yasmin

Nair and Jamie Royce are contributing writers for Windy City Times.)

Panelists and audience members tackled everything from a debate about what "queer" means, whether or not there was a "queer community" and what should be done to ensure that media portrayals of queer life are accurate.

Huffington Post writer Zach Stafford spoke of the need to break down "who we are willing to respect and why."

Panelists unraveled the controversy surrounding a recent New York Times obituary, in which transgender performer Lorena Escalera was described as "curvaceous" and in other ways that activists said unnecessarily over-sexualized her life and marginalized her death.

In one tense moment, Soto argued that transgender people should be forgiving of those who make honest mistakes, to which one person yelled, "Yeah, blame the victim!"

Audience members followed up by weighing in on Soto's statement, and the conversation eventually subsided.

However, a great deal of focus was placed on the Center, just two days after queer organization Gender JUST released a statement accusing the Center of not installing "restorative justice" practices for youth.

Center CEO Modesto Valle recently told Windy City Times that the Center used restorative justice practices for people who are caught stealing from Whole Foods, which is attached to the Center.

Valle said that those who do steal from Whole Foods can return to the Center through a restorative justice process of meeting with those involved.

However, Gender JUST organizers have alleged that no such process has been made public. The group launched a petition just days before the event calling on the Center to implement restorative justice. At least 65 people had signed it as of May 28.

Center representatives could not be reached for comment over the holiday weekend.

In the end, the event seemed to highlight a fissure between some in Chicago's gay and lesbian scenes and a mostly younger generation of self-identified "queer" people. (Queer, a term that has been reclaimed in recent years, is often used both as alternative umbrella term for "LGBT" identities and as a political identity set apart from a more mainstream gay rights movement.)

Donations at the event were collected for The Crib, a low-threshold shelter in Lakeview for LG-BTQ youth.

Guerino said that "Queer is Community" will continue to exist as a Facebook page, and that organizers may hold future meetings and events. The Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/qiscommunity.

Groups respond to legislative moves on Medicaid, HIV

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) and Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus (CB-GMC) praised the Illinois General Assembly's Black Caucus for opposing Medicaid- and HIV-funding cuts, according to a press release.

Gov. Pat Quinn has proposed a cut of \$2.7 billion from the state's Medicaid system and an additional 50-percent cut to community-based HIV prevention, housing, corrections, minority health-promotion and harm-reduction programs.

"The state's fiscal crisis must be resolved without devastating cuts to Medicaid, which help hundreds of thousands of families in Illinois every day, including many African-Americans with disabilities, seniors and children," said Ramon Gardenhire, AFC's director of government relations.

"It's time that the Illinois General Assembly follow the lead of the Black Caucus in finding a balanced approach to fit Illinois' budget issues, but do it in way that grows the economy, creates jobs and protects Medicaid."

"Experts in infectious disease tell us that regular HIV testing, linkage and retention to care and adherence to medications among HIV-positive people are all elements needed to stop the epidemic," said CBGMC Chair Keith Green. "When we consider other social determinants of health that exacerbate the epidemic, such as unemployment, stigma, poverty, and poor access to care, it is vital that funding levels are sustained for these essential services, which will inevitably lower community viral loads and reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus to others."

In a separate release, Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) lauded the General Assembly "for tackling the daunting task of Medicaid budget reform," acknowledging the Save Medicaid Access and Resource Together (SMART) Act (Senate Bill 2840). "Failure to act and do nothing to salvage Illinois' Medicaid program would have crippled our State's healthcare system," said HBHC Public Policy Director Clint W. Sabin.

'Burlesque Brunch' to benefit Lambda

On Sunday, June 3, TheQu.co is kicking off Pride Month with "The Ultimate Burlesque Brunch: A Benefit for Lambda Legal." The event will take place at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St., 12-3 p.m.

Founded in 2011, TheQu.co is an LGBT news and entertainment website. Among those performing at the brunch are Cruel Valentine, Tito Bonito and Holly Deck, among others. Xandra Fairlawn is hosting.

The L Stop is co-sponsoring the event.

Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door; passes are available at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/246851 or Carbon Hair Salon, 3009 N. Halsted St.

Hirshman's 'Victory' signing May 31

Linda Hirshman will be signing copies of her most recent book, Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution, Thursday, May 31, at 200 S. Michigan Ave., 22nd floor.

A cash-bar reception will take place at 5:30 p.m.; dinner will be at 6:30 p.m.

Dinner is \$30; RSVP with The Cliff Dwellers at 312-922-8080.

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Anti-bullying bill in jeopardy over LGBT support

BY KATE SOSIN

A bill aimed at strengthening anti-bullying protections in Illinois has been postponed after Senate conservatives voted down the measure, a move believed to be a reaction from LGBT support.

Bill HB 5290, introduced by lesbian Rep. Kelly Cassidy, would bolster the state's anti-bullying code by creating model policies for schools in 2013.

The bill is not LGBT-specific. Rather, it adds to the current code, which already contains LGBT protections along with several other identity categories. The amendment would mandate education, emotional support, counseling and other community-based solutions intended to address root causes of bullying.

Cassidy said she believes the bill was voted down because some conservatives equated the

ed groups when they voted against the measure.

Cassidy said that conservatives who had negotiated amendments to the bill went back on their word when they voted against it.

"They have attempted at every step of the way to take out protections for gay kids," she said.

However, supporters say the bill is not dead yet.

State Sen. Heather Steans postponed a vote, saving the legislation from defeat. The bill is headed back to the General Assembly before it returns to the Senate.

Cassidy believes the bill is still likely to pass by the end of the week. It was rejected by just one vote, and two supportive senators were not present for the vote, said Cassidy.

"But it's a weird time of year," she said. "Anything can happen."



State Rep. Kelly Cassidy.

bill with her own sexual orientation.

"It's not a gay bill," Cassidy said. "The bigger message is just how far the anti-gay forces will go."

Leading up to the vote, the Illinois Family Institute, an anti-gay organization, rallied against the bill, citing support from LGBT groups and Cassidy.

"All the various organizations committed to using public schools to normalize homosexuality are trying to make the case that opposition to their anti-bullying laws, policies, and programs constitutes support for bullying, and our lawmakers are falling for it," the institute wrote on its website.

The organization specifically names support from Equality Illinois, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, which works with LGBT youth, as proof that the bill is the work of LGBT activists.

LGBT groups have voiced support for the bill in the recent weeks.

But Sarah Schriber, policy director for the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, pointed out that the bill had widespread support, including the backing of Prevent School Violence Illinois, a coalition of more than 50 groups that supported the passage of anti-bully legislation in 2010.

"On the one hand, I can't imagine why [it was voted down]," said Schriber. "It's such a straightforward administrative bill."

Schriber contended that opponents singled out LGBT protections from a long list of protect-

PFLAG 'Heartland' event June 6

On Wed., June 6, the 2nd annual "PFLAG National Celebrates the Heartland" will be held at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

The event will be 6-8:30 p.m., with honors beginning at 7 p.m. Center on Halsted CEO Modesto "Tico" Valle and About Face Theatre will be the honorees.

Roosevelt University President Charles Middleton and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning President/CEO Pamela Tate are event co-chairs.

Tickets are \$75-\$200 each; visit www.pflag.org.

Library Pride events June 13, 20

The Chicago Public Library (CPL) continues its "Celebrating Diversity" series in June with the observance of Pride Month.

As part of this year's observance, CPL will present two author programs on selective LGBT topics at the Harold Washington Library

Center, 400 S. State St.

On Wed., June 13, Chicago author Ann Laughlin will read from and sign her latest novel, *Runaway*, in the video theater (lower level) at 6 p.m.

On Wed., June 20, Sukie de la Croix will discuss and sign his new book, *Chicago Whispers: A History of LGBT Chicago Before Stonewall*, in the Cindy Pritzker Auditorium at 6 p.m.

Visit www.chicagopubliclibrary.org or call 312-747-4050.

DIFFA gala June 9

DIFFA (The Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS)/Chicago is holding its Believe 2012 GardenGala Saturday, June 9, 6:30 p.m.-2 a.m., at the Marriott Downtown Chicago, 541 N. Rush St.

GardenGala will feature an organic farm-to-table dining experience and live auction bookended by a cocktail reception and the dancing/desserts segment.

Tickets are \$500 each; see www.DIFFAChicago.org.

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Cassidy, Steans host cyberbullying forum

BY JAMIE ANNE ROYCE

State Sen. Heather Steans and lesbian state Rep. Kelly Cassidy collaborated on a presentation about combatting cyberbullying for parents and community members.

Det. Alan Krok, a member of the Chicago Police Department Special Investigation Unit and of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, led the presentation at Sullivan High School in Rogers Park May 23. He routinely investigates cases of cyberbullying, child porn operations and online sexual predators.

There aren't many laws targeted at cyberbullying, but Krok has charged people with harassment by electronic means. Usually cases escalate



Det. Alan Krok. Photo by Jamie Anne Royce

once threats are involved, and Krok will make arrests if the harassment doesn't stop.

"There are no laws against talking stupid, but there are laws against threats," said Krok. "Be careful. What you post can get you in trouble."

In one case Krok worked on, a boy was being harassed by a peer who made fake Facebook accounts and posted comments calling him gay. His fellow students piled on with additional hurtful comments, with the harassment continuing at school. Finally, the boy called Krok to tell him he couldn't bear the bullying any longer and he was going to kill himself.

"When you're online saying this stuff, you don't see the person on the other end crying," said Krok. "It's the message we give to kids in the first grade. It's the golden rule—'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"

"These are not bad kids at all. Bullying has gone on forever. They're just taking advantage of the technology," said Krok.

To combat cyberbullying, Krok urged parents to familiarize themselves with the technology, what websites their children visit and who they interact with on the internet.

"This is nothing more than honing parenting skills," said Krok. "Communication is paramount. Don't think of the internet as a babysitter."

If someone is experiencing harassment, Krok recommends saving all the messages and contacting law enforcement.

Staff members for the senator and representative discussed anti-bullying legislation and the concerns of parents, urging them to contact their offices if they need anything.

Cassidy introduced House Bill 5290 to bolster the state's anti-bullying code by creating model policies for schools in 2013. The House approved the measure, but it failed in the Senate May 22.

The bill is an amendment to current anti-bullying legislation that would mandate education, emotional support, counseling and other community-based solutions intended to address root causes of bullying.

"The bill was raised in the Senate as 'part of the homosexual agenda.' The things people said on the Senate floor were disgusting," said Matt Muir, district office director for Kelly Cassidy. "But prospects look good. We were only down by one vote."

However, the anti-bullying bill is not dead; it has just been postponed. The Senate could vote on it again this week before the legislative session ends, according to Muir. It could also be voted on again during the veto session near the end of the term, when the legislature meets to

consider overriding vetoes by the governor.

"The bill is just one vote shy of the required majority, and it is likely Sen. Steans will try again before the session ends in the next week," according to a statement passed out at the event.

"Obviously, cyberbullying is becoming a pretty big issue with the rise of Facebook and other sites," said Muir. "This is something really important to Kelly and Heather, and we'll keep pushing on it."

Obama campaign holds Harvey Milk Day party in Chicago

BY KATE SOSIN

With excitement still buzzing over President Obama's recent support for marriage equality, an estimated 40 LGBT Chicagoans chose to spend Harvey Milk Day with his Chicago campaign staff.

Team Obama and openly gay Ald. James Cappleman held a Harvey Milk birthday party May 22 at the Holiday Club in Uptown, with the focus on encouraging LGBT Chicagoans to volunteer for the campaign.

"This campaign is about continuing the change that Barack Obama started," said Nellie Sires, Obama campaign LGBT outreach coordinator for Chicago, in a volunteer pitch.

Cappleman echoed the need for continued change in the country, and also encouraged attendees to get out the vote.

"We're going to really have to put feet to the ground," he said.

LGBT rights hero Harvey Milk was briefly honored on the anniversary of his birth, but the main focus was on Obama's re-election bid.

Attendees were shown a documentary-style campaign commercial that touted Obama's approaches to the economic crisis, healthcare reform, the war in Iraq, the killing of Osama bin Laden and the end of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," among other things.

Still, much of the talk among partygoers centered on Obama's recent announcement that he supports marriage equality.

Andrea Crain said that she only put weight

behind Obama's campaign after he came out for same-sex marriage.

"I felt it was a deeply moral thing for him to do," Crain said.

Crain used to reject campaign donation appeals, even though she planned to vote for Obama come November. The moment she saw the president supported same-sex marriage, she went online and donated to his campaign.

Brandon Fox planned to back Obama regardless, he said.

"The marriage announcement was surprising, but he had my support 100 percent," Fox said.

Fox said he was more interested in the president's pro-LGBT policies than he was in his words.

Still, for some like Cunyon Gordon, Obama's marriage support may have been too little too late. Gordon questioned why LGBT people forgave the president for holding out on the marriage issue.

"We just celebrate as if he came roaring in a champion of our cause, but he didn't come roaring in," she said.

Gordon said the president has been too conciliatory with conservatives, something overlooked by progressive people because he seen as better than Republican candidates.

Gordon did not realize she was coming to an Obama event, she said. She thought she was coming out to celebrate Harvey Milk's birthday.



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Alliance highlights LGBT issues with online video

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance (ISSA) youth committee released a video, "Dear 40-year-old me," last month through an in-kind grant from EPIC (Engaging Philanthropy, Inspiring Creatives; <http://iamepic.org/>).

With the video, ISSA's youth committee hopes to inspire more involvement by young people and adults to make schools and communities safer places for all students, especially LGBT youth.

Since April 19—when the video went live on ISSA's YouTube channel—it's been viewed by about 44,000 people.

"We were very surprised and honored at the video's popularity since we are a tiny organization," said Shannon Sullivan, executive director of ISSA. "The young people feel that way too and they are honored that people would take the time and respond the way that they did. Huffington Post picked it up and from there it's been on blogs, various newspapers and other websites like Buzz Feed, SheWired, Devour, Chicagoist. We are getting calls from reporters across the country and it's something we never anticipated."

"Youth committee members are basically the

up with the "dear 40-year-old me" concept (reminding their adult selves about the work they did as teenagers to make things better for the LGBT community), a flip on the "dear 16-year-old me" films that have already been released by other individuals and organizations.

A number of students were involved in the project both in the city of Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. ISSA didn't choose the students who took part in the video, they all volunteered. The video was shot during ISSA's youth summit, which was recently held at Evanston Township High School.

"It's so inspirational to have people come up to me to say that they saw the video," said Grace Gonias of Lyons Township High School. "It's incredible that it got so much attention and I hope that other organizations can use it

to raise awareness about LGBTQ high school student's experience."

"I'm glad that our video and personal stories will inspire youth not only in Illinois but all across the web. I'm glad I got to take part in this. It means that now ISSA is helping young people both directly and indirectly with this video," said Crystal Ramirez of Lincoln Park High School.

Abe Akande of Lyons Township High School said, "The video is more than I expected. It got my point across and it made people see who we really are. It humanized the LGBT youth community and made people see our bare hearts, and it hit close to home for a lot of people."

Sullivan was in attendance during the filming and said she wasn't surprised by what the students said. However, she was moved her to tears hearing how much they are impacted by their present situations, including unsupportive families and/or schools. Although some students come from unsupportive environments, Sullivan noted that they still have strong and powerful visions for their present situation and the future.

As for future outreach Sullivan said, "I really encourage LGBT and allied adults to be active on youth issues within the schools or with homelessness or the child welfare system. There are a

lot of things we aren't involved in that we can be more active in like running as a community member for local school council in Chicago or running as a community member for a seat on your local suburban school board."

ISSA provides professional development for teachers, assistance in creating gay-straight alliances (currently there are 140 high schools GSA's and one middle school GSA in Illinois) and support for teachers in places where LGBT-inclusive curriculum is not accepted.

See www.illinoisafeschools.org for more information. To view the video, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvuIVfzGtww.

'Pride and Joy' at Circuit June 18

The Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame will present its annual Pride and Joy Reception Monday, June 18, 6-10 p.m., at Circuit Night Club, 3641 N. Halsted St.

Tickets are \$20. They're available from board members of Friends of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame, from current Hall of Fame inductees and at the door at Circuit.



Shannon Sullivan. Photo from Sullivan

leaders of all of our work at the alliance," Sullivan added. "They meet quite often with staff, other volunteers and ISSA board members to help guide our decision making process because they are the ones who are most impacted by the work that we do."

The goal of this project, Sullivan explained, was to assist ISSA with its messaging surrounding the issues that they work on and how that impacts students. ISSA reached out to EPIC, a Chicago-based group. According to its website, the organization "pairs hand-picked volunteers from the advertising and design industries with Chicago-based nonprofit clients dedicated to education, children and families."

EPIC put together a team and the team decided that ISSA needed to produce a short film featuring young people. The EPIC team and ISSA members, including the youth committee, came

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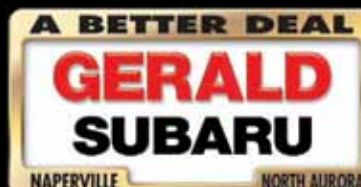
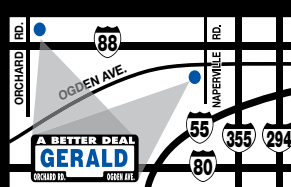
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Organizers start new chapter with Black LGBT Pride event

BY JASON CARSON WILSON

All of the rainbow's colors weren't always welcome at the Pride Parade.

Montrose Rocks creative director Anthony Galloway said that exclusion inspired the Windy City's African-American LGBT community's event.

Galloway said people of color initially gathered at Belmont Harbor in the 1970s—until the event's growth led them to Montrose Harbor. They'll gather again right after the 2012 Gay Pride Parade June 24. Montrose Rocks is literally a party with more than one purpose.

The event, Galloway said, is credited as the nation's largest one-day HIV-testing site, responding to then-President Bill Clinton's 1997 call. With that said, it's now focusing on overall women's health as well.

"We want to be inclusive of the entire LGBT community," Galloway said.

In addition to breast and cervical cancer, the event also offers resources and information about domestic violence. However, according to Galloway, Montrose Rocks provides more than health advice and testing.

"It brings a sense of community," he said. "It's essential that an event like this occurs."

Research apparently reveals LGBT people—with a community of supporters—have better health outcomes. Also, Lakeview isn't the only neighborhood where LGBT Chicagoans live.

"We know that our community is spread out all over Chicago," Galloway said.

While Montrose Rocks is a well-known HIV-testing venue, entertainment is a major draw as well. Since organizers are still planning, Galloway couldn't reveal any anticipated acts. However, neo-soul artist Kenchris and a complete drag show have been among past attractions.

"We're planning a spectacular event," Galloway said. "We'll pulling people from [all over] the community."

Montrose Rocks will also feature U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis. So, music—and messages—will be prominent. That suits event co-founder and Rocks Coordinating Committee president emeritus Michael O'Connor just fine.

"We wanted more than a party," O'Connor said about the efforts of him, Marc Loveless and Lloyd Kelly to launch the Montrose Rocks event, several years after the original Belmont Rocks celebration had started.

"It's the largest [organized] African-American presence on the lakefront," he said.

It became the first group with a legal right to gather.

"We decided we were going to be proactive,"



Anthony Galloway. Photo by Darren Calhoun

O'Connor said. "We had a legal right to get the permit and we used that permit."

That permit allowed Montrose Rocks to showcase entertainment, a vital health service, a platform to policymakers as well as LGBT constituent access to those power players.

In addition to Davis, U.S. Reps. Bobby Rush and Jesse Jackson Jr. as well as late former Cook County Board President John Stroger, Jr. and state Rep. Constance Howard have headlined the event. O'Connor is a former staffer for Howard.

Montrose Rocks, he said, honors the African-American lawmakers, advocates such as The Civil Rights Agenda's Rick Garcia and the unsung heroes who were at New York's Stonewall Inn—birthplace of the modern LGBT civil-rights movement.

"We've honored anyone who's successfully achieved what we consider community service," O'Connor said.

O'Connor said the Rocks Coordinating Committee is the only active organization to honor African-American policymakers as well as allies publicly. He stressed why he and fellow Rocks

Coordinating Committee founders had such a civic-minded focus.

"We understood the importance—unlike the apolitical [individuals] who fought us—of visibility of public policy decision-makers," he said. "That visibility translates into helping public policy."

Before the Rocks Coordinating Committee was created in 1996, house music producer Frankie Knuckles played out of the back of his van at Belmont Rocks.

"As far as I can remember, African Americans have always gathered separately from the parade," O'Connor said. "There was a time we were not effectively reached out to."

Frankly, he said, Belmont Rocks was a direct response to the "inability of promoters to adequately and legally have a party on the lakefront." O'Connor said "the Chicago Police ran us off the lakefront" in the 1980s.

"They said we were not a part of the pride events," he said.

Now, thanks to Montrose Rocks, both women and people of color have become more involved in pride events. Early in the morning, O'Connor said, the event is more family-oriented. By afternoon, younger gay men make their grand entrance after the parade.

"We make sure there's a public awareness about HIV/AIDS, because [some] organizations clearly weren't doing their job," O'Connor said. "We have service providers who normally do this work."

Montrose Rocks had ended festivities at 7 p.m.—until violence prompted city pushback. Violence led to Chicago Police Department's de-

mand for a 5 p.m. closure, according to a previous Windy City Times story.

Rocks Coordinating Committee president Ariq Cabbler didn't dispute the violence claim. However, Cabbler stressed the effects of an earlier closing time.

"The 3 o'clock-to-6 o'clock window is critical," Cabbler told Windy City Times, referring to the most popular HIV-testing hours. "If we have to close at 5, that means we have to shut down by 4:30," he added. "The people attending this event will bear the brunt of it."

The city and organizers disagree that the event was being closed early. Then-City of Chicago LGBT liaison Bill Greaves said the city only asked that the public address system be shut off at 5 p.m. Ironically, the PA system is Montrose Rocks' biggest draw—and problem, according to Greaves.

"We're not saying that it's these people who come here that are causing the violence," he said. "It's not even the people who come here after the parade. It's another element that is drawn here after 5 o'clock [by the entertainment] that is causing the problem."

Galloway said the Rocks Coordinating Committee has been working with Chicago Police Department District 19, Chicago Park District and 46th Ald. James Cappleman's office to resolve the closing time issue. He said they were close to a "tentative" compromise on a 7 p.m. closing time.

Tressa Feher, Cappleman's chief of staff, said things are on the right track.

"Everything is moving forward with the event," Feher said. "It will stay the same."

TJ Williams: Mobilizing Black churches for LGBT equality

BY KATE SOSIN

For TJ Williams, being Black, gay and heavily involved in the church is not a contradiction or an identity of great complexity.

Homophobes in the Black church, he said, "have forsaken the legacy of the Black Church" as a pillar of justice and social change.

Williams is a student, a gay man and an organizer on a mission to amplify the voices of Black gay preachers who support LGBT equality, of which there are many, he said.

"I want folks in the African-American community inspired to understand that LGBT rights are civil rights," Williams said.

At a time when some have equated Black churches with homophobia, especially in the wake of President Obama's recent support of marriage equality, Williams is fighting to portray a different image of the Black and faithful.

Williams is a Master of Divinity student at New York Theological Seminary. He is also a member of the Riverside Church in New York City, a church that has been open and affirming towards LGBT people since 1985. Williams married his partner, Brad Williams Hauger, there last year.

Williams grew up in Youngstown, Ohio. His mother was an evangelist who equated LGBT rights with her own struggles as a woman early on.

"She saw this connection between sexism and misogyny and homophobia [in the church]," Williams said.

Williams' upbringing and his own sense of justice led him to seek out a church that embraced LGBT people and continued to push for fairness. That church, for him, was Riverside.

Riverside has a legacy of social justice. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his "Beyond Vietnam" speech there in 1967. Today, the church bills itself as open and affirming on its website, listing same-sex weddings alongside heterosexual ceremonies.

Riverside is not alone. Rev. Otis Moss III of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago (the church of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, President Obama's controversial former pastor), made headlines recently by backing the president's support for marriage equality and calling on other Black churches to do the same.

"The institution of marriage is not under attack as a result of the President's words," Moss wrote. "Marriage was under attack years ago by men who viewed women as property and children as trophies of sexual prowess. Marriage is under attack by low wages, high incarceration, unfair tax policy, unemployment, and lack of education." [Windy City Times attempted to contact Moss on numerous occasions. However, he had not responded as of the press deadline.]

Other Black churches have added their voices to a growing chorus of those who support marriage equality. But for those not ready to go public with their support for LGBT causes, said Williams, Black churches are increasingly lending support to LGBT movements in a quieter way: they're backing President Obama on other issues at a time when his leadership has been called into question.

Williams argues that the media has largely portrayed Black churches as monolithic, interviewing homophobic Black ministers but not ones that embrace LGBT people.

"I often ask myself why the media is missing this," he said. "If you're going to give press to these homophobic ministers, then call up these clergy that are well-studied and believe in justice for all."

Williams is taking matters into his own hands. He is planning a large press conference at June 7 that highlights the voices of Black clergy who support President Obama's stance on marriage equality. The details of that event have not yet been announced.

Williams believes that Black churches, built on a foundation of equality and justice, should naturally step up to support LGBT rights.

"We find it very foreign when we come across folks that don't understand that civil-rights narrative," Williams said. "The legacy was always about justice."

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GAY *in the* **LIFE**
Ryan Ochoa Loren
 TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROSS FORMAN



Age
30

Neighborhood
Lincolnwood

Job title
Yogi (certified since July 2011)

Tattoos
Scorpion on right arm, aum (or om) symbol on right shoulder

Relationship status
Single

Hobbies
Photography, softball, volleyball, camping, traveling, bicycle riding

Favorite TV shows
Walking Dead, Battlestar Galactica and Spartacus

Favorite movie
Amelie

Volunteers at:
Leather Archives & Museum



Ryan Ochoa Loren has gone from being intrigued about yoga to becoming a certified instructor over the past year or so.

"For me, yoga is a way to relieve stress, and was a way to add something different to my workout; I [initially] just wanted something different, a new alternative to increase my workout," Loren said. "I never envisioned I'd become a yogi."

Sure enough, he's been trained for hundreds of hours and is now the assistant manager for the South Loop branch of CorePower Yoga, a national chain based in Denver.

"I did a free week of yoga [sessions] last March, and was immediately hooked," Loren said. "For me, yoga is an hour of my day that I can forget about everything, and just focus on breathing, on my practice."

"Yoga is a great way to connect with my inner thoughts, my inner self."

Loren does yoga—when not instructing—at least five days a week. "I feel guilty if don't do yoga every day," he said, smiling.

"People often are skeptical [about yoga], or will say things like, 'I'm not flexible [for yoga],' but that's not the case. Over time you build flexibility and more body awareness. You shed a lot of layers [through yoga]—emotional, physical stress and more. Yoga is a great way to do something different, out of the ordinary."

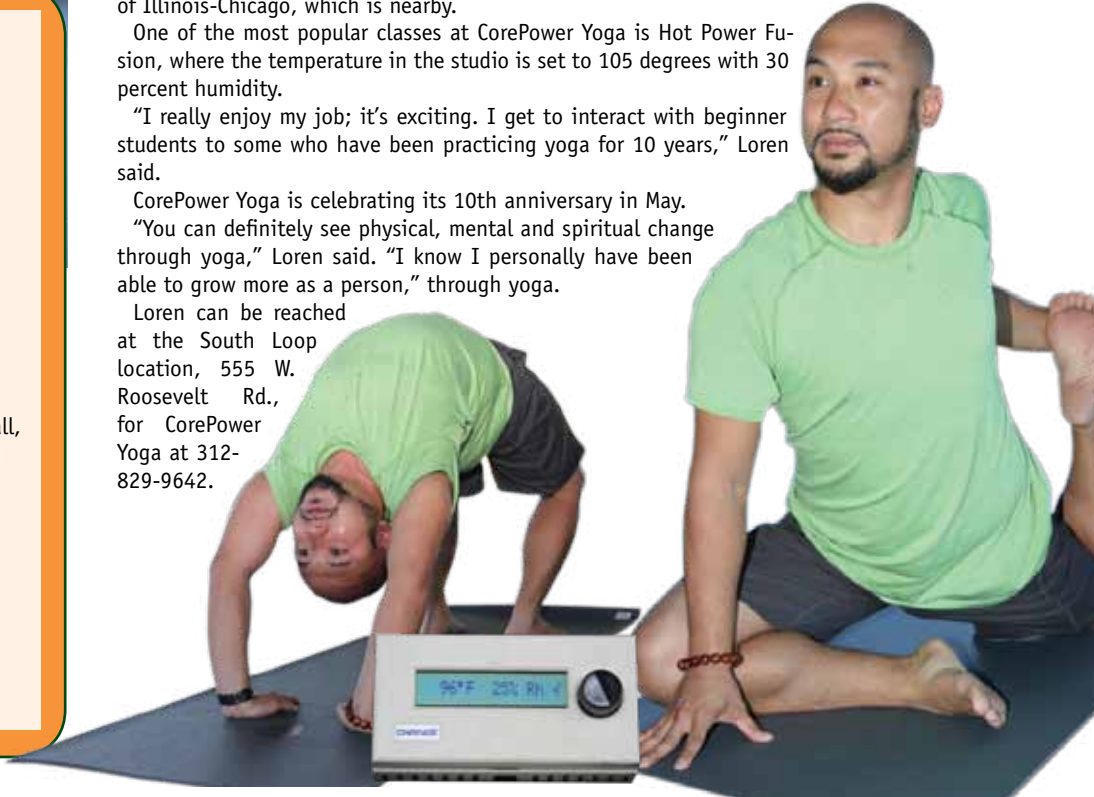
As a yogi, Loren instructs people of all shapes and sizes, including many associated with University of Illinois-Chicago, which is nearby.

One of the most popular classes at CorePower Yoga is Hot Power Fusion, where the temperature in the studio is set to 105 degrees with 30 percent humidity.

"I really enjoy my job; it's exciting. I get to interact with beginner students to some who have been practicing yoga for 10 years," Loren said.

CorePower Yoga is celebrating its 10th anniversary in May. "You can definitely see physical, mental and spiritual change through yoga," Loren said. "I know I personally have been able to grow more as a person," through yoga.

Loren can be reached at the South Loop location, 555 W. Roosevelt Rd., for CorePower Yoga at 312-829-9642.



T *in the* **LIFE**
 COMPILED BY KATE SOSIN



Diva Donzell

Pronoun
He.

Identifies as
Trans boy.

Life's work:
"I am Miss USA, and I do work actually for the community like I did once before ... to build community and strengthen it a little more. And to actually do a little more for myself like getting my own business started."

Interests
"I love bingo and volleyball."

Lives in:
Oak Park

School
"I'm at the Christopher House. I go there for my GED program, and I'm going to start the Art Institute in June ... fashion design and graphic and architecture."

When did you start questioning gender?
"I actually stepped out into the world when I was 19."

Do you have a coming out story?
"It's been kind of a difficult situation because, remember once before, I never was judged. I thought I was at a point in my life because my grandmother had to actually get used to me. But in my earlier teens, I was wearing women's clothes and lipstick and just go to work. I saw myself growing and expanding ... and saying my mother didn't want me living there because I was gay or because she was queer or because she knew another guy that was gay that always harassed her. That's what took me out of the situation to be the queen and to be the diva of them all."

Do you consider yourself an activist?
"I can see that all things are possible through Christ. Without him, I could never have gotten up and done all the stuff I have. ... I never thought HIV was a curse. That's what I want the people to believe—to believe in themselves, to believe in their truth."

Whom do you admire most?
"I would say fashion icons and singers all over the USA."

To nominate a person for T in the life, email: Kate Sosin
sosin@windycitytimes.com

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Tuesday, June 5 7:30 p.m.
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WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL. 27, No. 32, May 30, 2012

The combined forces of Windy City Times, founded Sept. 1985, and Outlines newspaper, founded May 1987.

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 DISTRIBUTION: Ashina, Allan, Dan, John, Renee, Sue and Victor
 WEB HOSTING: LoveYourWebsite.com (lead programmer: Martie Marro)

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 Community Marketing, Inc.



CHARLENE STRONG

It's time to carry the water

I had the great pleasure of participating in a global discussion presented by the World Affairs Council called Gay Rights as Human Rights. The event focused on LGBT equality and the atrocities that many people face simply because of their sexual orientation. The purpose of the symposium was to get people to think about gay rights on a much broader scale. The discussion seemed more than appropriate with the endorsement of same-sex marriage by President Obama fewer than two weeks prior.

Jessica Stern, program director of the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), led the evening with many accounts of real-life stories that illustrated how far we still must journey for real equality for all citizens. It was a reminder of how little has changed regarding humanity and the lack of dignity that many continue to endure simply because they don't fit the social norms of narrow concepts that serve no one but one's own agenda and political oppression.

Also on the panel was the esteemed Rev. Dr. Kopya Kaoma, a human-rights activist from Africa. He spoke of poverty and lack of services for many in the LGBT community in Africa. He explained people in the civil-rights movement there face tremendous financial, educational and communication struggles. The government, he said, commits atrocities against LGBT people in Africa and unless the United States lends its powerful hand to assist, LGBT individuals face a bleak future.

As I listened to the stories this thought struck me: As a U.S. citizen, I am terribly comfortable and selfish. I felt ashamed and bewildered that in 2012 the focus organizations that work for LGBT equality and legislation are continuing to be tasked with the never-ending battle for marriage equality in this nation. Frankly, I feel it is a pervasive and exhausting argument that seem-

ingly wastes precious resources and millions of dollars in trying to pierce the narrow ideology and damaging beliefs of folks who refuse to acknowledge that equality is truly a civil-rights issue.

How insignificant I felt at that moment; I know all too well from my own personal loss that if I had the right of marriage and the recognition of my relationship of 10 years I would not have faced the unimaginable treatment and humiliation the evening my wife died in a tragic flood. It changed me and galvanized my determination—inspiring me to make a difference to educate and advocate for others to do something more than nothing. The loss and struggles I experienced five years ago schooled me and inspired me; I am not the same woman I was before the tragedy, and I am determined to apply the lessons I learned and the fire in my heart to create and affect significant change in our society. I am committed to doing this with dignity, grace and compassion.

After listening to the pain that so many are suffering to this day because of the cruelty and lack of compassion and dignity expressed by others, it was my turn to take the stage and address the audience. I knew that it was time to speak about what I had not before said—that it was our responsibility to help carry the water for our brothers and sisters. Whether you identify as gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or any other classification, it is our responsibility—and mine as well—to reach out to make a difference for that one person you may never meet in a tiny African village.

The person who doesn't have the educational background to write a letter to their congressman or, as many arm chair warriors do in this country, go on YouTube and rant about what is wrong with very little talk about a solution.

I suggest we need something big to shake us, to bring us together: I suggest we need a revival. We need a good old-fashioned awakening of our soul as a community—as a global community—that is concerned about the bigger picture of inequality. A revival is a moment to be inspired. As a child growing up in the South, I remember watching the meeting and socializing—and praying—when families would come together to find inspiration to work on behalf of their faith. There's something to be learned from that fire in the belly moment. People are looking for a leader—a message—but are we prepared

including the gay and straight alderman and organizations that support this legislation. My concern is that some individuals are using this very public debate as a proxy for their own petty concerns of division and retribution.

I have the highest respect for both Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, as I do for Anthony Martinez of The Civil Rights Agenda. It is my hope that they will insure the focus of this debate is on strategy and not personalities.

Joe Murray
 Executive Director
 Rainbow Sash Movement

Family affair

Dear Editor:

As an adoptee and LGBT ally, I wholeheartedly support the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC's) efforts on behalf of prospective adoptive LGBT parents.

Windy City Times recently reported on the Human Rights Campaign's pioneering All Children-All Families program to recognize adoption agen-

to look at how far we must go to attain equality?

Large equality organizations are gifted at throwing enormous events to keep the conversation of our inequality in the spotlight. As a community, we soak it all up. We secure the most beautifully glamorous actors and celebrities and show the world our solidarity—our movement for equality. We express that we are just like everyone else and deserve to be treated with dignity. Thousands and thousands of dollars are spent to facilitate these lavish events as we put on our tuxedos and watch the stars walk the red carpet. We write our checks ... never really quite understanding where or how that money is being spent to secure civil rights for our community.

Currently, there are a handful of states that recognize marriage for same-sex couples. At last count, 30 states slammed the door on same-sex marriage and the march is on to take the few states that have marriage and reverse those decisions. It is 2012 and, as a nation, we are moving at a glacial speed toward reversing the discriminatory effect of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). I will not ever believe that securing marriage equality state by state should be our focus. If the Federal Government made the specific step to enact DOMA, then why are we left to state by state decisions and the bigger issues that continue—such as HIV/AIDS, workplace discrimination and bullying—get less attention? It is a national distraction with dire civil-rights consequences.

This is the moment for a revival. This is our time in history to stand together as a community and as a nation to speak out for those who don't have the resources and have nowhere to turn. The lessons that can be learned working together as a community are great. The momentum of our civil-rights movement rests on the passion of its people. We are those people—the ones whose time has come.

The time is now. It's time we all start carrying the water.

Charlene Strong is a nationally respected advocate for civil-rights and marriage equality. She is a prolific writer and speaker, and the subject of the award-winning film "for my wife..." She is an appointed Washington state human-rights commissioner and the co-founder of LFB Advocacy Group, a strategic consultancy focusing on civil-rights and social justice.

cies that demonstrate a staunch commitment to LGBT equal rights. Qualifying agencies must show proof of their clear non-discrimination policies, staff sensitivity training, family training initiatives and gender-inclusive language in their internal and external communications.

The best interest of children should always be the first and foremost concern in any foster care or adoption. As an adoptee, I know that "best interest of the child" means unconditional love, an unwavering commitment to parenting and fostering a sense of safety, home and belonging. I also know that none of this is pre-determined by the age, gender identity, sexual orientation or marital status of parents.

I applaud the efforts of HRC to ensure that members of the LGBT community have equal access to adoption services while simultaneously giving children an equal opportunity to find a loving family.

Sincerely,
 Sara Feigenholtz
 State Representative
 12th District

Going public

Dear Editor:

I am responding to your informative article "Transgender ordinance sets off EQ IL-TCRA fallout," written by Kate Sosin.

I think Kate's article highlights a difference in our political leadership vision about strategy when it comes to legislation. There are those who believe that the quality of our equality legislation should be based on our community's needs, while others believe that passage of even weak legislation is important because that can be built upon.

I think both views have their merits, but even above both of these views the question that must be asked, is this very public eruption over strategy helpful to our community unity or not.

What is troubling to me is that I sense that real issue is not the legislation, but rather some of the personalities involved.

I think there can be legitimate differences on strategy; however, there should be no differences in the ethical way we treat each other.

There are a lot of wonderful people involved,

LETTERS

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION

Photo from
Pride Films
and Plays

'JIM' DANDY

Richmond Jim (above) is one of the productions in WCT's summer LGBT roundup. See below.

DISH

Chips don't lie.
Page 28.

Photo by Meghan Streit



MUSIC

Gossip girl.
Page 25.

Gossip CD cover



MOVIES

Pop tart.
Page 22.

Press photo



SUMMER THEATER

Look at the season's
LGBT theater line-up

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Now that Gay Pride Month is upon us, it's a great time to take stock of how far the LGBT community has come (or hasn't) since the Stonewall Riots erupted in June of 1969 and kicked off the modern-day rights movement for LGBT equality. One way to reflect is to catch up with a variety of shows dealing with aspects of LGBT life and history. Some shows do it song, some are personal memoirs, while others reflect the time and place they were originally written. All shows in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

New to town

These world premieres and Chicago-area premieres give you a chance to see how current playwrights are depicting LGBT issues, be it from an up-to-date or historical perspective.

Swallow Your Pride, GayCo at Stage 773, June 1-July 7. Chicago's best-known LGBT sketch comedy troupe celebrates its sweet-16 anniversary with a brand new Pride Month revue featuring rowdy Dykes on Bikes, nervous politicians out for the gay vote and the poor sign spelling of anti-gay protesters. 773-327-5252 or www.gayco.com

Steamwerkz The Musical, Annoyance Theatre, June 1-Aug. 3. A sung story about a young gay man who comes to Chicago and befriends an odd assortment of characters who frequent the city's notorious bathhouse. 773-561-4665 or www.theannoyance.com

Immediate Family, Paul Boskind, Ruth Hendel and Stephen Hendel by special arrangement with the Goodman Theatre and in association with About Face Theatre at Goodman Theatre's

Owen Bruner Theatre, June 2-July 8. Tony Award-winning actress Phylicia Rashad directs this new American play by Paul Oakley Stovall about a Hyde Park family who divulge secrets when they assemble for the first time in five years. 312-423-6612 or www.goodmantheatre.org

Exit, Pursued by Bear, Theatre Seven of Chicago at Greenhouse Theater Center, June 7-July 15. A sassy gay friend is featured in the Chicago premiere of Lauren Gunderson's dark comedy about a fed-up wife who restrains and punishes her abusive husband before she plans on leaving him. 773-404-7336 or www.theatreseven.org

Mahal, Silk Road Rising at The Historic Chicago Temple's Pierce Hall, June 8-10. A Filipino family dealing with the loss of the strong matriarch also must deal with assimilation, homophobia and more issues in this staged reading of Danny Bernardo's new play. 312-857-1234 or www.silkroadrising.org

My First Time, Broken Nose Theatre at Greenhouse Theater Center, June 8-July 28. The hit off-Broadway show by Ken Davenport and folks just like you is all about people's hetero- and homosexual stories reflecting on the first they had sex. 773-404-7336 or www.greenhousetheater.org

Seconds from Suicide, Pandemonium Theatre Group at Greenhouse Theater Center, June 18-20. Cheryl Thomas' drama delves into 48-hours of the life of a teenager bullied for his sexuality. 773-404-7336 or www.greenhousetheater.org

The Gacy Play, Sideshow Theatre Company at Theater Wit, June 23-July 29. Playwright Calamity West explores the reality and the mythology of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, Jr. in a world premiere drama that aims to offer a meditation



Swallow Your Pride. Photo courtesy of GayCo

on masculinity and violence. 773-975-8150 or www.sideshowtheatre.org

Out of the past

Revivals of established classics give modern-day audiences a chance to reflect on where the LGBT community and its artists were thinking and depicting in the past.

The Glass Menagerie, Next Up repertory at Steppenwolf Theatre Garage, June 5-24. Tennessee Williams' classic 1940s drama is a semi-autobiographical portrait of his broken home and his regretful memories of his overbearing mother and fragile younger sister. 312-335-1888 or www.steppenwolf.org.

The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me, Glitterati Productions and Pride Films and Plays at Luna Central, June 20-30. Chad Ryan stars in this 20th anniversary production of playwright/performer David Drake's one man off-Broadway show about gay life in New York in the early 1990s. 800-838-

3006 or www.pridefilmsandplays.com

Richmond Jim, Pride Films and Plays at National Pastime Theater and part of its Naked July Festival, June 29-Aug. 8. A young man newly arrived in New York finds himself in a relationship with an older man in this slice-of-life drama and early gay play by Cal Yeomans. 773-327-7077 or 800-838-3006 or www.pridefilmsandplays.com

Butley, Hubris Productions at Greenhouse Theater Center, July 5-Aug. 11. Simon Gray's famed 1970s dark comedy is all about a pompous English university professor facing the breakup of both his long-time marriage and affair with a former male student. 773-404-7336 or www.hubrisproductions.com

A Steady Rain, Chicago Commercial Collective at Chicago Dramatists, July 7-Sept. 2. The original cast and crew to Keith Huff's 2007 Chicago

Turn to page 20

SUMMER DANCE ROUNDUP

International flair

BY VICKI CRAIN

Dance in Chicago goes global this summer with performances representing France, China, Japan, Africa, Argentina and Spain.

The **Paris Opéra Ballet** takes the Harris Theater stage with three performances of the classic ballet *Giselle* created for them in 1841, plus three repertory shows. A live simulcast of the Wed., June 27, *Giselle* performance will be shown in Millennium Park, 205 E. Randolph St., Wed.-Saturday, June 27-30 at 7:30 p.m. and June 30-July 1 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$55-\$175; call 312-334-7777 or visit www.harristheater-chicago.org.

The **Nanning Art Theatre** makes its U.S. debut at the Auditorium Theatre at Roosevelt University with *Legend of the Sun*, presented by the China Performing Arts Agency in association with the Chicago Human Rhythm Project, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., Tuesday-Wed., June 12-13 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35-\$55, call 800-982-2787 or visit www.ticketmaster.com/auditorium.

A shared concert with a local contemporary troupe and Taipei dance company **WCdance** continues *The Seldoms'* 10th-anniversary season. Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St., Thursday-Saturday, June 28-30, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, July 1, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$15-\$20; call 312-337-6543 or visit www.brownpapertickets.com/event/246618.

A new work by New York-based choreographer **Kota Yamazaki/Fluid hug-hug** features American and Japanese-American dancers along with dancers from Senegal and Ethiopia. The Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan

Ave., Thursday-Saturday, Sept. 27-29. Times and ticket pricing were not available at press time. Tickets go on sale Monday, July 9; call 312-369-8330 or visit www.colum.edu/dancecenter.

Deeply Rooted Dance Theater 2 blends ballet, modern and African-American dance in its annual spring concert. The Dance Center at Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan Ave., Saturday, June 2, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$25; call 312-795-9777 or visit www.deeplyrooteddancetheater.org.

Chicago's own **Muntu Dance Theatre** celebrates 40 years of presenting African and African-American dance with two shows this summer. *New Voices/New Vistas* at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St., Saturday, July 21, at 7 p.m. For more information call 312-334-7777 or visit www.harristheaterchicago.org. Muntu also performs on Saturday, Aug. 11, at 8 p.m. at Governors State University, 1 University Pkwy., University Park. For more information, call 708-235-2222 or visit www.centertickets.net.

Five female African choreographers showcase their work in two programs of **Voices of Strength**. The Dance Center at Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan Ave., Thursday-Saturday, Sept. 13-15. Tickets go on sale Monday, July 9. For more information, call 312-369-8330 or visit www.colum.edu/dancecenter.

Luna Negra Dance Theater presents *Luna Nueva*, an evening of two new works and a U.S. premiere featuring choreography by Gustavo Ramirez Sansano, Monica Cervantes and Argentinian artist Diana Szeinblum. Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.,



River North Dance Chicago dancers in *Risoluta*. Photo by Jennifer Girard

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The Spanish Dance and Music Festival presented by **Ensemble Español** hits the stage with *Flamenco Passion*. North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie, Friday-Saturday, June 22-23, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, June 24, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$26-\$46; call 847-673-6300 or visit www.northshorecenter.org.

Dance on film

Three local women (Kaitlin Fox, Atalee Judy and Nadia Oussenko) were chosen to participate in the Chicago edition of the monthly film series **Dances Made To Order**. Available online Wed., May 30. Prices are \$10 Chicago only, \$50 for all cities. www.dancesmadetoorder.com.

Footworks

Flashback to the '80s with Chicago Tap Theatre's *Totally Tap-ular!* at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Saturday, June 30, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$22-\$37; call 773-935-6875 or visit www.chicagotaptheatre.com.

Chicago Human Rhythm Project presents *Rhythm World 2012* Monday-Sunday, July 23-Aug. 5, at multiple venues. For more information on classes, workshops and performances visit www.chicagotap.org.

Hometown faves

River North Dance Chicago hits the outdoor stage at the Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park for a one-night performance of *World Class, Home Grown*. Tuesday, June 5th at 6:30 p.m. This is a free event. For more information, visit www.rivernorthchicago.com.

Punk Yankees returns to the Chicago stage as **Lucky Plush Productions** revives this 2010 hit. This will be Friday-Saturday, June 8-9, at 8 p.m. at The Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306

S. Michigan Ave. Tickets are \$25; call 312-369-8330 or visit www.colum.edu/dancecenter.

In the house

Mordine & Co. showcases works from past and present company members in *Next 2012*. Architectural Artifacts, 4325 N. Ravenswood Ave., Sunday, June 3, at 3 p.m. This event is free (with a suggested donation of \$15). For more information, call 312-654-9540 or RSVP by email to marketing@mordine.org.

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago presents its annual *Inside/Out* Choreographic Workshop performances at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Theater, 1044 W. Harrison St. with two shows Saturday, June 23, at 5 and 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15-\$35; call 312-850-9744 or visit www.hubbardstreetdance.com.

New Dances 2012 celebrates the 12th year for this program that **Thodos Dance Chicago** is presenting. It will take place at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St., Friday-Saturday, July 27-28, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, July 29 at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$28-\$35; call 312-266-6255 or visit www.thodosdancechicago.org.

Lastly, the summer wouldn't be complete without these two annual dance celebrations:

Dance For Life, featuring some of Chicago's top dance companies, benefits the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and the Dancer's Fund. It will take place at the Auditorium Theatre at Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., Saturday, Aug. 18, at 8 p.m. A pre-performance gala will be held at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave. Tickets are \$175-\$500; call 312-922-5812 or visit www.danceforlifechicago.com.

The Chicago Dancing Festival expands again this year to six nights of free dance events ending with a *Celebration of Dance* at the Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park. Events are free, but tickets are required and will be available the week of July 16. For more information, visit chicagodancingfestival.com.

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THEATER REVIEW

The Marvin Gaye Story

Playwright: Jackie Taylor
 At: Black Ensemble Theater,
 4450 N. Clark St.
 Tickets: 773-769-4451;
www.ticketmaster.com; \$55-\$65
 Runs through: July 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Our play opens with a projected collage of newspaper headlines announcing music superstar Marvin Gaye's murder, quickly followed by his white-suited ghost taking center stage to welcome us with a blunt "We may as well talk about it now." He then proceeds to speak to us about the insidiously transformative powers of abuse and doubt, finishing with a call for forgiveness (and an "amen," which he promptly receives) of both himself and his killer. Then, and only then, does the band start up.

Oh, and does it ever! You'd think the heavenly choir itself was playing Uptown and the angel Gabriel sitting in with the brass section. (You hear that hand-clapping *obbligato*? It's not the actors—that's the audience.) Among the splendors of this, the second show to occupy this spiffy new room, is an amplification hookup so sensitive as to later permit recurring character themes—the ominous bass line announcing Gaye's father, for example—analogue to those encountered in opera. That's right—*opera*.

So expect to enjoy plenty of Black Ensemble's trademark renditions of its title icon's best-known hits—in this case, the sensual "Sexual Healing" and socially conscious "What's Going On," along with such early premonitions of fame as "Ten Commandments of Love" and his career-making duet with Tammi Terrell, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." Company regular Rashawn Thompson croons the songs with a lissome charm that includes the kind of hip action on "Let's Get It On" that sends female playgoers into paroxysms of vocal ecstasy. (There's even some chaste laying-on of hands in the front rows before the night's over.)

What distinguishes *The Marvin Gaye Story* from a simple song-after-song musical revue is the portion of onstage time devoted to the troubled life of this still-lamented artist—specifically, the indelible harm inflicted by his demon-driven parent upon a son unable to escape his destructive heritage except through suicide-by-design. Does this mean that the show is (at its roots) a lesson in dysfunctional family dynamics, with Gaye serving merely as a case study? While those seeking wisdom will not leave disappointed—the final number is a syncopated soul arrangement of "His Eye Is On The Sparrow," after all—those preferring their sermons with a choreographed backbeat will also go home satisfied. Can I get a you-know-what?



The Marvin Gaye Story. Photo courtesy of Black Ensemble Theater

CRITICS' PICKS

A Little Night Music, Writers' Theatre, Glencoe, extended through July 22. This is a gloriously intimate and chamber-sized approach to Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's sophisticated and romantic 1973 Broadway musical. It's wonderful to be so up close and personal with such great performers without the aid of amplification. SCM

My Kind of Town, TimeLine Theatre, through July 29. Chicago's police torture scandal of the past few decades is expertly explored in John Conroy's fictionalized world-premiere drama that pushes audiences to ponder what they would do in the characters' dilemma-filled situations. SCM

Take Her To See the Maco Lights, Prologue Theatre Company at Luna Central (formerly Live Bait Theater), through June 2. If romance is based in uncertainty, can you get any more romantic than a lovelorn ghost unsure, himself, of what's real and what's not in this intimate little play performed across the street from a cemetery? MSB

When the Rain Stops Falling, Circle Theatre, through June 17. A jigsaw puzzle, this Australian play is about four generations, two families and two continents—but stick with it for its richly poetic rewards in dealing with love and loss. It's beautifully acted against gorgeous projections. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Crooked

Playwright: Catherine Trieschmann
 At: Rivendell Theatre,
 5779 N. Ridge Ave.
 Tickets: 773-334-7728;
www.rivendelltheatre.org; \$28.50
 Runs through: June 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Laney writes creepy short stories, usually involving abuse of the blameless and ending in a grotesque surprise-twist. The neogothic romanticism of her shivery tales lend palpability to the anxieties associated with her parents' divorce, precipitated by her father's mental breakdown, as well as her own disabling illness and the scariness of being 14 years old. Her friend Maribel has her church's doctrine to explain these mysteries—most of the time. The accord forged by the girls within their respective views of a confusing universe increasingly distances Laney from her mother—a confirmed rationalist, and therefore helpless to address her daughter's spiritual hunger—until tensions generated thereby demand the spilling of innocent blood.

In the tidily crafted dramas manufactured by the ream in playwrighting workshops all over America, an act of willful self-destruction would typically signal an intermission, followed by another hour of agitated discussion devoted to the behavior suddenly called into question. Catherine Trieschmann doesn't baby us with post-facto CliffsNotes, however. Like her teenage authoress, she gives us everything we need to know and then leaves us to sort it out: why pubescent girls suffering "growing pains" often deliberately injure themselves. Why parents who treat children like their equals are selfish and immature. Why a religion founded on a martyrdom is a dangerous foundation for cosmological orientation. The egotism that comes of enlightenment vs. the auto-abasement promoted by social isolation.

Confinement to a small room crowded with this many estrogen-fueled issues could easily lead to



Crooked. Photo from Rivendell Theatre

ideological suffocation (or inadvertent campiness, its most ready cure), but Sandy Shinner's direction never allows the intellectual overload or hormonal fumes to overwhelm the personal dynamics for the 80 minutes it takes to bring the conflicts to their abrupt conclusion, its violence emerging as the more shocking for being both unforeseen and eerily inevitable.

Rae Gray and Hannah Gomez replicate the hesitant curiosity of adolescent females with poignant accuracy, while Tara Mallen conveys just the right level of abject ambivalence in the thankless role of Elise, aka Mommy Clueless. The configuration of technical elements to the dimensions of Rivendell's storefront have improved with this second show (though Regina Garcia's handwriting-covered walls push the scenic design to the edge of precocity), rendering this early-summer production a patently serviceable excuse to explore the burgeoning Edgewater Arts District.

THEATER REVIEW

In the Continuum

Playwright: Danaï Gurira & Nikkole Salter
 At: Pegasus Players, 4520 N. Beacon St.
 Tickets: 1-866-811-4111
www.pegasusplayers.org; \$25
 Runs through: June 17

BY STEVEN CHAITMAN

It seems as though all the performance arts gathered for a conference in the late '80s-early '90s and theatre agreed to inherit the responsibility of chronicling the story of HIV/AIDS. In *In the Continuum* premiered in 2005, nearly 25 years after the epidemic began, yet it still covers new—or at least overlooked—ground.

After a run at the Goodman Theatre in 2007, *In the Continuum* returns to Chicago thanks to Pegasus Players, perfectly fitting the company's mission of issue-driven theatre that crosses all manner of social boundaries. For a play about two young women starring only two young women, it's as brave a production as the story is in the spiritual sense.

In the Continuum tells two parallel stories, one of an African-American teenager in Los Angeles and one of an African woman in Zimbabwe, who learn they are HIV-positive. The impact on their lives is immediate and devastating, and the play focuses on the social aftermath of this life-changing discovery—how it exacerbates lives that are already challenged.

Actresses Sam Bailey and Ashleigh LaThrop tackle the challenge of portraying these women (as well as several other people of in-

fluence in these women's lives) with a certain spirit, as if privileged and honored to take sole responsibility in telling their character's story. Only interacting with each other directly once at the very beginning of the play, they basically run one-woman shows, acting against other characters that aren't there.

Although Bailey comes on strong toward the end, LaThrop captivates from start to finish as Nia, the teenager who starts to realize she's losing control of her life when she finds out she's HIV-positive and pregnant with a promising athlete's baby. When LaThrop plays the other characters Nia seeks for advice, she transforms completely and convincingly, which helps her to nail the ironic tone of the play's humor.

Bailey keeps up mostly in exuberance as Abigail, a mother who senses what she perceived to be a steady marriage is likely to crumble now that she has HIV. The characters she gets to play are less divisive, but she ends on a high note as a witch doctor, a prostitute and—in the last scene—as Abigail again.

It's not easy to command an empty stage, so some scattered scenes drag a bit throughout the 90-minute run time, but these young women embrace the script in both its lighter and darker moments and the passion shows. Ultimately, they capture the struggle of these women who wish to stay strong in the face of this deflating adversity but must come to terms with its futile nature.

As a presence in the play, HIV is markedly silent, but the psychological torment it brings to these characters speaks to why the still-increasing rate of HIV in Black women both here and in Africa is so much more than a crisis of health.

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THEATER REVIEW

Bang the Drum Slowly

Playwright: Eric Simonson, from the Mark Harris novel
 At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St.
 Tickets: 773--338-2177;
 www.raventheatre.com; \$30
 Runs through: June 30

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Sixty years ago baseball stood as “the National Pastime” without dispute. There only were eight teams in each league (none west of Kansas City), no players’ union, and most players still were under-educated, underpaid, hard-drinking, tobacco-chewing, country boys who frequently were racist and chauvinist. Managers and owners weren’t much better—just older and shrewder. This is the world of *Bang the Drum Slowly* and its fictional ball team, the New York Mammoths.

But baseball, which novelist Mark Harris understood intimately, is only the framing device for this story of how men bonded, and expressed male loyalty and affection, long before our present era of guys in touch with their emotions. It centers on star pitcher Henry Wiggen, who’s a few years older and a lot smarter than his on-the-road roommate, Bruce Pearson, the fatally ill third-string catcher whom Wiggen comes to guide and protect.

In the process of assisting Pearson, Wiggen also forges a band of brothers out of what merely had been a team. Think of a typical war movie with a platoon of mixed racial and ethnic types who face death together. Although only one man is dying in *Bang the Drum Slowly*, everyone eventually must confront the reality of mortality and of an athlete dying young.

Art imitates life imitates art: The story echoes that of Lou Gehrig, and was a precursor to that of Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo. It also pro-



Bang the Drum Slowly. Photo by Dean LaPrairie

foundly reflects the last 30 years of LGBT experience during which so many of us have participated in the deaths of friends and lovers.

The stage adaptation necessarily short-changes a lot of character exposition and development in order to retain the novel’s Huck Finn-like narrative voice, delivered by Wiggen in down-home English. Indeed, the series of moral and ethical decisions Wiggen must make owe a good deal to Mark Twain. However, the adaptation is curiously

static despite director Michael Menendian’s effective use of athletic, ballet-like group movement and tableau staging. The midweek performance I saw was lackadaisical, which certainly was part of the problem. Comic moments (there are many) weren’t playing well, and the emotional gut punch of the ending simply wasn’t there. Perhaps it will gel later in the run.

This ambitious production features 15 actors playing 26 characters in uneven fashion, but perhaps the company can do with the many two-dimensional secondary characters. Fortu-

nately, Michael Stegall is a good choice as Wiggen, down to his tall rangy build. Kevin Duvall, as Pearson, is rather slim for a catcher but nails Pearson’s good-old-boy personality. Tim Walsh is amusing as the cagey, lumpy team executive and manager. Jen Short and Kristen Williams do well in the limited women’s roles as dames of different extremes.

SPOTLIGHT



Daredevil motorcyclists, contortionists and acrobats from China are back again to wow local and tourist audiences at Navy Pier’s 1,500-seat outdoor canopied theater now that **Cirque Shanghai** is back with a new show subtitled *Year of the Dragon* to time with the lucky Asian lunar calendar mythological creature. *Cirque Shanghai: Year of the Dragon* plays through Monday, Sept. 3, at Navy Pier’s Pepsi Skyline Stage, 600 E. Grand Ave. Performances are at 2, 6 and 8 p.m. Wed.s, 2 and 8 p.m. Thursdays, 2, 7 and 9 p.m. Fridays, 2, 6 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 4 p.m. Sundays. Extra shows are at 2, 6 and 8 p.m. July 3, 8 p.m. Sept. 2 and 2 and 4 p.m. Sept. 3. Tickets are \$15.50-\$29.50; call 800-745-3000 or visit www.ticketmaster.com/shanghai. Photo courtesy of *Cirque Shanghai*.

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Inside or outside: Chicago's summer theater season

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

At our latitudes, playgoing is indoor recreation—except in the summer, when theater, especially Shakespeare, inexplicably becomes an outdoor activity. In some quarters, this is sold under the pretense of replicating the authentic Elizabethan experience—as if ours was a maritime climate similar to that of London (on this side of the Atlantic enjoyed in upper Newfoundland) and performances given only in daylight hours. Fortunately, the Chicago area offers dramatic fare for those who like citronella or freon.

Bringing the indoors outdoors

"I love working outdoors!" declares Kevin Theis, slated to portray the villainous monarch in **Richard III** for Oak Park Festival Theater in Austin Gardens June 19-Aug. 25. "You feel connected to the other actors the way you don't in a theater." Jack Hickey, who will star in **Inherit the Wind** from June 16-July 14 concurred: "There's an intimacy between actor and audience after the sun sets, when the lights come up and the stage becomes a glow in the darkness." (708-445-4440/www.oakparkfestival.com)

David Rice likewise rhapsodized over First Folio Theatre's performance site in the Mayslake Peabody Estate, calling it a "sylvan setting in the west suburbs [of Oak Brook]." This summer, the venue not only offers a classical rendition of Shakespeare's **The Merchant of Venice** July 11-Aug. 19, but staged readings of **Shylock And His Daughter**, Maurice Schwartz' little-known classic from the repertoire of the American Yiddish Theatre recounting Shylock's perspective on the familiar story (performed in English) July 26-Aug. 16. (630-986-8067/www.firstfolio.org)

Theatre-Hikes offers an athletic as well as an artistic approach to entertainment, configuring its texts to a promenade through such horticultural museums as the North Park Village Center, the Pullman State Historic Site and the Morton Arboretum—a concept that founder Frank Farrell likens to "getting closer to nature while 'holding a mirror up to nature.'" This summer, Theatre-Hikes will present Arthur Conan Doyle's **The Hound of the Baskervilles** (June 23-July 24), **The Wind in the Willows** (July 14-Aug. 25) and **Streeterville** (Aug. 18-25). For schedules and locations, log onto www.theatre-hikes.org

For those who enjoy the proximity of nature without necessarily wallowing in it, there's the Skyline stage at Navy Pier, featuring the thrilling acrobatics of **Cirque Shanghai**, currently featuring in its Year of the Dragon line-up the Imperial Thunder motorcycle stunt-aerialists, and continuing through Sept. 3 (www.navy Pier.com), and Lincoln Park's venerable Theater By The Lake, this year presenting revivals of such 2011-2012 shows as Redtwist's **Opus**, ETA's **Broke-ology**, The Inconvenience's **Hit The Wall** and—a fitting choice for a lakeside venue—Building Stage's **Moby-Dick** (312-742-7994/www.chicagoparkdistrict.com). New to the circuit is the Riverfront Theater, housed in the giant tent constructed at Chicago and Halsted for last year's ThreeSixty Peter Pan, but now hosting a series of musical and dance revues May 30-Sept. 30 (888-556-9484/www.riverfronttheater.com).

Bringing the outdoors indoors

We associate abbreviated clothing with warmth and sunshine, but National Pastime's annual **Naked July Festival** celebrates the human body in the comfort of a temperature-controlled environment. "It's illegal to go naked outside in the city," artistic director Laurence Bryan reminds us, "Inside, the show goes on,



Richmond Jim.

rain or shine, and nobody suffers sunburn or bug bites." The festival's roster—playing in National Pastime's new quarters on Lawrence Avenue June 29-Aug. 11—features, among other acts, full productions of Jose Rivera's **References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot** and Cal Yeomans' 1979 gay classic **Richmond Jim**, as well as the **Living Canvas** dance troupe. (773-327-7077/www.nakedjuly.com)

Plays with bucolic settings allow us to pretend we're basking in lush pastoral splendor while still safely sheltered from flora and fauna. To conclude its season devoted to Eugene O'Neill, Eclipse Theatre presents **Ah, Wilderness**—as close as that gloomy author ever came to writing a boy-meets-girl comedy—at the Athenaeum July 31-Sept. 2 (773-935-6875/www.ecliptheatre.com), while Artistic Home offers **The American Plan**, Richard Greenberg's comedy of romance at a vacation resort in the Catskills, playing at Stage 773 July 22-Aug. 26 (773-327-5252/www.stage773.com).

Exploring more serious themes are Victory Gardens' production of **Oedipus El Rey**, Luis Alfaró's relocation of the Greek tragedy to a sweltering Los Angeles barrio where rival gangs roam the streets seeking respite from the heat, playing July 9-29 (773-871-3000/www.victorygardens.org) and Rasaka Theatre Company, premiering Rajiv Joseph's tale of childhood comrades growing up in troubled times, **Gruesome Playground Injuries**, July 5-Aug. 5 (312-777-1070/www.rasakatheatre.com). Audiences with vivid imaginations can also share in the watery ambience of **Eastland: A New Musical**, Lookingglass' docudrama of Chicago's most famous shipwreck, June 16-July 29 (312-337-0665/www.lookingglasstheatre.org), or the Chicago Commercial Collective's revival of Keith Huff's runaway hit, **A Steady Rain**, remounted in its original home at Chicago Dramatists July 10-Sept 2 (www.asteadyrain.com)

Huddling in the AC

Sometimes, however, nothing will do but to seek an environment wholly unlike your own, if

only in your fantasies. Chekhov's **Three Sisters** transports us to 19th-century Russia, where people go joyriding in sleighs on sub-zero nights, but since Tracy Letts did the adaptation, look for surprises in the Steppenwolf production running July 7-Aug. 26 (312-335-1650/www.steppenwolf.org). The decorum of regency-era Brits are explored in Lifeline's **Pride and Prejudice**, now extending through July 8 (773-761-4477/www.lifelinetheatre.com), and those of the less-privileged classes in Redtwist's **The Cripple of Inishmaan**, currently running to June 24 (773-728-7529/www.redtwist.org) and Ka-Tet Theatre's production of John Godber's **Salt of the Earth**, July 13-Aug. 19 (1-800-838-3008/www.katetheatre.org).

Finally, for the ultimate escape, House Theatre brings back its twice sold-out **Death and Harry Houdini** for one more stay, following its out-of-town gig in Florida. If you missed Dennis Watkins (who can't keep up this pace forever, remember) replicating the physically strenuous stunts of the iconic illusionist in its four previous incarnations—at Live Bait, the Viaduct, and twice at the Chopin—you can atone for this error between July 7 and Aug. 17 (773-769-3832/www.thehousetheatre.com).

'Limbo' art show May 31

Openly gay artist Tully Satre will present "Limbo" on Thursday, May 31, at the Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave., Studio 920, 5:30-10 p.m.

The title refers to Satre's status after the UK refused to issue him a student visa after London's Royal Academy of Arts chose him to be in its postgraduate program. (Full disclosure: Satre is an occasional writer for Windy City Times.)

For more information, email TullySatre@gmail.com.

'Iceman' ends soon

The major revival of Eugene O'Neill's **The Iceman Cometh** at Goodman Theatre, starring Nathan Lane and Brian Dennehy, runs through June 17 in the Goodman's Albert Theatre.

Visit www.GoodmanTheatre.org or call 312-443-3800.

LGBT from page 15

and Broadway hit play returns with its dramatic focus on two cops who inadvertently return a victim to a Jeffrey Dahmer-like killer. www.asteadyrainchicago.com

The Vortex, Dead Writers Theatre Collective at Greenhouse Theater Center, July 12-Aug. 26. Before he became known for his sophisticated and upper-crust comedies, playwright/actor Noel Coward caused a theatrical scandal with his 1920s drama involving a mother and son caught up with destructive sex and drugs. 773-404-7336 or www.deadwriters.net

Return engagements

Several shows with LGBT themes or characters that played earlier this season are back, though not always in their original setting, particularly with productions remounted at the open-air Theater on the Lake.

Exploited Again! Judy Garland, Liza Minnelli & Ethel Gumm, Davenport's Piano Bar & Cabaret, June 1-2. Jeff Dean and musical director Beckie Menzie offer up their own script and song-driven approach to exploring the mother-daughter relationships of famed gay icon Judy Garland, her daughter Liza Minnelli and her showbiz stage mother, Ethel Gumm. 773-278-1830 or www.davenportspianobar.com

Don't Act Like a Girl, Annoyance Theatre, June 3-24. Wes Perry's acclaimed comic cabaret about his life growing up gay and addled by prescription drugs in Southern California is back for a special run of Sunday Pride Month performances. 773-561-4665 or www.theannoyance.com

Or, Caffeine Theatre at Theater on the Lake, June 20-24. The English Restoration playwright Aphra Behn is the focus of Liz Duffy Adams' three-actor farce where a playwright and former spy struggles to finish writing her new play amid amorous advances from both men and women. 312-742-7994 or www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

30 Queer Plays in 60 Straight Minutes, The Neo-Futurists, June 21-23. The Neo-Futurists' annual Pride Weekend Benefit is back with short plays touching upon LGBT topics performed to help benefit UCAN's LGBTQ Host Home Program. 773-275-5255 or www.neofuturists.org

Opus, Redtwist Theatre at Theater on the Lake, July 4-8. A world-class string quartet is torn apart by a vicious queen with a business bent in Michael Hollinger's acclaimed drama. 312-742-7994 or www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

Hit the Wall, The Inconvenience at Theater on the Lake, July 25-29. Ike Holter's wildly acclaimed environmental theater piece complete with a live rock band focuses on the 1969 Stonewall Riots and a tale of 10 unlikely revolutionaries. 312-742-7994 or www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

Still running...

Time is running out to catch these spring shows:

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches and **Perestroika**, Court Theatre, now through June 3. Time is running out to catch Tony Kushner's epic 1990s plays set during the Reagan Administration touch upon homosexuality, AIDS, Mormonism, McCarthyism and so much more. Kushner himself gave his blessing to artistic director Charles Newell to stage his epic plays. 773-753-4472 or www.courttheatre.org

Her Naked Skin, Shattered Globe Theatre at Stage 773, now through June 3. Class and sexual boundaries are crossed in 1913 London when suffragettes protesting for women's rights get locked up in the notorious Holloway Prison. 773-327-5252 or shatteredglobe.org

[title of show], Northlight Theatre, Skokie, now through June 9. Gay friends Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell are the duo behind this meta musical about two friends writing a musical and the compromises and finagling they do in order to get it Broadway. 847-673-6300 or www.northlight.org

Rent, About Face Theatre and American Theater Company, now through June 17. Jonathan Larson's 1996 Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning musical about New York artists finding love and loss in the age of AIDS (inspired by the 1896 Puccini opera *La Bohème*) returns in a newly conceived production directed by David Cromer. 773-409-4125 or www.atcweb.org

Sexy Baby: A Docu-musical, Hell in a Handbag Productions at Mary's Attic, now through June 23. The bizarre world of child beauty pageants gets skewered in this world premiere camp and drag-filled musical by David Cerda and Scott Lamberty. 800-838-3006 or www.handbagproductions.org

Bodies, MPAACT at Greenhouse Theater Center, now to June 24. Chuck Smith directs Carla Stillwell's drama about a Baptist Church reverend and his wife who try to meddle in family affairs, particularly with a relative whom they suspect of being gay. 773-404-7336 or www.mpaact.org

The 'Boys' are back in town



From left: Jersey Boys Michael Lomenda, Joseph Leo Bwarie, Preston Truman Boyd and John Gardiner.

BY JERRY NUNN

Jersey Boys the musical is right at home in Chicago these days. Based upon the life of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, the story follows the group on their rise to fame.

The show has toured 38 cities and won Tony as well as Grammy Awards.

Without further ado let's introduce the four Jersey Boys in this cast:

Preston Truman Boyd plays Bob Gaudio, who toured with Young Frankenstein and has appeared in Broadway hits such as Singin' in the Rain and Oklahoma! Joseph Leo Bwarie has toured 40 cities playing Valli and even performed on the Tony Awards.

John Gardiner who plays Tommy DeVito, and has starred in the Lion King and TV's All My Children. Michael Lomenda returns to Jersey Boys as Nick Massi after playing the role in Toronto. His favorite past shows have been Hairspray and Miss Saigon.

Windy City Times went to the Bank of America Theatre to fist-pump with the four of them.

Windy City Times: Hey, guys. Is any one here actually from Jersey?

All: No.

Michael Lomenda: I lived there on and off for three years.

WCT: Where are you all from?

ML: I am from Stettler, Alberta, Canada.

WCT: That sounds so macho.

ML: I should have brought my 10-gallon hat.

John Gardiner: I am from Edgewood, Ky.

Preston Truman Boyd: Moorhead, Minn.

Joseph Leo Bwarie: I am from Sherman Oaks, Calif., the heartland...

WCT: What was your journey to be a part of the show?

ML: I started in 2008 and got into the travel company sort of the same time that the Chicago company was running, we were running up in Toronto for a couple of years. I joined the tour six months ago with Preston in Omaha.

JG: I started the show about three years ago and was in the ensemble. When there was an opening for one of the Seasons, I was lucky enough to get promoted.

WCT: You worked your way up!

JG: Yes, I got to be in the show from the inside.

PTB: I live in New York and an agent got me

an audition and had just come off the road with another show, Young Frankenstein. This was one of my bucket-list roles, so I came right back out on the road. I didn't even unpack!

JLB: I have been doing this show since 2007. I opened a Las Vegas company first and the tour opened in Toronto. It ran there for two years. I have been with the show since before it was even written! *[Everyone laughs.]*

WCT: What is the overview of the show for people that haven't seen it?

All *[simultaneously]*: It is a rags-to-riches story about four blue-collar guys...

JG: They worked their way out of the neighborhood but didn't do it by joining the army or the mob. They wrote a hit song.

JLB: They worked their way into the hearts of America and the world.

JG: It is a show about the trials and tribulations that they had to overcome to be a huge success that they were and are today.

PTB: They were on the road with wives, kids, relationships and friendships.

JG: There was changing of the group and new members.

JLB: It makes it an everyman story because they have their successes and highpoints as well as the trying times.

ML: Everyone knows the music but not everyone knows the story. It is an amazing underdog story that is fantastic.

PTB: It is kind of like a VH1 backstage pass behind the music that everyone knows so much about but they don't know how it came to fruition. I think many people walk away from the theatre thinking the music is great but didn't know about the story of these four iconic people.

ML: In Chicago they might know more because it was here for so long.

WCT: Right. So what makes this cast different than previous ones?

PTB: By different, you mean better? *[Everyone laughs.]*

JLB: We are the only cast that tours. We are the guys that live what we talk about in the show so we have a first hand knowledge about what it is like. We live what we talk about in the show.

JG: We are constantly in a new city with new people joining and leaving the cast so it is a fresh version of the show. I would call this a

perfect show since the book is written so well and it is a timeless story.

PTB: And there is no green makeup!

WCT: Why do you think audiences are into shows set in the past, like Mad Men and Million Dollar Quartet?

PTB: Skinny ties and fedoras is all it is!

ML: I think people look back at fonder times and the nostalgic feeling of that. It was amazing fashion and music back then though they are seeing it through a different lens. Just like Mad Men and Sopranos, they pull back the curtain to what they thought it was to the gritty real life behind it.

JG: We get these 70-year-old women coming up to the stage door talking about making out to these songs when they were younger.

PTB: It is really hot!

JLB: They don't say "making out." They say they had a nice kiss...

ML: This is kind of a racy show for the theater world.

WCT: There are a lot of curse words in it.

JLB: There are 42 F-bombs!

ML: It was very Jersey.

WCT: Jersey Shore!

PTB: When they wrote it, they wanted authentic language of the time.

JLB: It is a city thing. People show they are tough with these words. Chicago doesn't care. I had my window open at 6 a.m. and heard authentic Jersey language right outside!

WCT: The real Frankie Valli is coming to town right at the end of the run. Have you all met him?

PTB: Yes.

JLB: He follows us. He lets us play and then says, "This is the real deal!"

WCT: Are there any gay members in the group?

PTB: There are gay members in the cast of the show.

JLB: We even travel with pets, such as bunnies and birds.

JG: I can't believe you just segued from gay members of the group to bunnies.

JLB: I am just saying all kinds, colors and species!

ML: We are an equal opportunity employer.

WCT: What have you learned from doing the show?

JLB: It has been fun just being in the show as a family.

PTB: I agree. I have never seen a cast where our camaraderie has formed the work onstage.

WCT: How was the South By Southwest festival, Joseph?

JLB: It was a departure for me with billions of people there. (That is an exaggeration.) But it was great to get back to Texas. We played San Antonio in the summer of 2010.

ML: His CD is awesome and available on iTunes.

JLB: This is my PR team! *[Laughs]* My album was produced by Charlie Calello, who did all the arrangements of The Four Seasons.

ML: He was my character's replacement.

PTB: With the show they didn't have time to go into the other incarnations of the band. To make it simple they made it just these four guys.

ML: These are the four guys that made it into the Hall of Fame, though, so we are the real Jersey Boys!

Visit www.BroadwayInChicago.com to purchase tickets before the curtain call Sunday, June 3, at the Bank of America Theatre, 18 W. Monroe St.

'Gacy Play' at Wit June 28-July 29

Sideshow Theatre Company will present the world premiere of Chicago playwright Calamity West's The Gacy Play at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave., June 28-July 29.

According to a press release, "Developed with Sideshow over two and a half years, West's play looks under the floorboards of a nondescript suburban home, and reveals the many ghosts hiding underneath."

Previews are Saturday, June 23, at 8 p.m.; Sunday, June 24, at 3 p.m.; and Wed., June 27, at 8 p.m. The regular run will be Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; and Sundays at 3 p.m.

Preview tickets are \$20 in advance or pay-what-you-can at the door, and regular-run tickets are \$15-\$25. See www.theaterwit.org or call the Theater Wit box office at 773-975-8150.

'8' the Play in Rock Island July 7

The District Theatre, 1611 2nd Ave., Rock Island, will present a reading of 8, a new play chronicling the historic trial in the federal legal challenge to California's Proposition 8.

Written by Academy-Award winning writer Dustin Lance Black, 8 will run Saturday, July 7, at 2 p.m. A portion of the proceeds from this event will benefit the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER).

The national website for 8 is www.8theplay.com.

AFER and Broadway Impact have announced the full cast for the West Coast premiere of 8, according to a press release. The cast includes Kevin Bacon, George Clooney, Glee's Chris Colfer, George Takei, Jane Lynch, Matthew Morrison, Rob Reiner, Jamie Lee Curtis, Martin Sheen, Matt Bomer and many more. The production—penned by Oscar-winning screenwriter and AFER founding board member Dustin Lance Black—ran at Los Angeles' Wilshire Ebell Theatre March 3.

So far, there is no word of a similar production in Chicago. However, there are events planned in the Illinois cities of Urbana (July 2-3 at Station Theatre), Normal (Sept. 8) and Freeport (March 2, 2013).

Tickets are \$25 each for the Rock Island production; email tristan@districttheatre.com, visit www.DistrictTheatre.com or call 309-235-1654.

Summer 2012 queer film preview

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Summer-movie blockbuster season is in full gear and though I missed two of the most hotly anticipated summer kick-starters—*Dark Shadows* and *The Avengers*—during my hiatus, there's still a lot more comic book superhero (read: homoerotic) and action stuff just over the horizon. And though we're in for a lot of testosterone ahead fear not, it ain't all about the beefcake (no, really). A highly selective list of forthcoming summer movies:

June

Director Ridley Scott heads back to his roots with **Prometheus** (June 8), a prequel to his 1979 sci-fi classic, *Alien*. The original Girl with the Dragon Tattoo's Noomi Rapace heads a cast that includes Charlize Theron and dreamy Michael Fassbender in one of the summer's most anticipated movies.

On the local front, out writer-director Nathan Adloff's feature debut, **Nate & Margaret**—the story of a 19-year-old gay man and his friendship with a 52-year-old spinster—is getting a three-day run at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St. The film (which I'll review in next week's column) plays June 8, 11 and 12. Adloff and cast members will be present for a post-screening discussion.

Tom Cruise shows off his pecs as well as his vocal chops as rock star Stacee Jaxx in out director/choreographer Adam Shankman's screen adaptation of **Rock of Ages** (June 15), the hit Broadway jukebox musical that utilizes a raft of '80s heavy-metal rock songs for its score. Julianne Hough and newcomer hottie Diego Boneta play the young lovers; the film also features Mary J. Blige, Russell Brand, Alec Baldwin and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

The Music Box, 3733 N. Southport Ave., is programming a two-month matinee celebration of the films of Billy Wilder. One of his best, 1950's seminal **Sunset Boulevard**—with Gloria Swanson, William Holden and Erich Von Stroheim as, respectively, silent film star Norma Desmond, her dreamy boy toy and creepy chauffeur/ex-husband—is scheduled for the weekend of June 23-24.

For gay men and camp-film fans, **Magic Mike** (June 29) might just be the most anticipated movie ... ever. Channing Tatum heads a cast of Hollywood beefcake (Alex Pettyfer, Matthew Mc-

Conaughey, Joe Manganiello and the openly gay Matt Bomer) in a story about the trials and tribulations of male stripping. Tatum, who brought the dark comedy to director Steven Soderbergh, started his career taking it all off and has wanted to make a film about his eye-opening experiences ever since. Whether this will be the male version of *Showgirls* remains to be seen but advance reports (and a progression of shirtless stills) promise something quite diverting and hint at a gay twist.

That same week, Woody Allen stars—along with Alec Baldwin and queer audience faves Penelope Cruz, Ellen Page and others—in his latest comedy, **To Rome with Love** (June 29). The film is broken into four separate vignettes but, as usual, mums the word on the plot details.

The man who co-wrote "We've Only Just Begun," "I Won't Last a Day Without You," "Rainy Days And Mondays" and "The Rainbow Connection," and won an Oscar for his contributions to "Evergreen" from 1976's *A Star Is Born* is the subject of what promises to be a fascinating documentary portrait: **Paul Williams Still Alive** (June 29). Williams' diminutive presence was nearly ubiquitous throughout the 1970s. However, he disappeared from the mainstream decades ago, only to resurface in Stephen Kessler's documentary, which makes its Chicago debut at the Gene Siskel Film Center Friday, June 29. Williams will be on hand at the Saturday, June 30, screening.

July

Sony Pictures attempts to reboot a superhero franchise with **The Amazing Spider Man** (July 3), as cutie-pie Andrew Garfield bulks up and takes over the role from Tobey Maguire. Marc Webb directs, following up his charming romantic comedy *500 Days of Summer*. Hopefully, he'll be able to inject the movie with a healthy dose of freshness and vitality the series desperately needs.

Former gospel singer-turned-global pop sensation (and queer audience fave) Katy Perry takes a page from Madonna's *Truth or Dare* and is starring in **Katy Perry: Part of Me** (July 5), which is part documentary, part biopic and all Perry. The film includes footage from Perry's recent concert tour and includes segments on her childhood, her quickie marriage to Russell Brand, and charts her phenomenal rise to fame.

Director Christopher Nolan goes back to the



From left: Matthew McConaughey and Channing Tatum in *Magic Mike*. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

bat cave for the third (and what he says) is the final time with **The Dark Knight Rises** (July 20), which once again finds Christian Bale suiting up and protecting Gotham City. Anne Hathaway co-stars as Selina Kyle/Catwoman; Tom Hardy is the evil, hulking Bane; and Gary Oldman, Michael Caine and Morgan Freeman return in the roles in 2008's *The Dark Knight*.

The Music Box is bringing back its enormously popular **Sing-A-Long Mary Poppins** (July 21-22), which allows both the young and young at heart to enjoy Disney's 1964 supercalifragilisticexpialidocious musical classic that won Julie Andrews the Best Actress Oscar as the magical nanny and brought Dick Van Dyke screen immortality for his so-bad-it's-good cockney accent as Bert the chimney sweep.

Step Up: Revolution (July 27)—the fourth (can there really be four?) installment in the series of "dance off" urban films—centers yet again on a competition between a group of comely, dance-lovin' teens of indeterminate age (this one focusing on competing flash mobs in steamy Miami).

August

Colin Farrell and Kate Beckinsale take over the roles created by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sharon Stone in a remake of 1990's sci-fi hit **Total Recall** (Aug. 3). However, this new adaptation is said to be closer to the Philip K. Dick novel (boy, was he prolific) upon which both were based. Will this finally be the hit that puts the underrated Farrell—who has played gay in several films—back on the A-list?

One final action thriller worth checking out: **The Bourne Legacy** (Aug. 3), yet another at-

tempt at rebooting a franchise. Matt Damon as Jason Bourne, the rogue CIA agent who drove the series' first three films isn't back but all the other characters are, dealing with the fallout from Bourne's actions and finding themselves dealing with yet another cool, calculated agent (Jeremy Renner).

Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones play a couple seeking counseling after 30 years of marriage with therapist Steve Carell in the black comedy **Hope Springs** (Aug. 10). Streep has found financial and critical success (lots of it) in several movies counter programmed against the summer superhero juggernauts and this could be her latest. David Frankel, who guided Streep in her Oscar-nominated performance in *The Devil Wears Prada*, directs.

The Music Box is playing one of the years most talked about documentaries, **The Queen of Versailles** (Aug. 3), in which director Lauren Greenfield traces the building of the largest house in the United States by a billionaire couple—before the financial meltdown alters their ostentatious plans.

The late Whitney Houston has her final film role in **Sparkle** (Aug. 17), a remake of the 1976 backstage quasi-musical in which the title heroine (Irene Cara in the original, Jordin Sparks this time out) and her singing cohorts work at their dream of becoming stars. Inspired by the Supremes (and written before *Dreamgirls*), the movie is set in the '60s and focuses more heavily on the tricky relationship between Sparkle and her single mother (Houston)—one that escalates as fame starts to come.



Sparkle—the last film featuring Whitney Houston (above)—will be released in August.



Christian Bale is Batman one last time in *The Dark Knight Rises*. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

Moonrise Kingdom; High School; film notes

BY SAWYER J. LAHR

Moonrise Kingdom is one of Wes Anderson's most delightful pseudo-intellectual films, with him having helmed *Rushmore*, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*.

The puppy-love story between kleptomaniac bookworm Suzy (Kara Hayward) and orphan Khaki Scout Sam (Jared Gilman) is perfectly juvenile. Set on the fictional New England island of New Penzance, *Moonrise Kingdom* reimagines a more average childhood than in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, but Anderson's familiar stylized cinematography and elaborate production design are in full bloom here. Bob Balaban (*Howl*, *Capote*, *Midnight Cowboy*) is the omnipresent narrator who predicts a devastating storm and a high tide that will flood the island.

Anderson chooses to put his actors in absurd situations rather than somewhat realistic situations that are stranger than fiction, thus making *Moonrise Kingdom* part PG children's film and part uncouth adult live action/adventure comedy. It is the perfect summer movie and it's

to Sam as he dozes off smoking a pipe. They're like a charming senior couple that has settled into a routine.

Murray memorably struts around the house shirtless, wielding an axe and a liqueur bottle. McDormand is the world's most apathetic mom. She communicates with her kids by shouting through a bullhorn across the multilevel New England home. My favorite scenes are on the rocky shore of Chickchaw, where Suzy and Sam set up camp and listen to a record by an obscure French singer. The looks on their faces when Murray catches the couple half-clothed in bed together is one of those mutually embarrassing moments when parents discover their children are no longer innocent yet not quite pubescent. On the eve of the Hullabaloo scouting event, the scout troop—without their Scout Master—decide to stage a jailbreak to reunite the young lovers.

Like Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, *Moonrise Kingdom* is an operetta in its own right. The dialogue is painstakingly rhythmic, and the orchestral score by Alexandre Desplat



Edward Norton (center) stars in *Moonrise Kingdom*. Photo courtesy of Focus Features

a refreshing departure from the seasonal blockbuster fare, despite the good start this year with *The Avengers*.

Suzy's morose and incompetent parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop—played by Frances McDormand (*Fargo*) and Bill Murray (*Lost in Translation*)—go looking for the two pre-adolescent lovebirds who ran away together along the Harvest Migration Trail to Chickchaw. Soon Captain Sharp (Bruce Willis), Social Services (Tilda Swinton), militaristic Khaki Scout Master Ward (Edward Norton) and the entire island of New Penzance are searching the island for him. Harvey Keitel (*Thelma & Louise*, *Taxi Driver*) plays Commander Pierce, who's in charge of the larger scout camp where the great Jason Schwarzman (*Rushmore*, *I Heart Huckabees*) unofficially marries the couple in exchange for a golf ball can of nickels.

It's funny to see children imitate their adult counterparts. Suzy is the precocious eldest child who asserts her independence before she's hit the ripe age. She talks back to her parents and buries herself in many beautiful hand-drawn fantasy fiction books such as *The Girl From Jupiter* by Gertrude Pierce. Sam is an unwanted obsessive-compulsive orphan child whose foster parents, the Billingsleys, won't take him back after he goes missing. Suzy and Sam meet backstage at a school play and quickly become pen pals. That's how they plan their escape from their droll living situations. Suzy likes to steal her books from the library and read them aloud

keeps carries the story effortlessly. Although I don't remember anything but the trumpet waking me up at Boy Scout camp, I enjoyed the energizing marching music performed by Mark Mothersbaugh, Peter Jarvis and his drum corps. *Moonrise Kingdom* opened this year's Cannes Film Festival May 16 to great reviews and strong audience response. It opens on Friday, June 1, courtesy of Focus Features and India Brush Entertainment.

High School

Horror/Thriller film distributor Anchor Bay is growing ever larger with the recent *Coriolanus* and Madonna's *W.E.* The latest from this label is **High School**, the first feature by director John Stalberg, who also co-wrote the script with Eric Linthorst and Stephen Susco.

This low-brow comedy stars Adrien Brody (*Darjeeling Limited*; *The Pianist*) as pot dealer Psycho Ed; Michael Chiklis (TV's *The Shield*) as Principal Gordon; and Colin Hanks—who recently had a cameo on TV's *Happy Endings*, set in Chicago. *High School* is good for some cock jokes, locker-room nudity and stoner-specific references, but what takes it over the top is Psycho Ed's talking-frog and the animated "shroom" hallucinations.

The main characters are played by two relatively unknown actors, Matt Bush and Sean Marquette. Bush was in the frat comedy *Glory Daze* as well as *Adventureland*. In *High School*,

he plays Henry Burke, an MIT-bound, goody two-shoes high school senior who might have screwed up his scholarship and valedictorian status by taking an innocent toke of pharmaceutical-grade marijuana from his childhood friend, Breaux (Marquette), a Jonah Hill type. The friends share a misplaced sentimental moment when Breaux reminds Henry that they first bonded over having divorced parents.

What otherwise would have been innocent experimentation is exacerbated after an Asian-American spelling-bee student gets high before her turn at regional competition. Actress Julia Ling, as Charylne, has a hilarious moment on screen at the start of the film where she compares the word in question to diarrhea. "It's also a spray, but it comes out of a different orifice." The poor recreational user gets arrested for drug possession, spurring the racist high school principal (Chiklis) to conduct a school-wide drug screening.

For such a smart kid, Matt Bush agrees a little too easily to Breaux's half-baked, stoner fantasy plan to get the whole school "roasted" so everyone will fail the drug test so the results will be thrown out. That amounts to something like drug dealers getting all law enforcement officers high so they won't get arrested. Somehow, Henry thinks that Breaux's plan is better than no plan. The pair anger the big-time drug dealer in the city, Psycho Ed, by stealing his stash of potent pot crystals that will get the whole school progressively higher and higher.

Let it be noted that the theater for the preview screening was half-empty despite the draw of Adrien Brody and pot-smoking hijinks. At some point—a quarter of the way through the film—I felt like the filmmakers were trying to make a movie exclusively for stoners because the film tries to make its audience feel as high as the high school students and administrators who tasted the tainted brownies. It opens Friday, June 1, with a limited release.

Film notes:

—Donna Deitch, director of *Desert Hearts*, is co-chairing a screening and VIP reception of **Peace, Love, and Misunderstanding**, starring Jane Fonda, in New York City June 4 in association with Women's Media Center. The film is being distributed by IFC and will have a limited release starting June 9.

—**Snow White and the Huntsman** will open nationwide Friday, June 1. Charlize Theron (*Monster*) stars as the evil queen, and it co-stars Chris Hemsworth (*Thor*; *The Avengers*) and Kristen Stewart (*the Twilight* series). It is a Universal Pictures release.

'Big Bang' actor Parsons comes out

Actor Jim Parsons, 39—well-known as genius Sheldon Cooper on the TV show *The Big Bang Theory*—has officially come out of the closet in a *New York Times* item, according to a *Huffington Post* item.

He revealed his sexuality in an interview with *New York Times* writer Patrick Healy. Discussing Parsons' role in the 2011 revival of Larry Kramer's Broadway drama *The Normal Heart*, Healy writes that Parsons "is gay and in a 10-year relationship, and working with an ensemble again onstage was like nourishment, he said."

Although the *Times* doesn't identify Parsons' partner, the actor thanked Todd Spiewak when he won an Emmy two years ago.

Tabloids reported that Parsons and Spiewak became engaged; however, the wedding was allegedly called off because Parsons did not want children, the *Huffington Post* reported.

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SUMMER SPECIAL—
NUNN ON ONE: TV

Brooke Elliott: Leave it to 'Diva'



BY JERRY NUNN

Brooke Elliott has been knocking them dead on the Broadway stage from *Taboo* to *The Pirate Queen* and, for four seasons, on *Drop Dead Diva* on the Lifetime Channel.

On "Diva," she plays lawyer Jane Bingum, a plus-size woman who has her body inhabited by a wannabe model named Deb Dobkins—which makes for simultaneous comedy and drama. The show tackles relationships and court cases with a strong cast that includes gay fave Margaret Cho.

Windy City Times caught up with the multi-talented Elliott right before the new season started.

Windy City Times: Hi, Brooke. Good to finally track you down. I have been trying for

a few seasons and so excited about talking to you today.

Brooke Elliott: Oh, good.

WCT: You are originally born in Minnesota?

BE: Yes, I was born in Minnesota but we moved by the time I was 3, so I don't remember a lot about it. [Laughs]

WCT: Where did you go after that?

BE: We moved around a lot when I was kid. After that we went to Missouri, Oklahoma, Chicago, then to Michigan—so lots of moving.

WCT: I didn't know you lived in Chicago.

BE: My parents are from Chicago and my grandparents are there, also aunts and uncles and a lot of my cousins. I love Chicago. I love it!

WCT: Well, you have to come visit.

BE: Absolutely.

WCT: You have studied musical theater. Did you always love musicals?

BE: Yes, I did. It is funny because when I was little I thought I was going to be Barbra Streisand. I thought that is my path and I will just be Barbra. But as I got older and got into theater and realized I could major in that in college, which I didn't even know you could do, I did that and doors just kind of opened in that area. So I walked through them and luckily was able to do a lot of great shows.

WCT: Do you have an all-time favorite musical?

BE: I think my all-time favorite would be Jesus Christ Superstar.

WCT: That's a good one.

BE: I love that musical.

WCT: Do you watch the television show *Smash*?

BE: I do!

WCT: What led you to audition for *Drop Dead Diva*?

BE: The writer's strike had gone on around the time of the audition. When that was over I actually had an audition for a Broadway musical that day and for "Diva." It is funny because I thought there would be more chances of a job coming from the Broadway musical.

Obviously, I wanted to do a great job at that audition for *Diva* and, luckily, I think I did. I got to test and all of those other things. It was kind of a shock that things proceeded with *Diva* the way they did. I never thought they would.

WCT: Can you give our readers an overview of how things have changed since season one?

BE: In season one with Deb in Jane's body, the first and foremost dealing [involved] changes in the body type and her mindset in what beauty is. As we see her through the seasons, we find what is gorgeous about Jane and what makes her beautiful and how limited her thoughts were before. Through the seasons we really do focus on that. We focus on Deb's closed-mindedness and her self-involvement.

As she continues to grow and be confronted where she has to make a decision and take a stand. It is really fun to see that part come out, to see her grow and her mind expand and all the wonderfulness you get when you open your mind. That is how she develops from season to season.

WCT: What have you been able to tell people about the new season?

BE: Oooh, let's see. The new season is really fun. We leave off season three with Jane heading to Italy with Owen. We pick right up in Italy and that relationship with Owen. It continues to progress. You know Grayson gets involved in there too and starts noticing Jane. I think that will be really fun for the audience to see Grayson noticing Jane for the first time. It is bittersweet

because Jane has moved on.

WCT: You have had so many guest stars, including Kim Kardashian, this season. Have you had a favorite one?

BE: We have had so many amazing guests. One that probably stands out is Rosie O'Donnell because she was the start of my Broadway career. She gave me my Broadway debut so then to have her be on the show with me was really fun. She is such a supporter of mine and such a friend. She is a tremendous actress; I love working with Rosie. She is really good so I always love when she is on the show.

I love when they are all on the show and could give you a paragraph about each one of them!

WCT: You must like doing the dream sequences and doing musicals again.

BE: I always love those. It is a little bit of my history coming in. It is my home.

WCT: Having openly gay producer Josh Ber- man must have helped build a gay following.

BE: That is a very good question for Josh.

WCT: Well then, how is it working with gay advocate Margaret Cho?

BE: I love Margaret. She is so great. She has been one of the most supportive people in this whole show for me. She is kind, giving and funny. She is selfless and has zero ego. She is just a wonderful person.

WCT: Where do you find common ground with your character?

BE: I am kind of a mixture of Deb and Jane and then, of course, Brooke. With Deb, I relate to her girlie side. My bathroom is pink. I like makeup a lot. I love high heels and relate to that girlie side.

With Jane, there may have been times in my life where I was shyer or more insecure. I was good in school so I relate to that part of Jane.

I think both of them have a really big heart and that was important for me to give that to Jane. I wanted to make sure Deb and Jane had big hearts. I guess because I do, too!

The new season of *Drop Dead Diva* debuts Monday, June 4. Visit www.mylifetime.com for listings and *Diva* details.



Drop Dead Diva. Photo courtesy of Lifetime



Last year's *Glamorama*. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

Macy's announces Glamorama theme

The theme of Macy's Glamorama 2012 is "British Invasion: The Music Then. The Fashion Now!"

From The Beatles to The Rolling Stones, Macy's Glamorama 2012 will pay homage to some of the world's most well-known and respected British pop icons from the past 50 years.

The event will take place Friday, Aug. 10, at 8 p.m. at The Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St. Macy's on State Street will host an after-party.

Ticket prices are \$50 and \$75 for the show only; \$175 and \$285 for show and after-party;

and \$1,000 for the VIP show and after-party. For more information, visit www.macys.com/glamtickets. (The American Express Exclusive Pre-Sale will take place May 30-June 7 for American Express cardholders only.)

Jessica Halem show to benefit HBHC

Comedian (and former Chicagoan) Jessica Halem will return to the Windy City Wed., June 6, for a show to benefit Howard Brown Health Center.

The event will feature remarks by Halem and Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Bechara Choucair. There will also be cocktails and canapes.

It will take place at C-View rooftop bar and lounge at MileNorth Hotel, 166 E. Superior St.

RSVP to Lizzie Bright at 773-388-8992 or lizzieb@howardbrown.org by June 1.

CSO ending with 'Singin' in the Rain'

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has announced the addition of the movie musical *Singin' in the Rain* Friday, May 17, 2013, at 8 p.m. to complete its 2012/13 Friday Night at the Movies series.

Singin' in the Rain joins the 2012/13 series with *Disney Fantasia: Live in Concert* (Nov. 23, 2012) and *Hitchcock at the Movies: A Symphonic Celebration* (March 8, 2013).

Single tickets for all Friday Night at the Movies performances are \$69-\$267, and go on sale to the public Aug. 10. See www.cso.org or call 312-294-3000.



The queer trio **Gossip** returns with *A Joyful Noise*, its most pop effort to date. The lead single, "Perfect World," is a catchy, inspirational number straight from the '80s. "Get a Job" could have been lifted from a jam session with Scissor Sisters, whereas "Move in the Right Direction" seems like an outtake from Cyndi Lauper's *She's So Unusual*. Unfortunately, similar to 2009's *Music for Men*, *A Joyful Noise* is plagued with clichés as heard on "Get Lost," where Beth Ditto sings, "Get lost / You're dancing to the beat of a different drum."

Gossip is featured in the recent sexy Dior commercial. The ad has Charlize Theron running late to a fashion show, as golden-era actresses like Lauren Bacall and Marilyn Monroe are backstage. The Monster actress owns the catwalk in a gold gown as Gossip's "Heavy Cross" blares in the background.

Nina Sky released remixes to the scorching hot single "Day Dreaming." Here, identical twins Natalie and Nicole Albino sing in unison like only siblings can, over lively beats courtesy of remixes by DJ Yonny, Eli Escobar, Boson and Tonnesen Chains. Nicole is out and married to fashion designer Erin Magee. The forthcoming album, titled *Nicole & Natalie*, is due in July.

Last year Nina Sky collaborated with CREEP on the mesmerizing single "You." Its black-and-white video clip is brilliantly edited, as images of Nina Sky are spliced to the drum and bass beat.

This spring, singer-songwriter Jason Mraz made a video in support of same-sex marriage for Human Rights Campaign's "Americans for Marriage Equality." Now on the heels of the success of the breakout single "We Are Young," **fun.** is getting in on the fun. Guitarist Jack Antonoff

also contributed a video and told *Washington Post* that the band hopes to form an organization that is pro-same sex marriage. He said, "We're firm believers that if you're not talking about it, you're part of the problem." Members of fun. are straight.

I cannot stop raving about the album *Colours* by **Graffiti6**. Jamie Scott has a beautiful, soulful voice that works fabulously with retro-pop ditties like "Stare into the Sun" and "Free" as well as slower pieces like "This Man" and "Over You." The band has been dubbed as a You Outta Know: Artist on the Rise by VH1. The video for "Free" cracked the top 10 on the network's video countdown. Graffiti6 returns to Chicago with a headlining concert at Schubas, 3159 N. Southport Ave., on Friday, June 1.

I first heard of **Penguin Prison** because of its electro-fueled remix to Goldfrapp's "Rocket." The one-man band fronted by Chris Glover made a splash last year with the irresistible single "Don't Fuck with My Money." The accompanying video was filmed during Occupy Wall Street demonstrations. The self-titled album pairs his deep voice with '80s-inspired basslines, as if Rick Astley was working with Human League and Howard Jones. Penguin Prison comes to Chicago for a gig on Tuesday, June 5, at Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln Ave.

A stage production **The Marvin Gaye Story: Don't Talk about My Father, Because God Is My Friend** is scheduled to run through Sunday, July 29, at The Black Ensemble Theater, 4450 N. Clark St. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster. The musical was written, produced and directed by theater founder Jackie Taylor. Gaye's music challenges social issues ("What's Going On"), provides a romantic soundtrack ("Let's Get It On") and can fill the dance floor ("Got to Give It Up"). Let's not forget his magical duets with Tammi Terrell, either. His life story proves he was a "Trouble Man" with problems with drugs, women and his shocking murder. There have been rumors that a biopic on the "Sexual Healing" crooner is in the works. The all-star tribute album, *Inner City Blues*, came out in 1995.

Pride Month gets started properly with "**For Singing out Loud: A Pride Celebration of Singers, Songwriters and Icons**," on Sunday, June



Graffiti6. Photo by Marina Chavez

3, at Mayne Stage, 1328 W. Morse Ave. Here, local artists—including Amy Matheny, Beckie Menzie, Tom Michael, Meghan Murphy and Honey West—unite to cover beloved hits ranging from Cole Porter to Freddie Mercury and even Lady Gaga under George Howe's musical direction. For tickets and more information, visit www.mayne-stage.com.

Before **Cake Chicago** takes a summer hiatus, there will be one last show on Saturday, June 9 at The Red Line Tap, 7006 N. Glenwood Ave. The LGBTQA showcase will have a disco theme as well as performances by Milwaukee's Blue Sky Hour and Overstory; the PJ Harvey tribute band Rm:509; and Cake Chicago's mastermind, Ripley Caine. For more information, find "Cake Chicago" on Facebook.

Once again, Scott Free assembled a remarkable group of artists for this year's **Alt Q Music Festi-**

val. The audience was treated as Nhojj sang "The Gay Warrior Song." Jason Brooks of J.C. Brooks & the Uptown Sound alternated between poetry and music. He dedicated an ode to those we lost in the wave of queer youth suicides. Local duo Band Practice was backed by an accordion and a banjo then a guitar to support its social commentary. E. Nina Jay delivered powerful, thought-provoking poetry, while Alix Dobkin humored the crowd with her classics "Amazon ABC" and "Lesbian Code." Former Chicago native Daphne Willis closed the festival with a cover of "Eleanor Rigby" and her own material like "One by One." Broadway Youth Center was this year's beneficiary.

The season's hottest LGBT releases:

Adam Lambert – *Trespassing*
Brandi Carlile – *Bear Creek*
Girlyman – *Supernova*
Gossip – *A Joyful Noise*
Ian Wilson – *This Is Water*
Imani Uzuri – *The Gypsy Diaries*
Nina Sky – *Nicole & Natalie*
Rufus Wainwright – *Out of the Game*
Sam Sparro – *Return to Paradise*
Scissor Sisters – *Magic Hour*
Sigur Ros – *Valtari*
Sophie B. Hawkins – *Crossing*

Upcoming Chicago-area concerts:

Emeli Sande at Lincoln Hall on Wed., May 30
Graffiti6 at Schubas on Friday, June 1
Penguin Prison at Lincoln Hall on Tuesday, June 5
Cathy Richardson Band at Fitzgerald's on Friday, June 15
Kristin Chenoweth at Cadillac Palace Theatre on Saturday, June 16
Ruthie Foster at Space on Friday, June 22
Scissor Sisters at The Vic Theatre on Sunday, June 24
Sarah McLachlan at Ravinia on Saturday, June 30
Heart at The Venue at The Horseshoe Casino on Friday, July 6
Idina Menzel at Ravinia on Sunday, July 8
Chaka Khan at Taste of Chicago on Saturday, July 14
Rufus Wainwright at Bank of America Theatre on Wed., Aug. 8



Gossip. Press photo

Alison Krauss headlining 'Belt' gala June 7

Women's Health Foundation's (WHF) announced that Grammy winner Alison Krauss and lead singer/guitarist of her Union Station band, Dan Tyminski, will be headlining the fifth annual "Below the Belt Fighting for Women's Pelvic Health" gala Thursday, June 7, 6-11 p.m., at the Ravenswood Event Center, 4011 N. Ravenswood Ave.

During the program, WHF will award one deserving healthcare provider the Medical Activist Award and one patient the Passion Award, which recognizes a pelvic floor champion, a woman willing to inspire others with her story of healing. Nominations are now open and being accepted for the WHF Passion Award through www.belowthebeltgala.org.

For tickets and more information about the event, visit www.womenshealthfoundation.org.

Singer to pay tribute to Whitney June 2

Vanessa Holmes—who, among other things, was musical director of "Chicago's Tribute to the Motown Greats" concert—will perform her first one-woman show, "Lovin' You."

The show will take place Saturday, June 2, at Illinois Institute of Technology's McCor-

mick Auditorium, 3241 S. Federal St., at 8 p.m. During the show, Holmes will pay tribute to Whitney Houston, Chaka Khan, Minnie Riperton, Teena Marie and Etta James.

There will also be a VIP reception at 7 p.m. Illinois state Sen. Mattie Hunter and the What If...Carolyn Y. Adams Breast Cancer Foundation will be recognized for their efforts in the breast-cancer movement.

Advance tickets for the show are \$25 each; reception tickets are \$80. Call 708-533-6558 or email dmebain@aol.com.

One Direction in Chicago June 2

The British band One Direction will be hitting the road for its first-ever headlining North American tour in support of its debut album, *Up All Night*. Among the stops is a show at Chicago's Allstate Arena June 2.

The band—made up for five men aged 18-20—recently made history as the first British group to debut at number one on the Billboard charts.

One Direction is known for the single "What Makes You Beautiful." On April 7, the band was the musical guest on *Saturday Night Live*; the host was actress Sofia Vergara.

In addition, Live Nation has announced that the band will perform at First Midwest Bank Amphitheatre in Tinley Park July 13, 2013. (Tickets are on sale April 21, 2012.)

See www.LiveNation.com for tickets.

SUMMER SPECIAL: MUSIC

The trouble with Adam Lambert

Pop star talks 'novelty' of his homosexuality, being an unfit role model and his peculiar sex toy

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Remember the fuss Adam Lambert caused when he tongued his keyboardist in front of the world? Of course you do. The controversial kiss drew both homophobic outbursts and so-what shrugs, and it's an American Music Awards moment that won't soon be forgotten—especially by Lambert himself.

"That was an interesting night," he says, snickering in his charmingly guy-next-door way about that seminal smooch. "That AMAs performance was trespassing, in a way." And, on his latest album, he's not done crossing the line: *Trespassing* is the defiant second to the American Idol spawn's 2009 debut.

In this candid interview with Lambert, the pop star opened up about the "redundant" press questions regarding his sexuality, becoming more confident as an out celebrity, and breaking the rules—and going to jail for it.

Windy City Times: What does the album title, *Trespassing*, mean to you?

Adam Lambert: Being who I am in this music environment is trespassing, and that's why Pharrell [Williams] and I wrote it about that. We had a big conversation about the music industry and the business and being an artist, and then on top of it, being somebody that's different, being a gay man and being in an industry where it's not very common, not very present. Kind of feeling like I'm gonna own this, march forward and ignore any kind of sign or person telling me no. I'm gonna do what I wanna do and not feel sorry for myself.

WCT: Is anything you do for shock value premeditated?

Lambert: No; I don't think, "OK, I want to piss people off now" or "I want to shock people." I kind of, especially after the (AMAs), go with what I want to do musically. That's been more in the forefront for me in my decision-making. I think just kind of being, and being unapologetic for being, is a risk in and of itself in today's music industry.

WCT: Was the AMAs kiss good for you?

Lambert: I don't even know. I was in such autopilot. It was one of those weird moments that just kind of happened. Some of the choreography earlier in the number was planned, but that whole moment with him was just, "Oh my god, now we're kissing!"

WCT: You've spoken with gay publications and mainstream publications. How is it different talking to each?

Lambert: I try not to make it any different. That's been one of my big goals, especially with this album. This time around I'm trying to just adopt a post-gay mentality about it, because I'm so proud of who I am and I'm 100 percent positive about it and I celebrate it—but I also think it's a bit dated to harp on it and to lean on it and to constantly be defined by your sexuality.

I think that gay men and women who live their lives as gay men and women understand that and understand that it's just another part of who they are. Unfortunately, with some mainstream publications, it's such a novelty for them to be able to talk about it. It's such a hot-button issue that it becomes the focus of a lot of discussion.

WCT: Does that bother you?

Lambert: [*Hesitates*] It gets a bit redundant,

gets a little old. It's something I've made peace with; I'm trying to just look at it from the other point of view and realize that a lot of the questions are legitimate for someone who doesn't understand. I think the way to progress and confront ignorance is information. You start talking about things and we get past them. So, yeah, it gets a bit redundant, but I feel like at this point, it just comes with the territory that I'm trespassing on.

WCT: What challenges have you run into as not just an artist but a gay artist?

Lambert: Well, there's a huge double standard. Straight artists are constantly toying with images of sexuality and double-entendre lyrics; when a gay male artist does, it raises a lot more eyebrows. I'm trying to find the balance, and I think this album has found a balance. It's not shying away from it at all—my sexuality or who I am or my identity—but it's also universal. All of these ideas are universal: how I feel, wanting to go get laid, to go have a couple drinks with my friends and get a little nasty.

Hopefully, for an open-minded individual, no matter what their sexual preference is, they'll relate. Everybody feels that way. Everybody wants to have a good time, let go and feel free, no matter who you are. What's cool about the album is that it does specifically address my lifestyle and my experience in nightlife and in relationships, but I think it can reach anybody.

WCT: Does being a gay celebrity put pressure on you to spearhead the gay movement? To have to be more political?

Lambert: I don't feel pressure to be political, but I do feel pressure to raise social awareness and to help be a confident voice for perhaps a young gay teenager who doesn't really have a lot to look up to. I also find it dangerous, because I don't always consider myself the best role model in the world. [*Laughs*]

WCT: Why do you say that?

Lambert: Because I'm not here to teach anybody how to be gay and I'm not here to teach anybody how to be the best person. I'm not always the best example. I make mistakes and I do things that are out-there sometimes, but what I hope to inspire is the sense that people can be who they want to be. I always say, "Don't do what I do; do what you want to do." I hope that I can inspire people to take control and charge of their own reality.

WCT: What can we expect from this album?

Lambert: One of the best parts about the album, as well as it being about an out and proud gay man, is that the first half of the album is very upbeat and electro-funk-dance-pop, and a lot of the things expressed in the first half of that album are rebelliousness and liberation and these kind of anthemic calls to arms. It explores, as gay men and people in general, that when we go out into the world we have to put on our game face.

You want to go out and feel fierce, and that fierce thing that we all put on is sometimes like an outfit: We dress it up and we project fierceness, but what lies underneath is sometimes weakness and vulnerability and pain and darkness. The album transitions into that place midway through—it's very dark and quite sad and it's dealing with heartache and insecurity. It shows a lot about what lies underneath the surface of me, but I think we all can relate to that. We all want to be our fiercest self, and it takes a certain amount of posturing and peacocking to be that. I hope people can find themselves in this music.



Adam Lambert. Photo by Lee Cherry

WCT: Tell me about the song "Outlaws of Love."

Lambert: That song actually is about everything—it's about gay marriage, it's about every challenge that we face as a community, including gay marriage, but it's more about that emotion of what it feels like when you're being persecuted or outlawed or shunned because of whom you choose to love.

WCT: You've been reluctant to talk about politics in the past. But something seems to have changed in you; you've been more open to discussing politics and equal rights. What changed?

Lambert: You know what I think? It's so fast. All of a sudden, everyone's talking about me and I'm on the cover of a magazine. No matter how well-adjusted you are, that's a weird thing to get used to. Over the past several years, with the first album and the first tour, I've got more comfortable in the public eye and I've gotten to know my fans more and I've sussed out who I want to be as an artist.

WCT: But not just as an artist, [but] as a gay man in the public eye too, right?

Lambert: Yeah, as a person. Totally. I've kept a lot of my close friends close and my family is still close to me, but of course this type of experience and this flip in your lifestyle causes you to adjust—and that includes as a gay man. I've had to adjust and reassess things and evolve a little bit, and that's because of age, too. When I started I was 27, and I just turned 30—those three years are a big three years. My perspective is just different—it's different because of celebrity, but also just because of life.

WCT: What's one piece of advice from American Idol that you've held on to?

Lambert: I had a lot of support from my circle of friends who were like, "Just do what you've always done. It doesn't matter that you're on TV now; just do what you've always known." The hardest thing about the show is all of a sudden, there's all this pressure and all these factors that you aren't used to as a performer, and you have to tune it out and just trust your own gut and try to maintain that sense of integrity. And it's not easy. Then, transitioning into the music industry is the same challenge. You're like, "OK, well, I gotta play the game but I also want to do what I want to do, so how do I do that?"

WCT: You were in the slammer for a few

hours for fighting with your boyfriend, Sauli Koskinen, outside a gay bar in Finland. Did it fulfill any fantasies of yours?

Lambert: [*Laughs*] Uh, no. Actually, it was horrifying. I was by myself; there wasn't anybody else in there. It was a private cell. It was a very embarrassing moment and not something that I'm proud of. I have plenty of friends who have had crazy nights and things have happened, and these things do happen to regular people; I am a regular person, but I just happen to have a higher profile. I've tried to walk away from the experience and learn a lesson from it and make some adjustments and try not to let it ever happen again. It definitely wasn't as dramatic as the media made it out to be, but it also wasn't something to laugh about.

WCT: So it's not true what they say about young guys in jail?

Lambert: Not from my experience!

WCT: What's different about maintaining a relationship in the public eye versus out of it?

Lambert: People wanting to know what's up and asking questions. But I don't know. To be honest with you, I only maintained one relationship out of the public eye, so I'm kind of inexperienced either way. [*Laughs*] I was a bachelor for a long time! I definitely played the field. So I think just being in a relationship that's become quite domestic actually feels really good; it's something I hadn't really experienced much before, and I'm really enjoying it. It actually fits in quite well with my new lifestyle because it's more private, it's more at-home, and that's nice.

WCT: Do you want to be married and raise a family?

Lambert: Yeah, someday. I definitely want that for myself at some point. I don't know when that's going to be. In fact, I don't know if it's anytime soon. I'm really excited that our society is progressing. Everybody has the divine right to marry whoever the fuck they want. The funny thing about being a gay celebrity is all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, are you going to get married since that's the new big struggle and that's the thing everyone is fighting for?" And I'm like, "I can fight for it without getting married myself." I don't need to get married for my people. That's silly.

WCT: What does it take to be a Glambert?

Lambert: Reckless abandon. [*Laughs*] I think that any sort of diehard fandom is a crazy, surreal mentality. That's part of the fun for the Glamberts; they've given themselves permission within that community to be kind of insane. And it's gorgeous and it's fun and it's an escape. It's not real life—it's something else. Everybody wants that in some form or another. We all have our different versions of it. For people who are diehard fans, that's their way, that's their obsession and that's their outlet.

WCT: Tell me your best crazed-fan story.

Lambert: Well, I've gotten a lot of very interesting gifts. I don't know what they're called specifically, but I remember opening up this small box and it was this metal sex toy and I think you stick it in the tip of your dick—a urethra rod or something. I don't know what the fuck it is. [*Laughs*]

WCT: Did you use it?

Lambert: I definitely did not use that. That is not my style. I looked at it and said, "What the hell is that?" And somebody had to answer that for me and then I went, "OK, I'm gonna pass."

WCT: Did you at least regift it?

Lambert: As a joke, I did. I think I gave it to Raja [season three winner of RuPaul's Drag Race]. He actually was my makeup artist on my tour that same year. I think I gave it to him. I doubt that he kept it, but I know he laughed quite hard.

WCT: Who knows where it is right now.

Lambert: Or what it's being used for!

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com.

SUMMER SPECIAL
NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Rapper Rye Rye: On '21 Jump Street,' gay award shows

BY JERRY NUNN

Ryeisha Berrain is taking over the hip-hop world as Rye Rye, teaming with some of the brightest and biggest stars in the music business.

Her new album, *Go! Pop! Bang!*, was released last week and is full of upbeat tracks featuring artists M.I.A., Akon and Robyn.

Her single "Boom Boom" brought her attention at the recent NewNowNext awards on the Logo Channel and she even dabbled a little in acting this year with *21 Jump Street*.

Rye Rye broke it down to Windy City Times about the new music and more.

Windy City Times: Hi, Rye! Where are you calling in from?

Rye Rye: Baltimore.

WCT: Of course—that's where you are from and I heard your music described as a Baltimore sound. What does that mean, exactly?

RR: Baltimore is its own type of music. You are from Chicago, right?

WCT: Yes.

RR: Well, you guys have house music. We have Baltimore club music. We use a lot of heavy beats. It is dance music but it is more heavy. It is grimmer, but it is similar to house music like you have there.

WCT: It seems like good music to blast in your car on a summer day.

RR: Yeah, it is crazy.

WCT: The new album is finally being released. There are several tracks with M.I.A. on there. How did you meet her in the first place?

RR: She came to Baltimore to work with Blaqstarr. He called me to the studio and said someone wanted to meet me. When I got there it was M.I.A. and DJ Diplo so that is how I met her.

WCT: She has been a fan of your work and you are on her music label now.

RR: Yes. When I first met her I didn't know anything about her. For me it was learning about who her and Diplo were. Then when I heard her music I said, "Shit, we do almost the same thing!"



Rye Rye. Press photo

WCT: Did you see her on the Super Bowl?

RR: No, actually I missed it. I was flying but I heard about it.

WCT: I like the track "Never Will Be Mine" with Robyn. You have some similarities with sounding alike.

RR: Yeah, I feel like Robyn did more house music before and now she is more Euro. That song will make you dance.

WCT: How was it performing on the NewNowNext Awards?

RR: It was awesome. I didn't really know I was performing. I saw someone mentioning it on Twitter but I didn't know about it. Eventually I thought it was a cool idea because I am a big gay lover. I love gay people. They are the

most fun people in the world so when I found out I was doing that show I was truly excited. It turned out to be great and I got good feedback. People said I stole the show. It was dope!

WCT: Speaking of your LGBT friends, you did the Club Skirts Dinah party also.

RR: Yes, it was so much fun to be a part of it.

WCT: You should come do a festival here in Chicago this summer.

RR: I know. I can't wait to come back. Every time I come there it is so cold so the summer sounds good.

WCT: Did you enjoy doing some acting in the movie 21 Jump Street?

RR: Yes; it was fun, actually. I was a little scared at first because I had never acted before. I was nervous but it was a great experience. Everyone was like me—down-to-earth—so it was cool.

WCT: You did the theme song with Esthero. I am such a fan of hers.

RR: I hadn't met her before and didn't know her music. They sent me the idea to do the theme song. At the time when I did it I had no idea who would be singing it or anything. I did my part and waited for it to come out. I love her now!

WCT: So it was put together later?

RR: Yes; we didn't go into the studio together.

WCT: That's how it is these days.

RR: It happens all the time. Me and Robyn did that separate, too.

WCT: I am sure you are ready for the new album to come out finally. It has been a long process.

RR: Yeah, it has been a minute. I want people to run out and get it.

WCT: I like your eye shadow, by the way...

RR: Why thank you!

Speaking of makeup, purchase the album at www.ryeremusic.com/order and receive her specially branded nail polish.



GLHF GAY AND LESBIAN HALL OF FAME 2012 CELEBRITY BOWL FUNDRAISING EVENT

Saturday, June 9th

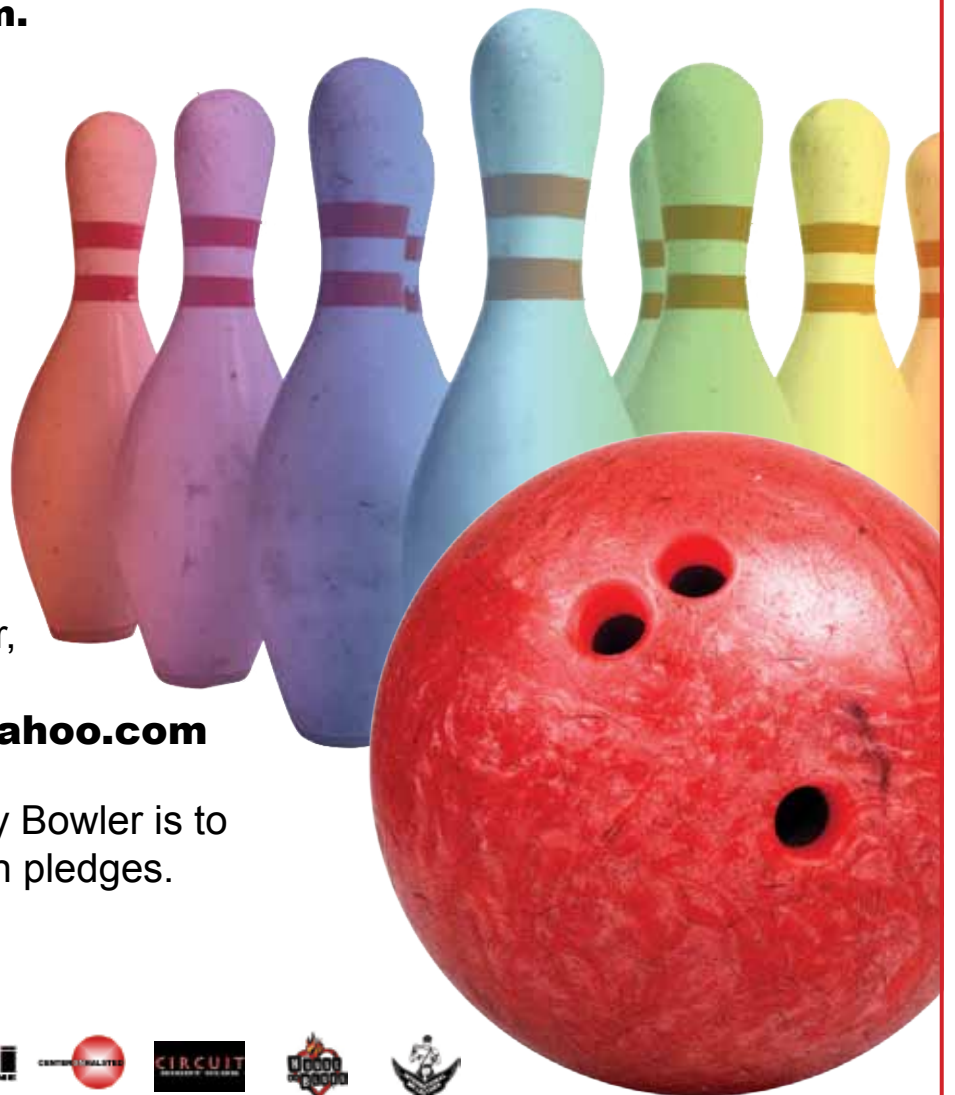
Registration: 10-11 a.m.

Bowling: 11 a.m.-noon

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WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES



New England Seafood Company

BY MEGHAN STREIT

Are you planning a lovely summer getaway to Martha's Vineyard or Kennebunkport, Maine, to enjoy fresh fish and ocean breezes? Well, good for you. For the rest of us, I can offer a bit of consolation. You can find out-of-this-world lobster rolls and other East Coast specialties (minus the ocean breezes) at New England Seafood Company, a no-frills eatery and fish market on Lincoln Ave. in Lakeview.

The space is brightly lit, you order at the counter, vie with other diners for a table and, if you bring wine (which you should), you'll be drinking it out of plastic cups. But, none of that matters because the food here is just that good.

The lobster bisque is flavorful, but not too rich. At \$3.95 for a small cup, which is actually quite large, it's a great deal. I actually, to my surprise, liked the clam chowder even more than the lobster bisque. It was creamy and packed with big chunks of fresh seafood. I've eaten many an inferior bowl of clam chowder for three times the price of this delicious soup.

For entrees, you can choose from among a selection of baked, pan-seared, grilled, and my personal recommendation—fried—fish. The fish-and-chips dinner is a generous portion of expertly fried haddock and crispy fries. If you want to try a little bit of everything, I recommend the Fisherman's Platter, which is a heaping mound of fried shrimp, clams, calamari and other breaded fish on top of fries. You can't go wrong with that.

Truly, every morsel I tasted at New England Seafood Company was fantastic, but there's no debating that the star of this show is the lobster roll. Transplants from the Eastern Seaboard will be delighted to find a local joint that knows how to make a proper lobster roll, and native Chicagoans will be pleasantly surprised (and instantly addicted). The lobster roll is served on a but-



The fresh fish case (above) and lobster roll with homemade chips (below) at New England Seafood Company. Press photos

tered and grilled hot dog bun—as all lobster-roll purists know it should be. The bun is jam packed with big chunks of meaty lobster that are tossed in butter—not mayo as you might find on some less authentic lobster rolls. Trust me, this lobster roll is plenty decadent without the mayo, but if you want to add some, they have packets available.

The lobster roll is served with crisp coleslaw and homemade potato chips that are still warm from the fryer. This is one simple but phenomenal meal that I can confidently say is worth every penny of the \$16.95 it will set you back. The roll itself is not huge, but they don't skimp on the lobster and you won't be leaving hungry.

If you want to DIY your New England experience here in Chicago, this restaurant is also a fish market, so you've got plenty of options. You can choose your favorite seafood from the refrigerated case packed with large selection of fresh fish or the saltwater tank filled with live lobsters, and then cook it all up at home. New England Seafood Company also has a full catering menu, which includes all the fixings for an authentic lobster boil—right down to the drawn butter, lobster bibs and Whoopie pies for des-

sert. Or, just grab a couple of lobster rolls to go and head down to the lakefront for lunch. It will be your own little East Coast "staycation."

New England Seafood Company is located at 3341 N. Lincoln Ave.; call 773-871-3474 or visit www.neseafoodcompany.com.



DINING NEWS

COMPILED BY ANDREW DAVIS

—Executive Chef Perry Hendrix has revealed the dinner menu for **Maison**, 333 E. Benton Pl.—a 140-seat brasserie featuring classic, every day French fare—opened May 25. Items include chilled seafood such as iced oysters and poached shrimp; cheese and meats like chicken liver terrine; and entrees such as Parisian gnocchi and slow-cooked duck confit. See www.maisonbrasserie.com.

—**La Creperie Restaurant**, 2845 N. Clark St., will celebrate its 40th anniversary this week with a week full of specials and events (with original prices June 1). Originally opened in 1972 by Germain Roignant, La Creperie is considered the oldest family-owned French creperie in the United States, and has a menu that specializes in a variety of both sweet and savory crepe dishes. See www.LaCreperieUSA.com or call 773-528-9050.

—**McDonald's Corp.** has voted down a proposal to assess its impact on public health, particularly childhood obesity, according to Advertising Age. The consumer-watchdog group Corporate Accountability International brought the proposal. Outgoing McDonald's CEO Jim Skinner said the chain has set the bar in the fast-food industry when it comes to improving the nutritional value of its items.

—**Cafe des Architectes** (located at Sofitel Chicago Water Tower, 20 E. Chestnut St.) is hosting "Les Amis du Chef" Thursday, June 7. The cocktail reception is at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. Chef Greg Biggers and Pastry Chef Patrick Fahy will welcome guest chefs Justin White of Small Bar and Dirk Flanigan of Henri and The Gage, along with Master Sommelier Serafin Alvarado of Southern Wine & Spirits. The cost is \$90; see <http://lesamisduchef.eventbrite.com>.

—**Kanela Breakfast Club**, 3231 N. Clark St., invites guests to indulge in its weekly menu specials. Featured specials include the Breakfast Burger, steak and eggs, a French toast flight and more. There are also a daily bottomless mimosa special (for \$18) and a Kanela Latte (cinnamon-flavored Kahlua, coffee and steamed milk for \$7), among other drink specials. See www.KanelaCafe.com.

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Summer begins with a Memorial Day weekend to remember

Chicago was the center of the gay universe this past weekend, playing host to International Mr. Leather XXXIV, Bear Pride XVIII, the Grabby Awards and many other reasons to celebrate. Windy City Times was there. Look for many more photos from all these events online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and in next week's issue of Nightspots.



International Mr. Leather claims his sash

Woody Woodruff (Mr. Michigan Leather 2012) was chosen as the new International Mr. Leather on Sunday, May 27 at Hyatt Regency Chicago. First runner-up A.C. Demidont (Mr. Eagle New York 2012) and second runner-up Kevin Jordan (Mr. DC Eagle 2012) shared the spotlight at the contest, now in its 34th year. Entertainment included singer Sharon McNight and comedy writer Bruce Vilanch.

Photos by Verdell Shannon

To the victors go the spoils



Images from the official International Mr. Leather XXXIV Victory Party, Sunday, May 27 at House of Blues. Left to right: International Mr. Leather 2012 Woody Woodruff; second runner-up Kevin Jordan; first runner-up A.C. Demidont.

Photos by Dave Ouano

Getting 'Grabby'



The shining stars of the gay adult film industry, um ... came to Chicago for the 2012 Grabby Awards, Saturday, May 26 at Park West Chicago, 322 W. Armitage Ave. The porn stars (and their adoring fans) partied throughout the weekend at such locations as Spin, Hydrate, North End, Lucky Horseshoe and Charlie's.

Photos by Anthony Meade



'Market'-ing 101: Leather Basics



Vendors hawked their wares (and underwears) at the IML Leather Market in the Riverside Center of the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

Photos by Ross Forman



Welcome to the Bearpawcalypse



Bear Pride XVIII: Bearpawcalypse clawed it way through town last weekend as well. This early-bird party at Touché, Thursday, May 24 was just one of many bear-ish get-togethers.

Photos by Kirk Williamson



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ARTISTS

CALL FOR ARTISTS: SKOKIE ART GUILD'S 51st ANNUAL ART FAIR. July 14th & 15th, 2012. Fine art. Prizes and awards. Held on the Village Green, 5211 W. Oakton St., downtown Skokie, IL. apply now. For applications or information: skokieart@aol.com or 847-677-8163. www.skokieartguild.org (6/27/12)

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About the Gay & Lesbian Community Survey®: Tremendous strides toward full equality have been achieved by our communities over the past decade. There's Power in Our Pride. Power to make a difference!

Gay and lesbian survey studies have opened doors (and minds) in leading corporations and organizations, which in turn have recognized the value of their LGBT employees through the establishment of equal hiring policies and domestic partner benefits. This has been a catalyst, leading to sweeping changes in political and social inclusivity.

Demographic reports also influence marketing investment. Virtually absent until recently, we now see a growing variety of products and services represented in gay media, celebrating our diversity. Ads keep LGBT publications and websites in business, serving their communities with independent news and information.

Beyond simply advertising, though, these companies support us in many ways, including sponsoring community events and funding community-based charities in order to earn our loyalty.

Taking an annual pulse on market trends through surveys helps demonstrate the LGBT community's growing power, and influences positive change.

We respect your privacy. All personal survey data is held securely by Community Marketing, Inc., a gay-owned and operated, independent market research and communications firm based in San Francisco, and will not be sold to third parties or used for marketing purposes. CMI was founded in 1992 and is proudly NGLCC-Certified. Thank you!



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Wed., May 30

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Win Scissor Sisters Tickets at MaryOke! Win a pair of tickets to see Scissor Sisters at the Vic on Pride Sunday. Come to MaryOke with DJ Hamybear and sing one of the mystery songs from the mystery hat. At midnight, a winner will be chosen from all songs sung that night. Other fun prizes too. 9pm, Mary's Attic, 5400 N Clark St., www.hamburgermarys.com/chicago

Subject to Change Presents: Roots and Fruits Featuring DJs Josie Bush, Miss Summer Clearance and Panakin Skywalker, plus special guest host Shea Coulee. No suggested donation so tip your bartenders extra well and chip in for a copy of our community zine. 9pm, The Burlington, 3425 W. Fullerton Ave., www.facebook.com/events/216568248462203/

Thursday, May 31

The Chicago Underground Film Festival Through June 7. 12pm, Siskel Film Center, 164 N State St., www.siskelfilmcenter.org

ZACH TRACK Friday, June 1

Teen marriage-equality activist Zach Wahls will be at Deloitte, 111 S. Wacker Dr.

Photo by Jerry Nunn



Cirque Shanghai: Year of the Dragon Running May 24-September 3, rain or shine, at the Pepsi Skyline Stage, the 1,500-seat, canopied, open-air theater on Navy Pier. 2pm-4pm, Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave., www.navypier.com

Personal PAC The Power of Choice Rockin' at the House of Blues with top leaders. Inside information and silent auctions. 5:30pm-8:30pm, House of Blues, 329 N Dearborn St., www.personalpac.org/events/power-of-choice

VICTORY: The Triumphant Gay Revolution signing Book signing, dinner and presentation by Linda Hirshman on her latest book, the story of how a dedicated and resourceful minority transformed the notion of American equality and forged a classic campaign for cultural change that will serve as a model for all future political movements. Cash bar reception, dinner \$30. RSVP by phone. 5:30pm, 312-922-8080, The Cliff Dwellers Club 200 S. Michigan Ave., 22nd Floor

Inside Out Faith with Jennifer Knapp

Part concert, part storytelling event, Inside Out Faith is about breaking the cone of silence experienced by many LGBT people of faith. 7pm-8:30pm, 773-281-3355, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St., www.facebook.com/themarinfoundation/app_366157543414218

Qweirdo! A recurring showcase of Chicago's top gay comedians, improvisers and artists coming together every Thursday at 10 from May 31 to June 28. Featuring Cameron Esposito (stand-up), Rhea Butcher (stand-up), Gerald: The Harold's Gay Brother (improv) and 1, 2, 3, Fag! (improv). 10pm-11:30pm, iO Chicago, 3541 N. Clark St.

Friday, June 1

Zach Wahls: Taking Risks to Achieve Success Zach, then a 19-year-old University of Iowa student, addressed the Iowa House of Representatives regarding a proposed state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. Hours later, his speech was posted on YouTube and quickly went viral. 3:30 pm doors open, 4-4:45 pm presentation, reception follows. RSVP by May 25; 3:30pm, 111 S. Wacker Dr., www.deloitte.com

The Sacred Sexiness of the Jewish Way Shabbaton with Rabbi David Dunn Bauer, Bringing our sexual selves into prayer and worship; bringing our sacred selves into our sexual relationships. Wine and cheese reception at 7pm, program at 8pm. A Shabbaton is an educational event or program held on Shabbat (Friday evening and Saturday). office@OrChadash.org; 7pm, 773-929-6139, Congregation Or Chadash, 5959 N. Sheridan Rd., www.orchadash.org

Sky opening night vs Indiana Fever Celebrate Pride with the Sky; 7:30pm, Allstate Arena, 6920 N Mannheim Rd, Des Plaines, Tickets: http://www.wnba.com/sky/splash_intro_11.html

Jeff Dean in Judy, Liza & Ethel: Exploited Again! Two mothers. Two daughters. Three very complicated, interconnected personalities. They've been examined, re-examined, reported on, gossiped about and psychologically probed. Jeff Dean with musical director Beckie Menzie tries to boil all that down to a nutshell (no pun intended). 8pm-9:30pm, 773-278-1830, Davenport's, 1383 N Milwaukee Ave., www.davenportspianobar.com

Steamwerkz The Musical preview Wide-eyed gay boy comes to Chicago looking for love in all the wrong places when he stumbles on a popular bathhouse, Steamwerkz. As our hero makes his way through the labyrinth of the bathhouse, he meets a host of fun, sexy and antagonizing characters. Previews continue June 8 and 15.

Opening June 22 and shows every Friday through Aug. 31. No show Aug. 17. \$20, \$15 students and preview. 10pm, Annoyance Theatre, 4830 N. Broadway, www.theannoyance.com

Dance Off With Your Pants Off: Summer Kickoff Everyone's favorite party is back and ready to kick off the Summer! Get on your finest summertime undies or swim trunks and come over to Scarlet! Featuring DJ DOLO; 10pm, Scarlet Bar, 3320 N Halsted St., www.scarletbarchicago.com

Saturday, June 2

Windy City Gay Idol Semifinals City Gay Idol continues the search for the best LGBT singers in the Windy City. 2pm door opens; 3pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., www.windycitymediagroup.com

Girls' Night Out concert and Pride dance Artemis Singers, Chicago's lesbian feminist chorus, will present a concert and dance spotlighting the music of 20th-century girl groups. Suggested donation advance \$15 for adults, \$10 for children. At door, suggested donation are \$20 for adults, \$10 for children and includes admission to both events. 7:30pm, Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N Broadway, www.artemissingers.org

Singer to pay tribute to Whitney, Chaka Vanessa Holmes's first one-woman show, "Lovin' You" a tribute to Whitney Houston, Chaka Khan, Minnie Riperton, Teena Marie and Etta James. VIP reception at 7pm dmebain@aol.com; 8pm, 708-533-6558, Illinois Institute of Technology, 3300 S. Federal

Chow Down A night of performances by William (of RuPaul's Drag Race), Detox and Vicky Vox. Hosted by Dida Ritz. Two performances at 11 pm and 1 am. Doors open at 8. \$15 presale, \$20 at the door, \$25 VIP meet and greet (limited quantity available), \$150 ultimate VIP package includes 4 VIP tix and 4 Rebels Vodka bottle service. 8pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

Sunday, June 3

Urban Village Church: Andersonville service Andersonville is a neighborhood full of passion, art, diversity, and eclectic energy, all which makes Urban Village Church thrilled to be joining the community! 10:30am-11:45am, 1602 W. Ainslie (at Ashland), www.newchicagochurch.com

Urban Village Church Spiritual worship is about coming together as community to make space for God to move in us. 10:15am-11:30am, Urban Village Church, Spertus Institute, 610 S. Michigan Ave., www.urbanvillagechurch.org

The Ultimate Burlesque Brunch - A Benefit for Lambda Legal TheQu and Lambda Legal Chicago Leadership Council is kicking-off Pride Month with a very special burlesque brunch to benefit Lambda Legal. Featuring some of Chicago's premiere LGBTQ burlesque performers, the event will also include two complimentary cocktails and a light brunch. Hosted by Xandra Fairlawn. Performances by Holly Deck, Cruel Valentine & Kyle Greer, Tito Bonito and Po' Chop. Photos by A/S/L Media. \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door and includes food, two cocktails and entertainment. Purchase tickets at this link <http://bit.ly/IHmxfM>. 12pm-3pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., www.brownpapertickets.com/event/246851

Women's Singer Songwriter Shakedown 2012 Come out and support musicians from all over as they compete to open for nationally-acclaimed singer/songwriting star and community advocate Chely Wright at Back Lot Bash on Friday, June 22. No cover. 5pm-9pm, Mary's Attic, 5400 N Clark St., www.hamburgermarys.com/chicago

Monday, June 4

Women for Lisa Madigan Book Party Jodee Blanco, featured author Fundraiser, recep-



IDOL TIME

Saturday, June 2

The Windy City Gay Idol semifinals will take place at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Photo by Jerry Nunn

tion, book sale & signing. Blanco is an authority on school bullying and the author of the best-selling Please Stop Laughing at Me: One Woman's Inspirational Story. 5:30pm, Studio Paris at Paris Club, 59 W. Hubbard St., www.lisamadigan.org/events/wflm2012

LGBT Narcotics Anonymous LGBT meetings take place Mondays. For more info, call Anthony Oltean at 312-208-4021. 8pm-9pm, Haymarket Center, 20 N. Sangamon St.

Live Band Karaoke with Amy Armstrong Every Monday night at 10 p.m. in the front bar, hosted by the one and only Amy Armstrong; Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St., www.roscoes.com

Tuesday, June 5

Drag Race with Frida Lay Chicago's only amateur drag contest, hosted by Frida Lay! A hit at Roscoe's since its premier in 2000. 9pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St, Chicago, www.roscoes.com

Eva Gabrielsson, author "There Are Things I Want You to Know" Life partner of writer Stieg Larsson offers a series of revealing vignettes about the Millennium Trilogy author and their 32-year relationship. Tickets required; 7:30pm, 773-769-9299, Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Wed., June 6

Personal Insurance and Benefits: Understanding Your Options Speakers: Jason Ott, Aon, Jim Harbert, Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP; 5pm-7pm, Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP Offices, 222 N. LaSalle St., www.surveymonkey.com/s/xmbvvyvm

PFLAG National Celebrates the Heartland Second annual celebration of PFLAG in the heartland. Drinks, food and an opportunity to honor several members of the Chicago community who have worked tirelessly to move equality forward. Cocktail reception 6pm. Honors at 7pm. \$75 PFLAG Member Admission, \$100 General Admission, \$200 VIP Admission. Event Co-Chairs: Charles R. Middleton, PhD, President, Roosevelt University; Pamela Tate, President and CEO, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning; 6pm-10pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St., <http://community.pflag.org/chicago>

Cocktails and Canapes Remarks by Bechara Choucair, M.D., Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health and Jessica Halem. Hosts: Board of Directors, Howard Brown Health Center. RSVP to Lizzie Bright, 773-388-8992 or lizzieb@howardbrown.org; 6pm-8pm, C-View rooftop bar and lounge, MileNorth Hotel, 166 E. Superior St., 29th Fl., www.howardbrown.org



VIVA LA DIFFERENCE

Wed., June 6

"PFLAG National Celebrates the Heartland" will take place at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Photo from 2009 by Kat Fitzgerald

BILLY MASTERS

"I wouldn't be here without a show like this. I'm like, 'Dude, I know you have my album, but there's plenty of people who can sing like me or better, and you just gotta get past that because this is your moment.'"—Kelly Clarkson shares the advice she gives prospective contestants on Duets. Nice to see that this real "American Idol" hasn't forgotten her roots.

When I read the headline "American Idol Has Lowest-Rated Finale Ever," I felt very guilty. Yes, guilty because this was the first season of "AI" that I skipped completely. I didn't watch a single episode. Not one. And you know what I missed? Nothing. I didn't even feel out of the loop. I was vaguely aware of what was going on. I knew that there was some girl in the finale who the American people already tried to get rid of. And there was a guy who could possibly drop dead before winning—which would make this the first year that the new American Idol would



Heartthrob William Levy may be having trouble on the financial front.

be crowned posthumously. I would've liked to see that. It's not often that someone can win a show and also be included during the "In Memoriam" segment.

On the other hand, Dancing with the Stars had an action-packed finale where everything changed. Frankly, I was simply relieved that Katherine didn't win. Had the unthinkable happened, I would have consoled myself knowing that the deserving Mark Ballas had another win under his belt (along with many other things). Going into the finale, many people predicted William Levy had it all tied up—which is a tantalizing image to consider alongside the full-frontal nudes of him that we have on www.BillyMasters.com. He not only had the bad news of coming in third, but also that his home in Miami is in foreclosure. I hate to even bring this up because the last time I had a foreclosure story, it started a war. But, hey, I just report these things. Levy is reportedly behind \$20K in payments and there are plans for the property to be included in a bank auction June 13. However, I will add that there are many reasons people get behind ... and, frankly, William's got quite a nice

arrears.

With Dancing with the Stars over, you know what that means ... another season of The Bachelorette. Roll your eyes all you want, but this is a perfect chance for some prime man-watching. Why any of these guys are vying for Emily is beyond me—those Muppets were more lifelike than this plastic princess. And, while I usually consider children off limits, I have to say that there's no need for me to ever hear the words "Little Ricky" unless the role is being played by Keith Thibodeaux. As to the men, these prospective suitors did a number of ridiculous things to get Emily's attention—dress as an old woman (Randy), ride a skateboard (Jef—with one "f") and carry an ostrich egg (the soon-to-be-departed Travis). But no one stood out like Kalon, who belatedly arrived in a helicopter. Obviously, the flight didn't muss his perfect coif. And—wait a minute—is he wearing lip gloss? He's a little pretty, but a lot prissy. And, clearly, he moisturizes. Next.

Having a penchant for blonds, I focused on Sean Lowe. Even in clothes, I could tell his body was worth looking into. My instincts were correct. Sean is an insurance salesman by day and fitness model by night. As it turns out, he has quite a gay following—because I think we all know who's reading those workout magazines. I'm told he's very popular with the gay boys in Texas—photos to follow on BillyMasters.com. But Sean ain't the only physique to watch. There are at least four competitive bodybuilders in this cast. We got a glimpse of the first one at the end of the season premiere. After Jackson was eliminated, he made sure that the camera captured exactly what Emily was missing out on. I don't think she would have cared, but I took a little time to enjoy the view.

Then there's David, a singer-songwriter who has a penchant for writing lyrics that include words like "ineffable"—which you don't find in many hit songs. I didn't expect him to be amongst the body beautiful, but I was proven wrong. The biggest shock to me was Tony Pieper. He's the lumber-trading single dad who introduced himself with a glass slipper and a pronounced lisp when he said the word, "M'lady." (You can't make this up.) Last week, he was featured sweating profusely waiting in the wings while Emily read an interminable letter from another gent. Turns out that underneath his nebish exterior beats a champion bodybuilder! In fact, he came in third in the 2011 Iron Mountain Classic Men's Physique Competition—which certainly sounds impressive. Almost as impressive as the photos of his hot body, which I'll feature (along with all the others) on BillyMasters.com.

Since we're kicking off Pride Month, let's talk about all the people who've been coming out. The New York Times did an article about Jim Parsons—who is currently appearing in the Broadway revival of Harvey. When discussing his performance in last season's *The Normal Heart*, the scribe wrote that it "resonated with him on a few levels: Mr. Parsons is gay and in a 10-year relationship, and working with an ensemble again onstage was like nourishment, he said." Since the writer did interview Parsons, I'm sure this information was conveyed directly—even if it isn't presented in a direct quote.

When a Jim Parsons outing is by way of an imaginary rabbit, it's definitely time to end yet another column. If you're home alone, check out www.BillyMasters.com, the site that's always good company. Although I didn't get to squeeze in a question this week, I'm always happy to hear from you. So feel free to send an e-mail to Billie@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Little Ricky turns up on *Toddlers and Tiaras*. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Dragons confident heading into Bingham Cup

BY ROSS FORMAN

The Chicago Dragons are off to its best start ever and truly ready to face some of the best rugby teams from around the world.

The Dragons kicked off its spring 2012 season with an early April championship win at the St. Louis Spring Fever Invitational, which culminated in a 21-0 victory over the Madison Minotours in the championship match. This first-ever tournament win for the Dragons resulted from wins over the St. Louis Crusaders, Charlotte Royals and Nashville Grizzlies—and the event featured the first tries for Dickie Harper and Jared Majerle.

“St Louis is an experience a long time coming for the Dragons,” said Dragons President Craig Sklenar. “We have the experience, knowledge and drive to win tournaments, but just could not seem to close that chapter in our team’s history. We could get to a championship match and barely lose, whatever the case it was a frustrating experience.”

“So winning at St Louis this season as our first event of the year has set a positive competitive tone on the team I have not seen in a while. We won’t always win every game, but we sure know that amazing feeling at the end of the day, hearing that final whistle blow, knowing you are the champion of an event keeps you as a player going week after week.”

Sklenar, 30, who lives in Chicago’s Edgewater neighborhood and works as the urban planner for the City of Evanston, is in his fifth season

playing for the Dragons—and this promises to be an amazing year for the predominantly gay rugby club.

“Our spring season began with a win at a tournament in St Louis, usually a daunting task for any club stepping on the pitch for the first time in any season,” he said. “The win proved that the Dragons have been working hard in the off season, and the ability of our new coach was tested for the first time, [with] great success.”

Now the team must prep for its greatest challenge: the Bingham Cup, set for June 1-3 in Manchester, England. The Bingham Cup is the world championship of gay and inclusive rugby teams and is the largest men’s 15-a-side rugby union tournament in the sporting calendar outside of the IRB Rugby World Cup. Manchester 2012 will be the sixth Bingham Cup, named in honor of gay rugby player Mark Bingham, who died on United Airlines Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Bingham Cup welcomes teams from 15 countries, including Australia, Canada, France and Portugal.

“We are walking into the Bingham Cup with some wins under our belt, which will help the team prepare mentally for a three-day event that [might] involve six or seven rugby matches,” Sklenar said. “Bingham is a special event that cannot really be placed into words. Our team works hard for two years to fundraise, recruit and develop our squad to take to the Bingham Cup that will be the most competitive. It’s also a time to catch up with old friends, meet people



Chicago Dragons (in light blue) competing. Photo courtesy of the team

from around the world and share in the memory and courage of Mark Bingham, who selflessly stormed the cockpit with other passengers on Flight 93 in September, 2001.

“It has been 10 years since the first Bingham Cup [was] held, and the event has grown to the largest amateur rugby tournament in the world. To me, that’s the most striking aspect of the Cup—not only is it an event to further our cause of bringing inclusiveness and openness to the sport of rugby, but it is now the largest of all amateur rugby tournaments in the world.”

Sklenar attended the 2008 Bingham Cup in Dublin, and made his debut on the pitch in a Bingham Cup in 2010 in Minneapolis.

“Bingham is a special event,” Sklenar said. “Any club that is a member of the International Gay Rugby Association (IGRAB) may choose to participate in the Bingham Cup. Since most cities around the world have only one club affiliated with IGRAB, that means you are representing your city on a world stage for one weekend every two years. There are more than gay men who attend the Bingham Cup. Straight and bisexual men form squads, too. I really enjoy knowing that the men from our club, of all backgrounds, look forward to Bingham. The weekend is just a fun event to be at, not to mention you get the opportunity to play rugby in locations around the world many of us would not imagine we would ever play [in]. Doing a rugby tour is something every club works toward; the Dragons get to do it every two years.”

There are 20 Dragons with Sklenar playing in the Bingham.

The Dragons also will feature a few players from Kansas City to fill out their roster.

“The greatest [Bingham] memories are sharing the victories and pushing yourself on a daily basis to play the best you can,” Sklenar said. “Some of the best memories come on and off the pitch. Scoring a hard-fought try [or] playing against a rival team for a prime spot in the playoffs are all great memories of matches at the tournament. A teammate getting his nickname or his first Zulu, finding [a] Bingham crush are all good memories off the pitch, too.”

“I find those on the team who go to Bingham are inherently closer to each other because of the shared experience of the tournament. Hence, my goal [is] to get every player, every supporter excited and at Bingham.”

“Bingham to me is a very honorable event. I do not know if the Cup would exist had it not been for the unimaginable events on September 11, 2001. Mark was able to bring us all together in this amazing way, and we play to honor him

and his spirit at every Cup, at every match back in our home unions and continue to spread the message of equality on and off the pitch.”

Sklenar said playing on the Bingham’s international stage, often against teams filled with players who have played the sport, essentially, their entire life is sometimes daunting. Still, the Dragons finished 11th out of 30-plus teams in 2010.

“We are honored and excited to participate in the Bingham Cup,” Sklenar said. “This time around, the Dragons are looking to make it to a championship match during the tournament. Our boys really want to bring a trophy back to Chicago.”

“Bingham is an event that not every club in the Chicago Region gets to experience. The Dragons every two years pack up for a week and head to a location to meet 40 clubs from around the world to play the sport of rugby. It’s an event I would love to share with more rugby players and hope to as our club grows in the coming years.”

So how do the 2012 Dragons look compared to 2011 and past years?

Good, Sklenar said. The team is beginning to see results in three areas that the team has focused on in the off-season.

First, we have a new coaching staff hired outside the ranks of the Dragons,” Sklenar said. “Next, recruitment of new players and potential players has increased. Finally, game development of our veteran players,” has improved.

“Retaining players and bringing new ones into the fold is always the hardest aspect of any club. The Dragons have worked hard this year to come together as a team, build on our strengths, and recognize our weaknesses so we can best eliminate them. Our new coach, Corey Ringhisen, has done a tremendous job of setting expectations, developing team strategies and unifying our squad.”

“The Dragons [is] a team that is growing stronger every match we play. We have grown from a small club with [only] a few experienced players and players who have never played the sport before to a broad squad of veteran players [who] get excited about teaching new members the sport of rugby.”

“This is a keystone year for the Dragons. With a strong start to our spring season and the continual development of our players, we will see the strongest squad in the team’s history.”

In addition to the Bingham Cup, the Dragons are working to help raise funds and expand youth clubs in Chicago, partnering with the Illinois Youth Rugby Association, Sklenar said.

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This past year we have witnessed three of the most substantive changes in the law that I have seen in over 35 years.

When my partner and I adopted over 14 years ago, same-sex couples who wanted to adopt thought they had to present themselves as straight and would even have their partner move out of the residence when their home study was being completed. Especially couples doing international adoptions. That is not the case today.

After our adoptions were finalized, we started changing our names, passports and drivers licenses; and this was an involved process. Today with the Civil Union Act couples are finding they don’t need to go to court to change their names. Clients have been successful changing their Illinois driver’s licenses, passports and Social Security cards with a certified copy of their civil-union certificate.

Also, if a child is born to one parent of a same-sex couple in a civil union there is the presumption of parentage and the new child’s birth certificate should name the non-biological civil-union partner as the other parent.

But this is not enough to protect the same-sex couple and their children.

Civil Union Certificates are not judgments. When children are involved the non-biological parent should do a second parent adoption and obtain an adoption judgment. And both should obtain a judgment order for change of name if they want to change their names.

The problem is that partners in a civil union may find themselves in a state whose laws deny recognition to their legal relationship. If they were in a car accident with their children in such a state and they tried to rely upon their civil union status to show that both adults were parents to their children, they could run into problems.

Likewise, they could have trouble making medical decisions for their incapacitated partner or child. And they could have trouble establishing they are the children’s parents. Or, if the biological parent moved to such a state with the children to defeat the other partner’s visitation in a custody dispute, the non-biological parent could face a nightmare court battle.

To summarize: Civil-union certificates are fantastic in Illinois but they are not judgments. To protect your family you need change of name and adoption judgments. Judgments are and must be recognized by other states under the Full Faith and Credit Protection Clause of the Constitution.

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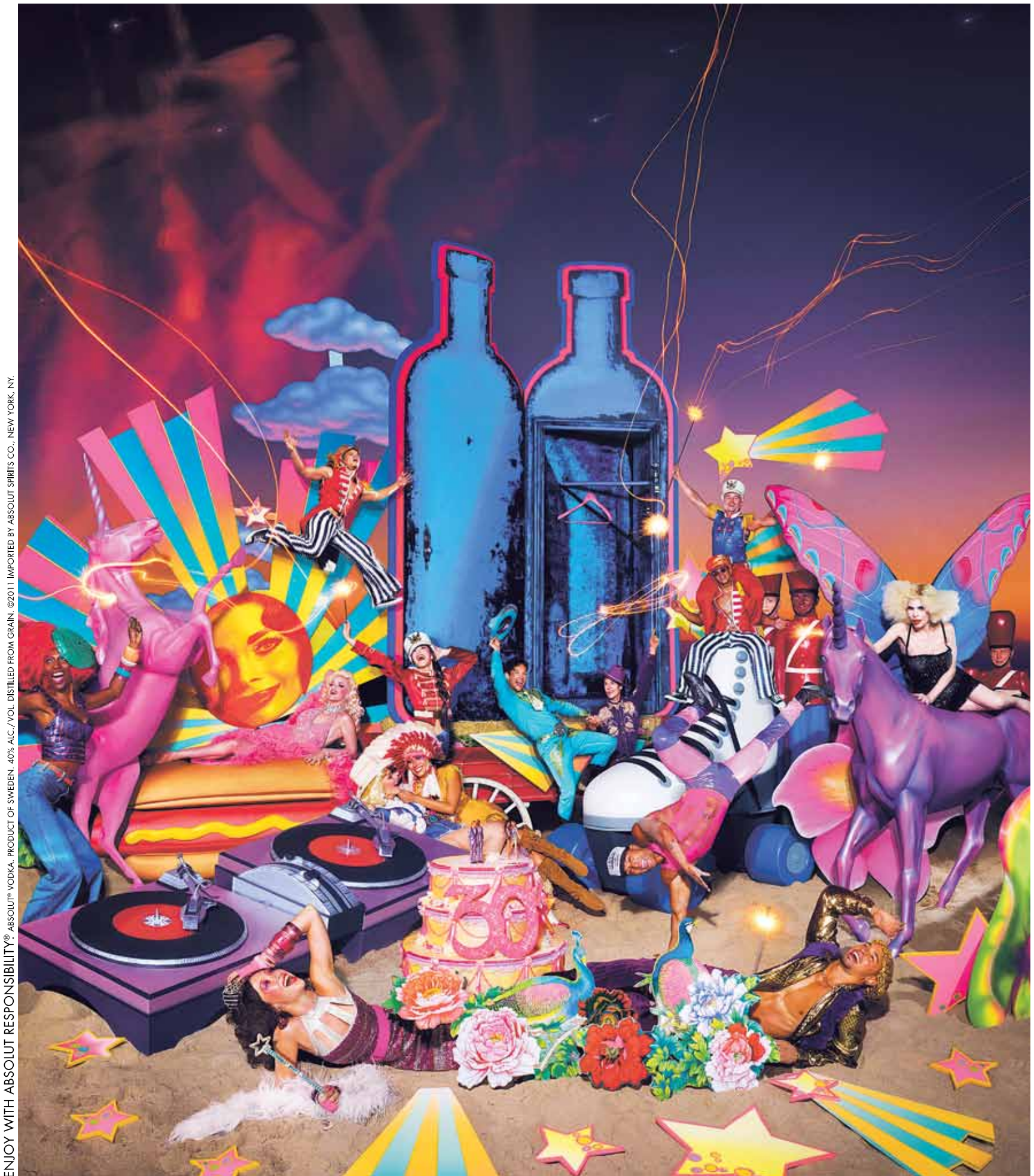
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