VAGINAS TAKE BACK CAPITOL

POLITICIANS, PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTRESSES UNITE FOR ‘THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES’
Cover story

4 | Vaginas take back the Capitol
Politicians, playwright, actresses unite on the Capitol steps for “The Vagina Monologues”
Large photo: Protestor carries sign reading “I can’t believe we still have to deal with this shit.”

News

5 | Petitions filed to recall Troy Mayor
Daniels makes more antigay remarks on talk radio show

6 | Sunny Rainbow Run, then rain for Ferndale Pride
7,000 converge on Ferndale, new faces attend festivities

7 | 3K gather for festival, 1K for political rally

9 | National group’s work for older LGBT adults focus of Detroit gathering
Older Adult Coalition moves closer to forming SAGE chapter

11 | Saginaw LGBT banquet to honor local activists, businesses, politicians

12 | Novi arson latest in life of challenges for Stacy Barker

13 | NC couples sue federally for second parent adoption

15 | Between Ourselves
Meet Tyler Bradley

Opinions

8 | BTL Editorial
Thank you, Mr President

9 | Viewpoint
Taking care of ‘Family’: Exploring the needs of our LGBT elders

Rear View

10 | Heard on Facebook
The benefits of the gay gene

10 | S/he Said
Bigotry and the Boy Scouts

12 | Parting Glances
No believe it or why not?

Life

17 | Sister Act
Jake and Ana talk 10 years together, who’s gayer and disco idols

18 | Hear Me Out
Kylie Minogue keeps the compilations coming. Plus: “Rock of Ages” surprises

19 | General Gayety
Puzzling out the Phelpsians

22 | Cool Cities: Ann Arbor
Jim Toy Pride Dinner to award scholar, advocate Sandra Cole

27 | Ringwald’s Gay Play Series fills the bill with talent

28 | Happenings
Featured: Aretha Franklin on June 22

Contact Us

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Chat on our FB Fan Page. Search “Between The Lines Newspaper”
Vaginas take back the Capitol

Politicians, playwright, actresses unite on the Capitol steps for ‘The Vagina Monologues’

BY BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

LANSING – Thousands showed up to the Capitol Monday night protesting the silencing of Rep. Lisa Brown, D-West Bloomfield, and Rep. Barb Byrum, D-Onondaga. In an event titled “Vaginas Take Back the Capitol,” female Democratic lawmakers and professional actresses from around the state were led by Tony Award-winning playwright Eve Ensler in a rally and a performance of Ensler’s “Vagina Monologues.”

Nor did it seem to make much difference to protesters whether Michigan House Speaker Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, instituted the one-day speaking ban because Brown used the word “vagina” or whether it was because her saying “no means no” likened the bill to date rape.

“I was really unbelievably disgusted by their First Amendment rights being violated,” said Andy Adamson, Ann Arbor, who attended the rally with his wife. “That’s why I have this sign: First amENDment includes WOMEN.”

Brown said she felt compelled to speak against a bill that she described as overturning Roe v. Wade.

“I decided I needed to speak in opposition to this bill, because we’re not going to let legislators turn the clock back to the ’60s when women didn’t have a right to abortion and weren’t insured they were going to have access to safe health care,” Brown explained. “In my speech, I made a few points, but I dared utter the word ‘vagina.’ We shouldn’t be legislating vaginas if you can’t say vaginas.”

Byrum’s ban came after she objected to an amendment she had proposed to the abortion bill being debated.

“I was denied the right to speak to my amendment,” Byrum told the crowds Monday evening. “(The Speaker) gaveled my amendment down. Then, being the daughter my mother raised me – hi, Mommy! – I said ‘vasectomy,’ there I said it, and it was gaveled that I was out of order.”

A speaker for Bolger, Ari Adler, said Byrum’s ban the next day came not for saying “vasectomy,” but “for marching through the chamber and shouting like a small child throwing a temper tantrum.”

Amy Geishert from Lansing, who carried a sign at the protest Monday stating, “Male Reps Have Opinions. Female Reps Have Temper Tantrums,” was offended by such characterization. “It is sexist, plain and simple. (The democratic representatives) were making respectful opinions. It is just a double standard. I’m very proud of them for standing up and having a press conference and (this event).”

Lance Enderle, a candidate for U.S. Congress in the 8th District, agreed.

“What happened – that was uncalled for. I know Speaker Bolger has probably used worse language at his country club than what he heard on that floor.”

Not everyone was angry with Bolger, however. Penny Gardner, president of the Lansing Association of Human Rights, saw the ban having at least one positive outcome, “If it mobilizes this many people to get here, I want to thank Jase Bolger. I want to send him a thank-you note and tell him I think this is incredible. We haven’t had this many people at the Capitol for any of the things I support until now, and it came in a heartbeat.”

Over three thousand people attended the rally and performance of the Vagina Monologues on the state capitol steps June 15. BTL photos Bridgette Redman.
Petitions filed to recall Troy Mayor

Daniels makes more antigay remarks on talk radio show

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

PONTIAC – In an effort to remove the Mayor of Troy from office, members of the Recall Janice Daniels (www.recalljanicedaniels.com) campaign filed nearly 9,300 signatures on 909 petition sheets of paper last week at the Oakland County Courthouse. This is 15 percent more than the 7,985 signatures required by law.

“We feel good. We’re very pleased and really happy with the tremendous outpouring of support,” said Troy resident and campaign organizer Matthew Binkowski about turning the petitions in to the Elections Division of the Oakland County Clerk and Register of Deeds office.

The petitions were collected by 125 “dedicated and tireless” volunteers over the past three months.

“Most people we approached didn’t need education on the issues surrounding Janice Daniels. About three-fourths of them signed the petition when asked. Her supporters, about one-fourth, were usually quiet and they just declined to sign,” said Binkowski. “However, a few got vocal. Some got upset when you refuse to debate them for hours on end on their porch. We actually had one guy heckle a volunteer at the library. Another guy followed a volunteer on his bike. Other than that, they were relatively harmless.”

For those who weren’t aware of the issues, the volunteers carried postcards which explained some of the reasons for the recall efforts, as well as providing the campaign website address for more information. “Our volunteers can usually summarize the situation in a minute or so. After hearing the facts, most people signed the petition,” said Binkowski.

Mayor Daniels has been the center of controversy, both in Troy and nationwide, since December of last year. Binkowski said her conduct provides an overwhelming case for her recall.

In a recent press release, he reiterated the reasons why. “By referring to the City Charter as a ‘whimsical’ document, Mayor Daniels demonstrated her lack of respect for the city’s own Constitution. By repeatedly voting against

the Troy Transist Center, Mayor Daniels put her ideology over the best interests of Troy residents and business community. By attacking city employees with false and irresponsible accusations, Mayor Daniels has driven out John Szerlag, the former City Manager, described by L. Brooks Patterson as ‘one of the best.’ Finally, with her controversial remarks, Mayor Daniels has brought embarrassment and shame to the entire community.”

She faces further criticism following her radio interview last week with Talk Radio 1270 host Charlie Langton. Mayor Daniels once again compared the dangers of the homosexual lifestyle to the dangers of cigarette smoking.

“What I said while I was mayor…I was in a business meeting, I come from a business perspective…I said that I would bring a doctor into a meeting that would say that the homosexual lifestyle is dangerous,” said Mayor Daniels on the air. “Had I been with a group of smokers, I might have said I would like to bring a doctor into this meeting to say that smoking is dangerous.”

After Langton asked whether the mayor felt it was dangerous to be gay, the Troy Patch reported, Mayor Daniels said she had no opinion, but noted, “I think that doctors can make a case for it, certainly.”

Mayor Daniels told the Troy Patch she does not agree with the reasons she is being recalled. “The recall process is part of the representative republican form of government that we have, so we let the process work the way it was intended to,” she said. “I think it’s designed for when elected officials commit a crime, and I’ve committed no crime.” Mayor Daniels said she believes the failed recall of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is proof that citizens do not like recalls. “I hope people will go to my website, janicetroymayor.com, to find out more about me,” she said.

Crime or not, Binkowski pointed out that Michigan’s Constitution and subsequent legislation (MCL §§ 168.951-168.976) permits recall for any objectionable conduct during the elected official’s term in office. “In contrast,
years ago. Why are we here? I’m a mother and a grandmother. I don’t want my grandchildren to have to continue to fight this fight.”

Sixteen-year-old Roman Collins from Lansing, dressed sharply in a dress shirt and tie carried a sign saying, “Stop Pussyfooting Around the Word Vagina.” After the “Vagina Monologues” were over, he approached Rep. Byrum and asked for her autograph on the sign – a request she said she was flattered to fulfill.

The performers

Those performing the monologues were:

- Intro – Hair (Rep. Dian Slavens, D-Canton Township)
- Hair (Jan Blixit)
- Intro – The Flood (Rep. Ellen Cogen Lipton, D-MI 27th District)
- The Flood (Ruth Crawford)
- The Vagina Workshop (Courtney Jo Dempsey-Burkett, Lynn Lammers, Lindsey Ford)
- Vagina Happy Fact (Sen. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor)
- Intro – Because He Liked To Look At It (Rep. Maureen Stapleton, D-Detroit)
- Because He Liked to Look At It (Jennifer Graham)
- Intro – My Vagina Was My Village (Rana Elmir)
- My Vagina Was My Village (Chelsea Sadler, Emily Sutton-Smith)
- My Angry Vagina (Qu’Amara Black, Mary Jo Cuppone, Eva Rosenwald)
- Intro – Reclaiming Cunt (Renee Chelian)
- Reclaiming Cunt (Suzi Regan)
- Intro – The Woman Who Loved To Make Vaginas Happy (Madison Deadman)
- The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy (Julia Glander, Dana Sutton, Eliza Nicolaou)
- Intro – I Was There In The Room (Rep. Joan Bauer, D-Lansing)
- I Was There In The Room (Sally Pesetsky, Barb Christine, Naz Edwards)
- Over It – (Eve Ensler)

A performance of the Vagina Monologues on the Capitol steps drew thousands.

Vagina

Continued from p. 6

Sunny Rainbow Run, then rain for Ferndale Pride weekend

7,000 converge on Ferndale, new faces attend festivities

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE – When asked if the layers of rainbow paint slowed her down, Hillary Herring of Southfield laughed and said “No, not at all. Actually it was kind of inspiring.”

By the end of the 5k Rainbow Run in Ferndale June 18, she was covered in red, orange, yellow, blue, green and purple-dyed corn starch which was thrown as she ran past. She wasn’t the only one. Five hundred runners took part, some choosing the 5k and others doing just two.

“This was not like other runs,” Herring said. “It was more fun and it inspired me to not do races that don’t help causes.” She explained that seeing the way all the community organizations, volunteers and sponsors came together, combined with the Pride booths and concert stage gave the Rainbow Run “a totally different feel.”

“I have done the American Heart Foundation Orangefest Run, the Free Press Marathon, and runs in Ann Arbor and Dexter, but from now on I’m only going to do it if the profits go to charity. This one is perfect because it suits my beliefs and what I think is important, and I’d rather have my money go to that.”

The Rainbow Run and other Ferndale Pride events had various organizations involved, and multiple beneficiaries including Affirmations, Michigan AIDS Coalition, and The Ferndale Community Foundation which gives grants to other community projects. Over 30 volunteers took part in the planning process and over 100 volunteers came out to help. The Rainbow Run was an endeavor taken on by the Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, and Project XYZ that organized Saturday’s Dyke March.

Herring finished the Rainbow Run in 26 minutes and 30 seconds, with plenty of time to rest before the grand ceremony: the closing of Rainbow Run and the official start of Ferndale Pride.

Here hundreds of rainbow-covered runners met with another hundred or so Pride attendees in front of the stage for speeches and a balloon release salute to the LGBT community. One-thousand bio-degradable balloons in all the colors of the rainbow were released by a line of elected officials including Oakland County Commissioners Craig Covey, Helaine Zack, Marsha Gershenson, and Jim Nash who is giving up his Commission seat in hopes of being elected Water Resource Director for Oakland County. Kevin Howley, who is currently running against L. Brooks Patterson for Oakland County Executive, was also there along with Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter and Oak Park Mayor Marian McClellan. State Representative Lisa Brown, who is now known as the State Representative who was censored by the state house Republicans for using the word “vagina” also attended.

The balloons were released and the festivities began, including the beer tent, multiple booths from organizations and vendors, a kids’ area, and music from the main stage and from the newly remodeled back patio of Orchid, one of Ferndale’s many mixed-company clubs.

New to Pride

Of course there was the usual attractive young people enjoying the opportunity to mingle attending the festivities. Merchants with rainbow necklaces, tank tops and caramel corn was everywhere. Politicians and activists speaking up for equality could be found amid a sea of colorful outfits and cheering, dancing people. But also among the hundreds of Pride-goers were
**LANSONG:** Thousands gather for party, 1M for political rally

**BY TODD A. HEYWOOD**

LANSONG – Nearly 1,000 people showed up on the steps of the Michigan Capitol Saturday as part of the annual pride march and rally event, while 3,000 showed up in Lansing’s hip Old Town to drink, dance and be merry as part of the annual pride festival.

At the capitol, ralliers were greeted by a mass union ceremony conducted by Rev. Kent Lederer of Unity of Greater Lansing.

Among the speakers at the rally were Diane Goddeeris, mayor of East Lansing; Joe MacDonald, a representative from Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero’s office; Emily Dievendorf, policy director at Equality Michigan; R. Cole Bouck, president of the Michigan Gay Officers Action League (MI-GOAL); Kevin Epling, co-director of Bully Police USA; and actor James Duke Mason, who was brought in by the Obama campaign as a surrogate to address the gathering.

Goddeeris reminded participants the city of East Lansing earlier this year, celebrated the 40th anniversary of the nation’s first ever law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but noted not enough communities had followed suit.

“Today, 21 states, the District of Columbia and over 141 cities prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation” she said. “But 18 cities in Michigan? C’mon!”

Emily Dievendorf, policy director at Equality Michigan addresses the rally Saturday. Later, dozens of couples are seen during the Commitment Ceremony on the steps of the Capitol lead by Rev. Kent Lederer of Unity of Greater Lansing. BTL photos: Todd Heywood

For Bouck, the rally was one of noting history. As he spoke, he told the rally how in the 80s and 90s exiting the gay bars on Michigan Avenue often meant having members of the Lansing Police Department “toy” with you.

“That’s the historical context of what you saw coming up Michigan Avenue today,” Bouck told the rally, referring to the contingent of officers and vehicles from Lansing Police, Ingham County Sheriff Department and East Lansing Police, as well as the Lansing Fire department. “That’s big.”

Introducing herself as “your big bi lobbyist,” Emily Dievendorf, policy director at Equality Michigan laid out the last year in Michigan politics. It was a year of antigay legislative moves, punctuated with legislation that banned domestic partner benefits for public employees and passage of a bill to allow counseling students to refuse to counsel persons with whom they hold significant religious differences.

But Dievendorf sounded a note of optimism, in a year punctuated with such loses.

“We are on the cusp of equality,” she said. “But the closer we come, the taller the walls and the thicker the walls are they make on our way to equality.” Dievendorf asked rally participants to vow to each other to register and to vote in the coming elections.

“A voice is progress. Many voices is many votes, coming together,” she said, “it’s a game changer.”

Several new faces to the Pride experience. There were a noticeable number of presumably straight parents with their gay teens and youth, getting to know their children’s peers and showing their love and support.

Eileen Long wore a Dyke March shirt when she left her home in the Auburn Hills area to join her daughter Audrey as a volunteer for the Ferndale Pride event. She admitted that it was a challenge accepting her beloved little girl as a lesbian. “When I was Audrey’s age I worked in the floral business and I had tons of gay friends. I was always so accepting. I didn’t think I had a homophobic bone in my body. But when she told me, it was like, different. It’s different when it’s your own child. Not like hate or anger, but I wanted to save her from a hard road. It struck me. And it took a while to get over that fear. But I love my daughter. I don’t want to miss out on her life and being there for her when there are those struggles. I don’t understand why some of these parents can cut off their children. We know people whose parents just took their stuff and threw it out on the lawn and said ‘get out.’”

On the way to Ferndale, Eileen stopped at a gas station. Like any other day she got out to pump her gas, and went inside to pay. But just wearing the Dyke March shirt made the experience much different. “For the first time ever in my life I got that horrible judgmental look from others. I felt it for the first time and it made me feel so bad. These kids,” she said choking up a bit. “There are people that feel that judgment everywhere they go.”

“We had so much diversity on the planning committee that when everything came together we had a unique event that none of us could have imagined on our own.”

- Ferndale Pride organizer and Oakland County Commissioner Craig Covey

Audrey not only came out, but she blossomed into what Eileen calls “a little dynamic powerhouse.” The 27-year-old Ferndale resident is on the board of the Dyke March and also one of the main organizers for Ferndale Pride. “I came with her the first year…and this year I came to volunteer for her. When she was growing up I would clean houses and I would bring her with me. She was always my right arm, always very helpful. And now I get to assist her. It makes me so proud.”

Her advice to other parents is just to...
**BTL Editorial**

**Thank you, Mr. President**

BY JAN STEVENSON

“Welcome to The White House,” said President Barack Obama to me and about 350 other activists at the Third Annual LGBT Pride Reception June 15. Those simple words opened a floodgate of emotions for me. Prior to that moment, the only other times I had been at The White House I was outside protesting, and here I was inside being welcomed by our nation’s leader.

“For every person who lost a loved one at the hand of hate, we ended a decade of delay and finally made the Matthew Shepard Act the law of the land,” he said, and I was thrown back into the moment in 1992 when I got the phone call telling me that Sue Pittman and Christine Puckett had been murdered by their homophobic neighbor. They had been my friends and fellow board members at Affirmations.

“For every American diagnosed with HIV who couldn’t get access to treatment, we put forward a National HIV/AIDS strategy - because who you are should never affect whether you get life-extending care,” said the President. I said a silent prayer for James Drain, my dear friend and co-worker who died of AIDS in 1994 just months before the release of protease inhibitors that could have saved his life. And I felt a wave of anger at the ghost of former President Ronald Reagan who had refused to even say the word AIDS for six years as the epidemic raged like wild fire.

“For every partner or spouse denied the chance to comfort a loved one in the hospital, to be by their side at their greatest hour of need, we said, enough. Hospitals that accept Medicare or Medicaid - and that is most of them - now have to treat LGBT patients just like any other patient,” said Obama. I wished I could share that moment with my friend, David. In 1998, I had held his hand through an excruciating funeral ceremony for his lifelong partner, a ceremony in which the family excluded him and refused to even mention him in the eulogy – as if the love of his life never existed. David died shortly thereafter, I believe of a broken heart.

“And, of course, last year we finally put an end to ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ – (applause) – so that nobody would ever have to ever again hide who they love in order to serve the country they love,” and my thoughts jumped to Ken Warnock who was the first person I ever met who was thrown out of the Navy for being gay. By all accounts was the first person I ever met who was thrown out of the Navy for being gay. Though painful and difficult for Jim, it turned out to be Hudson’s loss and our community’s gain as he went on to create Pronto! in Royal Oak, led the creation of Steppin’ Out’s AIDS Walk and so many other LGBT projects.

“I want to acknowledge all the young leaders who were fired from his job at Hudson’s Department Store in the late 1980s because he is gay. Though painful and difficult for Jim, it turned out to be Hudson’s loss and our community’s gain as he went on to create Pronto! in Royal Oak, led the creation of Steppin’ Out’s AIDS Walk and so many other LGBT projects. The 2012 Presidential LGBT Pride Reception June 15 brought about 350 people into The White House. Pictured here in front of the Lincoln portrait are (left) Jonathan Capehart of the Washington Post, BTL’s publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson, and Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of Detroit’s Kick. Photo courtesy of Curtis Lipscomb. Below is President Obama addressing attendees at the White House June Pride gathering on June 15.

“Welcome to The White House,” said President Barack Obama to me and about 350 other activists at the Third Annual LGBT Pride Reception June 15. Those simple words opened a floodgate of emotions for me. Prior to that moment, the only other times I had been at The White House I was outside protesting, and here I was inside being welcomed by our nation’s leader.

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LGBT older adults are three times as likely to live in poverty due to inequalities related to a lifetime of workplace discrimination and a lack of marriage benefits like social security survivor payments and tax-free inheritances.

In the spring of last year, Healing Detroit and the LGBT Older Adult Coalition both simultaneously hosted dialogues about this emerging issue. The findings were similar to what national experts are seeing around the country — LGBT older adults are living in fear and isolation. Only 10 percent of LGBT elders have children to help care for them — as compared to 80 percent of heterosexual elders. Seventy percent of LGBT seniors live alone, as compared to just 30 percent of straight seniors. LGBT older adults are three times as likely to live in poverty due to inequalities related to a lifetime of workplace discrimination and a lack of marriage benefits like social security survivor payments and tax-free inheritances.

Both summits revealed that metro Detroit’s LGBT elders faced significant isolation. Today’s LGBT elders find mainstream aging services in their communities and not have to be placed in care. That’s what most people want and it’s better for the system to make it so people can stay at home as long as possible,” said Tax. “The act provides for chore assistance, transportation, meals through programs like Meals on Wheels and home nutrition programs. There are a slew of programs to older communities. What we’re doing with this is that the Act has no mention of LGBT older adults.”

Tax explained the three primary goals SAGE has in regard to the Older Americans Act.

The first is to have older LGBT adults listed as group of greatest economic and social needs, like other demographic groups are. “Funds come from the federal government and are funneled through Area Agencies on Aging, which is a critical piece of SAGE outreach. The Center is run with collaborations with a dozen partner organizations and gives them a hub to provide information to three key target audiences: LGBT Older Adults, Aging Networks that serve all senior citizens, and to share information with the LGBT community about the needs of their eldest members.

Tax is the keynote speaker for the Planning For The Future event. Other workshops will share information about health and wellness, managing healthcare, protecting finances, employment, and volunteer opportunities and older adults/youth networking. The event is free.
The month of June is Gay Pride Month. I have not yet seen where they have declared Adultery Pride Month. I have not seen where they have declared the Drunkenness Pride Month. Here's the issue, it's not a matter of whether or not someone can do what they want to do with their lives. We're talking about redefining the rest of culture and making others both embrace, celebrate and subsidize... We're talking about changing the laws that will influence what our children are taught in schools... We're talking about religious organizations losing their religious freedom... We never asked for this debate... It was the homosexual community that wanted to have this discussion on redefining marriage. Whether it's adultery, whether it's any type of sexual immorality it's a problem, but we're not celebrating those other forms as a society, we're not promoting it and teaching it as normal in our schools.”


"Ernst & Young is proud to have such a strong record in LGBT inclusiveness. As CEO, I know that having an inclusive culture produces the best results, is the right thing for our people and makes us a better organization. My experience has led me to believe that an inclusive environment is important throughout our society and I am proud to be a leader on this issue. I support the meaningful work of the Boy Scouts in preparing young people for adventure, leadership, learning and service, however the membership policy is not one I would personally endorse.”

-James Turley, CEO, Ernst & Young accounting firm, in a statement, the first member of the Boy Scouts of America’s Executive Board to publicly disapprove of the nationwide policy excluding gays, www.huffingtonpost.com, June 13.

"I regret to say that I and others like me have been alienated by the modern Boy Scout organization I used to admire. It would be wonderful to have an organization that provides all the opportunity for learning and adventure without all the religious bigotry and homophobic garbage. I support the mission of the advocacy group Scouting for All that wishes to make BSA more inclusive. I would like to see an organization that does all the cool things that the BSA does and includes girls too as I question the extent to which single sex environments are a positive thing.”

a community which can place a strong emphasis on image and youthfulness. Participants from both summits talked about facing significant financial instability – from concerns about healthcare to housing affordability.

But there were some significant differences between the two summits.

The most significant difference identified between these two groups – one targeted an African American Detroit-resident audience while the other attracted a mainly Caucasian, suburban audience, was that black Detroiters had concerns specifically revolving around living in the city as an LGBT elder, whereas white suburbanites rarely mentioned their town or city as a significant issue – beyond a concern of general isolation. Our African American LGBT community members living in the city, already facing tremendous isolation and heightened financial concerns, also have to deal with the same city issues facing all residents. Of those issues, unemployment and public safety topped the list (for a complete report, visit www.e-kick.org or www.lgbtolderadults.com).

Research shows, and it certainly doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out, that as you compound layers of adversity, risk dramatically increases. The outlook for a white 70-year-old lesbian who’s a retired gym teacher living in the suburbs is considerably different from the black 70-year-old lesbian who worked as a blue collar manufacturer for her entire life, is now disabled and living in an unsafe neighborhood with inadequate public transportation and an extremely low public safety response time. And her concerns are very different from the suburban lesbian.

And yet we are all in this together – we are family.

This year – June 23 – the Elder Project at KICK (a spinoff program from last year’s Healing Detroit Summit) is partnering with the LGBT Older Adult Coalition to co-host one unified summit – The 2012 LGBT Older Adult Summit. It takes place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the MSU Detroit Center, 3408 Woodward Avenue (next to the WSU’s Bonstelle Theater) in Detroit and features workshops and panels addressing isolation, healthcare, finances, and employment. The conference is free to attend, but you must RSVP in advance at www.LGBTOlderadults.com.

Frequently, the unspoken definition of “the LGBT community” defaults to the dominant or majority culture, and as is common in the Metro Detroit region, this all too often means white and suburban. We are working hard together, to ensure that as we move forward to plan services for LGBT elders and that they are sensitive to the needs of a wide range of people.

Further, we challenge readers to think about the whole LGBT community as a broad and diverse cross-section of our Metro Detroit region’s population. For a community that is often isolated from biological family members, turning to our chosen “family” – our whole family – is a strength we can and should count on.

Curtis Lipscomb is executive director of KICK. He can be reached at curtislipscomb@e-kick.org or www.e-kick.org and Kathleen LaTosch is co-chair of the LGBT Older Adult Coalition. She can be reached at klatosch@gmail.com or www.lgbtolderadults.com

Taking care
Continued from p. 9

Saginaw LGBT banquet to honor local activists, businesses, politicians

BTL STAFF REPORT

Outstanding members of Saginaw and Bay City’s gay community will be honored at the Perceptions-sponsored 4th annual Saginaw Valley LGBT Pride Awards Banquet at 6 p.m. on June 26 at Saginaw’s Andersen Enrichment Center. Perceptions Saginaw Valley is a Tri-City LGBT organization.

The event will include a reception with wine and appetizers, followed by dinner and the award presentations.

Michelle Brown, a Detroit based speaker, author and activist will be the keynote speaker for the evening. Brown will deliver a speech entitled, “The Road to Equality Begins at the Intersection of Social Justice and LGBT Equality.”

Several honorees will be recognized for their service to the LGBT community in the Saginaw area.

The Lifetime Achievement Award has been earned by Barbara Klimaszewski, a Saginaw Criminal and Civil Rights Attorney, who has been active in the community for over 35 years. When members of the LGBT community had no one to stand up for them, Klimaszewski provided representation. In 1976 she began the Underground Railroad, a place where battered women and their children could escape. Its formation marked the first free standing, emergency women’s shelter in Michigan. She serves as an advisor on Perceptions’ board. She is also a member of ACLU and the Criminal Defense Association of Michigan. She has worked hard throughout her career for equality and civil rights.

Leo Romo will be honored with a Pride Award. Romo is a tireless activist, often visiting Lansing and other areas to champion LGBT causes. He’s an organizer, advisor, educator and friend to many in the community. He is the current chairman of PFLAG Tri-Cities and belongs to countless other LGBT organizations. Romo served on the board of Perceptions Saginaw Valley for many years where he remains an advisor. He was the creator of the Pride Awards banquet and served as its chairman for 3 years.

Tana Michaels will also be given a Pride Award for her contributions in music and journalism. Michaels, a singer/guitar player and journalist, has donated her time and talent to many LGBT causes including 2009 Respect Fest, 2011 & 2012 Saginaw Pride Fests, Perceptions Wine Tasting event and others. She is the former editor of Perceptions Newsletter, and a regular contributor to Between The Lines.

The 2012 Class of Mt Pleasant’s Sacred Heart Academy will receive a Pride Award for launching a campaign to let gay alumnus, Dominic Sheahan-Stahl, speak at graduation. Unsuccessful in their campaign, they organized an inclusive graduation event, “Live Through Love,” where Sheahan-Stahl delivered his speech to the graduating class and approximately 800 community members.

Holland Pride events planned for June 28

A community choir, award-winning documentary, and a discussion of discrimination in the workplace and housing are all on tap for Holland’s 8th annual Gay & Lesbian Pride event on June 28 at the Park Theater, 248 S. River Ave.

The activities will begin at 7 p.m. with a performance by “In Harmony,” an all inclusive community choir started by Marty Kiefer, who also founded and directed the West Michigan Gay Men’s Chorus. The choir features people of various ages and sexual orientation and its goal is to bring about change and understanding through “beautiful, meaningful and life-changing music,” said Kiefer.

At 8 p.m., the award-winning documentary “Out at Work” will be shown. The film follows a cook who was fired for “failing to demonstrate normal heterosexual values” and also includes the stories of an auto worker and librarian who seek workplace safety and job security. It was the winner of the GLAAD Award for outstanding documentary of the year and the Golden Apple Award from the National Educational Media Network.

The one-hour documentary will be followed by a discussion led by Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan’s LGBT Project. Kaplan will speak about the current status of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the workplace and housing in Michigan and field questions from the audience.

Dessert will be served and refreshments will be available. All of the events are free, with good will offerings accepted.

The event is sponsored by the PFLAG Holland/Lakeshore chapter and Holland is Ready.

Saginaw Valley LGBT Pride Awards Banquet
6 p.m. June 26
Andersen Enrichment Center, Saginaw
www.perceptionssv.org

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Tana Michaels contributed to this report.
Parting Glances
No believe it or why not?

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

It’s 5:30 Friday afternoon. Thinking of BTL co-publishers Jan and Susan in Washington, D.C., I iPhone text a simple message of sharing: “Hugs!” Seconds later Jan cellphone hugs me back.

Jan’s comment: “It’s totally awesome!” Her accompanying picture is a shot of invitees meeting President Obama at the ongoing White House LGBT reception. A stunning moment shared.

Jan is visible in the lower left-hand corner, looking stylish, well dressed for an auspicious, who’d-ever-believe-it-could-happen? (For someone who came out in 1956 like myself, this is truly mind boggling. Pie in the Sky with red-white-and-blue sparkler candles!)

I email back. “I’m in awe – even with this tiny rainbow souvenir.” Incidentally, my last iota of White House contact occurred some 20 years ago. A friend was there for some sort of military honors during Bill Clinton’s administration, and he quietly pocketed sugar packets.

I shan’t mention my friend’s name – just in case having done so might occasion an investigation by the FBI, CIA, or Michigan Republicans – but I treasured that little packet of calories. It carried the White House seal. I’ve been tempted to put it up for e-Bay bid, if only I could locate it among all my studio art.

(As a parry simulacra of Mother Teresa can earn several eBay thousands, surely a sugar packet from a sticky-fingers Democratic presidency can get high-digit bid response. Monica Lewinsky, who?)

This is the second time in 12 hours that I’ve been high tech zapped. On Thursday night I was sitting next to an architect friend, John, dim-summing in a favorite Chinese restaurant where he showed me China photos taken two years ago on a business trip.

He had dozens, and as he highlighted them on his iPad he explained how well he was treated in that remote, little known city. People went out of their way to literally open doors for him. A total stranger, he was treated like visiting royalty.

Then, to my delight and surprise, John brought up a map of China, zeroed in on the province and city where he had stayed, and then the neighborhood where he lived – the apartment building – and also the eight-story architectural center he temporarily worked in. All thousands of miles away. Details clear; and John traced how he walked everywhere in the area. Just like being there. A miraculous technoc visit.

I’m also in awe of American-made GPS units with voice overs that give sweet-or-sour commanding directions to wherever one wants to go. I know that satellites are somehow involved in street-by-street pinpointing, but it all seems like magic to me. (Two hundred years ago, it would be condemned to death.)

Wherever we look, wherever we listen, our modern world is a wonderment of astounding, taken for granted, high tech. What was only dreamed about in times long, long gone – things that only the fabled walk-on-water gods could perform – is now fact.

And, if far-fetched truth, turned pleasing reality be known, it’s pretty hard to top a gathering of gays, lesbians, T-persons (not T-baggers) shaking hands with the President of the United States. Hugs, Obama! (Yea, verily: Mitt was inconspicuous by his absence.)

Novi arson latest in life of challenges for Stacy Barker

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

NOVI – When ten year old Dimani went to live with a lesbian couple in Novi, she got As and Bs for the first time in her life.

“She was doing really well here,” said Stacey Barker, one of the women who took her in earlier this year. “Just a couple of weeks ago she helped me do a Girl’s Group event. I hired her to help. She took the responsibility so seriously! She helped me tie balloons and we put together little gift bags. I paid her $10 an hour and she was so proud of herself for doing a good job. You should have seen her being so helpful!”

The Girl’s Group event, which helps connect young women in an empowering and supportive environment, was just one of the many ways Barker has given back to the community after overcoming unbelievable obstacles in her own life. Barker has been working with the Girl’s Group in Ann Arbor, and having Dimani as part of the family had also been a light in her life, and a way to give back.

But then an arsonist’s fire destroyed their home and Dimani went back to live with her biological mother in Detroit.

On May 12, while Barker and her partner Tawana Williams were in Las Vegas celebrating their honeymoon, someone broke into their Novi Meadows home, scrawled racist and homophobic comments on the walls, and used an accelerant to set the home on fire.

“All we have left are the clothes we took with us to Vegas. We lost everything. All our wedding presents, all our stuff, everything.”

While Dimani still had belongings at her mother’s house in Detroit, she also lost clothing and toys in the fire. “The worst thing is losing our daughter,” Barker said.

“After the fire we had to take her home because her mother didn’t feel like it was safe. Kids at school were making fun of Dimani and one boy told her that we should have died in the fire.”

Barker said that the home in Detroit is also loving one, and that Dimani is in good hands. But she worries about her education. “She moved out here with us so she could go to Novi schools, but now she is too scared.”

Dimani had been with her mother when the fire occurred, since Barker and Williams were in Nevada. When they returned they stayed in a hotel for sixteen days before their insurance relocated them to a one-bedroom apartment. They will not be returning to Novi Meadows.

“We never had any problems there,” Barker said. “We’ve never been disrespected. That’s what makes it so horrible, not knowing who did it or why.”

She said she remains close to her neighbors, including the neighbor to her right that made the centerpiece for her wedding.

Barker said the Novi Police have been “very honest and nice,” and that the FBI is also looking into the fire as a potential hate crime. In Michigan anti-gay remarks are not considered a hate crime, but anti-black remarks are. Barker said that her house contained both, though it’s not clear yet how the crime will be prosecuted or if a suspect will be arrested.

Equality Michigan support

Equality Michigan is helping the family through their victim services program. In addition to providing educational resources and a supportive ear, they are collecting department store gift cards to help them replace household items and clothing they lost.

Barker is on medical leave from work where she helps empower women. She worries about how she will return to work without the professional business clothes she wears when she hosts events and does public speaking.

“Me and my partner just support each other. We don’t want to ask for help. We’re the ones who help other people overcome. I know we’re going to get our blessings, because we have our health and we have each other.”

She said this isn’t the worst thing that has happened to her. Barker’s life has been fraught with struggle, not just as a lesbian, but as a woman trying to make it in a society where violence and degradation of women is still all too common. When she was 18 years old she was hospitalized after being gang-raped by three men. And when she was 22 she was sentenced to life in prison after using deadly force to stop another sexual assault.

She was locked up for 22 years, half her life at the time. In 2000 a Federal court ruled that the judge in her trial was wrong for not explaining to the jury that a woman is allowed to use deadly force to prevent a sexual assault. It took a full ten years after that for the parole board to finally approve her release.

While she was incarcerated, Barker was repeatedly raped and assaulted by prison guards. Barker won settlements in 1995, 2000 and 2010 as a result of being sexually assaulted in prison. The most recent suit uncovered widespread abuse of prisoners and resulted in over 800 women coming forward in a class action lawsuit against the state. Thirty prison guards being convicted of various related crimes as a result.

The torture she endured behind bars drove her to do better for herself. She earned a degree and made connections to the outside world. One connection is Williams, who she’s dated off and on since 1994 and as a public speaker.

“Through Girls Group I get to help young women stay in school, don’t be a teen mom, don’t get in abusive relationships. We also send them on trips and to conferences to learn how to be independent leaders.”

With a life full of experience and a heart full of love, Barker said she’s going to keep moving forward. “A lot of people would say ‘why me?’ But I say ‘why not me?’ I’d rather have it be me than someone who isn’t as emotionally strong who would really be hurt by it.”
NC couples sue federally for second parent adoption

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Six couples in North Carolina are taking second parent adoption to the Federal level. The ACLU of North Carolina has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the gay and lesbian couples contending that denying second parent adoption deprives Americans of equal rights and the right to due process.

A second parent adoption occurs when one partner in an unmarried couple adopts the other partner’s biological or adoptive child. This can occur in both gay and straight relationships. In December 2010, the North Carolina Supreme Court banned second parent adoptions for same-sex couples.

Elizabeth Gill, staff attorney for the ACLU LGBT Project stressed the harm that is caused by “not allowing lesbian and gay couples the ability to create the same parent-child relationships as heterosexual families.”

“Harms are an incredibly important part of this case,” Gill said. “Kids are left vulnerable in a number of different ways. Children are harmed by not having access to health care benefits and the harm from the real fact that a child could be taken away.”

Currently 20 states plus Washington, D.C., have clear protection for second parent adoptions either through statute or by case law. Five states expressly prohibit it and the remainder — including Michigan — are ambiguous, with many states having counties that will do it while others won’t.

Though two other cases — one in Michigan — have been filed in Federal courts, none have been heard yet, Gill said. “The process can take years, but if we start now it will be all those many years closer,” she said.

The families

Chantelle Fisher-Borne and her partner Marcie have been in a committed relationship for 15 years. A recent vote in North Carolina solidified their inability to get married, and a 2010 vote banned second-parent adoptions completely in the state. They hope that justice can be done for the sake of their children by attacking this law at a Federal level.

Marcie and Chantelle Fisher-Borne. Courtesy of ACLU.

The couple has two children, and each is the biological mother of one. When their daughter was born, the couple was treated rudely by a hospital staff member who demanded their legal paperwork. If both women were able to be fully recognized legal parents to their children, such encounters could be avoided.

“We were treated as if our family was less than other families, during which should have been one of the happiest occasions of our lives,” said Marcie. “We don’t ever want there to be any question as to who should care for our children. If something were to happen to either one of us, it could tear our family apart.”

Some of the protections that come with a second parent adoption include ensuring that all children in the family are covered if one partner lacks health insurance; ensuring that families will stay together and children will not be torn from the only home they’ve known if something should happen to the biological parent; ensuring that either parent will be allowed to make medical decisions or be able to be by their child’s bedside if one of their children is hospitalized.

The law doesn’t just affect same-gender-loving partners and their kids. Examples of other situations where second parent adoption would give essential protections to a child include if a single dad also wants his sister or his mother to have parental rights, or if a straight couple who is unmarried wants to jointly adopt. Essentially it would remove marriage as a barrier to parenthood.

Michigan

In Michigan the second-parent adoption case filed federally has stalled because the State of Michigan has filed for a summary dismissal, contending that adoption is a state right and not a federal one. Hazel Park women April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse have been together for ten years, and have lived together for six. Rowse is the legal parent of one child and Rowe is the legal parent of another. Each of the children was taken in by DeBoer and Rowe after being abandoned or surrendered at birth by their mothers. The women served as guardians and licensed foster parents to the children before adopting them as individuals. Each child could only legally be adopted by one of the women, so they face the same fears as the couples in North Carolina. (Read more at www.pridesource.com/article.html?article=52468)

To help the general public understand the issue and to help supporters mobilize their friends, co-workers and neighbors, the ACLU has put together an “Allies Guide to Talking about Adoption by LGBT Parents” which can be downloaded at www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/allies-guide-talking-about-adoption-lgbt-parents.
love. “No matter what you face with your child, love them. Be sweet and patient and hope that things will work themselves out,” she said. “Your child needs and deserves your love.”

The theme of family love was evident in the Ferndale Pride planning. The kids’ tent was run by local moms and dads, and the Rainbow Run had a short family “run” where kids could join their parents and get paint thrown on them too. And in the afternoon a local family spoke about their experience adopting a gay teenager.

The afternoon Market Daze suffered a loss of attendees as heavy rains poured on downtown Ferndale, sending many of the families home and pushing the rest of the crowds into the bars, coffee shops and boutiques along 9 Mile and Woodward, giving the businesses — many of which are gay-owned or employ LGBT staff — an even bigger boost in sales than expected. Fortunately the sun came back out in the late afternoon and the Drag Show and after parties, another boost for business, carried on as scheduled.

Ferndale Pride Weekend had many individual events including the SE Michigan Dyke March and a Light the Night Walk where visitors heard from multiple groups about how they are affected by hate.

Covey said 7,000 people came out in total and there were no injuries or incidents. He said over 125 volunteers helped out the day of the festival and a core group of 20-30 on the planning committee. “One thing that makes this event so neat is that we had all sorts of folks come together with their own ideas to make one big festival. We had so much diversity on the planning committee that when everything came together we had a unique event that none of us could have imagined on our own.”

‘Bully Chronicles’ fundraising deadline approaches

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Local filmmaker Amy Weber is nearing the final fundraising days for her true-to-life fictional documentary, The Bully Chronicles. She remains hopeful that she will reach her goal of $100,000 by June 23.

“Every penny counts in this game changing project that will help bring understanding and healing to an epidemic that has plagued our youth for far too long,” said Weber about the 100 percent Michigan-made project.

The Bully Chronicles (www.thebullychronicles.com/) begins as a documentary investigation into the story of 16-year-old Jessica Burns, who lies in a coma after a nearly successful suicide attempt. The filmmakers examine Jessica’s life to uncover the reasons why. Confessional tapes recorded in secret by Jessica and her best friend Brian surface. The recordings show an unblinking look into the world of bullying through the victim’s eyes. As she languishes in a coma, her story unfolds in the “found footage” style through self-recorded interviews and actual confrontations with her bullies. Jessica’s primary bully, Avery, initially denies that she’s been tormenting Jessica. But once given the opportunity to film her own thoughts and experiences, we see the other side of the story for the first time — the bully’s side.

So far, supporters have donated more than $20,000 toward making the film at Indiegogo (www.indiegogo.com/TheBullyChronicles), the world’s largest global funding platform. Every dollar raised will go toward the making of the film. “This is a true example of a grassroots effort. We need supporters and we have to pull together as a community in order to make this happen,” said Weber.

Leslee Blatnikoff, co-owner of Real Ryder Revolution in West Bloomfield, is doing anything she can to help with fundraising efforts for the film while introducing a brand new workout to the community at her indoor cycling studio, the first of its kind in Michigan.

“Amy and Tina are our riders and they’re also good friends of mine. They are two very hip, young, successful women. I love what they stand for. I respect them so much and I care for them as individuals. I want to support the film, which they are so dedicated and passionate about,” said Blatnikoff.

She and her business partners, Traci Raitt and Dan Barish, take cycling to a new level and actually simulate an outdoor ride. The Real Ryder bikes offer a total body workout allowing riders to turn, lean, steer, race, climb, and strengthen their core while generating an increased calorie burn.

“Spinning has been around for a long time. This is the next level of exercise...an intense, exhilarating and motivating 45 to 60 minute workout primed to inspiring, hot music,” said Blatnikoff. “It’s my pleasure to promote good health and raise awareness.”

Visitors are encouraged to come and work hard, but to do things at their own pace. “Any level can take a class. Have something light to eat before, bring water and a towel. People will be amazed at what a great workout they will get,” said Blatnikoff, a hardworking mother who is philanthropic in her community.

“This bullying thing has become such a big to-do with people judging and hurting each other. I’m not about that anymore in my life, which is why I want to be a part of this and see this grow. This film is so important,” said Blatnikoff, adding that donations are accepted at the studio whether people take a class or not.

“We are very honored that Real Ryder Revolution is making efforts to raise money for The Bully Chronicles,” said Weber. “What a wonderful opportunity to exercise, have a great time and contribute to a much-needed cause.”

Real Ryder Revolution is located at 6716 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield. 248-737-6455, www.realryderrevolution.com
Meet Tyler Bradley

Tyler Bradley a third year student at Saginaw Valley State University studying graphic design and Spanish. He is the A&E Section Editor of The Valley Vanguard and Social Activities Coordinator of Living Proud, the on-campus affinity group.

1 How big of an LGBT presence is there at Saginaw Valley?

While the LGBT presence at Saginaw Valley might be a bit smaller than at other Universities, our presence is definitely growing. The University has started Ally Training sessions, which more than 100 have completed.

2 What type of events do you have?

Our registered student organization, Living Proud, holds bonding get togethers so that those who aren’t on the whole social activist side of things can get to know people like them and just have fun. We do the program “How Good is Your Gaydar?” in which the audience asks a series of volunteer panelists questions to determine their sexuality. We organize a group to participate in an AIDS Walk. Our charity drag show is entering its sixth year. Word on the street is that we have one of the best college drag shows hosted at a University.

3 How is being out and active in college different than your high school experience?

I was the only one in my high school that identified as something other than heterosexual in the whole school. It was very disheartening! In fact, I had attempted to contact some old high school teachers some months ago about putting on an LGBT program. We’ve had programs for anorexia, alcohol, drugs, and texting and driving, but nothing was ever mentioned about LGBT issues in our school unless it was forcibly brought up by a student.

4 Are other students supportive of the LGBT students?

This is a little harder of a question. While we do have a growing ally population at the University, there will always be a select number of students who aren’t supportive. My freshman year, I had a roommate who was against the idea of homosexuality. After he had gotten to know me, he was completely okay with it. In fact, he said his views on it had changed a lot because of meeting me.

5 Do you see people who are coming out while at college, and what do you do to help them?

I just try to be available if they have any questions, concerns or just need someone to talk to. A couple weeks ago, a professor had talked to me and had thanked me for writing newspaper articles about LGBT events. He had told me he is in the process of coming out himself, and is very appreciative for all that I’ve done. Knowing things like that are helping support not only students, but professors too is a very rewarding feeling.

A longer version of this interview can be found online at www.pridesource.com
you’re invited

you’re invited

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Jake and Ana talk 10 years together, who’s gayer and disco idols

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Ever ones to take themselves too seriously – their new video, “Baby Come Home,” has them camping it up in nun gear – Jake Shears and Ana Matronic of Scissor Sisters let loose in our recent interview. Who’s gayer? Jake has the worst table manners? The band thought Ana was murdered and tossed in the trunk of a car? Check out what the Sisters – who just released their fourth album, “Magic Hour,” and will play on June 27 at the Royal Oak Music Theatre – revealed about life on the road, and life with each other.

Does this album have as high of a libido as “Night Work”?

Jake Shears: There’s sexy music on it, but it’s not sexually aggressive. The last record was very aggressive in a certain way; this one is much more romantic – about relationships and friendships, but a real tapping into that creative force.

The last album, “Night Work,” took nearly four years to release; this one only took two. How were you able to get this album out so quickly?

Jake: This one we made in six months. It was a pretty laid-back process, and I wasn’t feeling wound up or stressed out and wanted to make music that wasn’t over-thought. I just wanted to make a happy record that was fun to write that meant something. It was super natural and the creativity was definitely flowing, which you can never take for granted. It came really easy.

Ana: For me, songwriting is never very laid-back; that’s the thing that I really fret about. When I get to relax is when the show is together and we’re performing. But from my perspective, and watching Jake in the studio, this is his most confident moment in the studio, I believe. He had a really clear sense of what he wanted and where he wanted to go with things.

What’s the weirdest inspiration for a song off “Magic Hour”?

Jake: There’s a song called “The Secret Life of Letters” about creative block. I don’t know if that’s the weirdest inspiration, but it’s weird, because the song itself is about not being able to write a song. When I wrote that, it was the only way I could write a song, so that’s a special and interesting song to me.

Ana: “Let’s Have a Kiki” was directly inspired by an experience I had of going to a party; it was raining and the cops had busted it and it was in a loft downtown. It was partly inspired by that and it was partly inspired by the fact that Jake and I love to have house parties. That
Kylie Minogue keeps the compilations coming. Plus: ‘Rock of Ages’ surprises

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Kylie Minogue, ‘The Best of Kylie Minogue’

After two decades of niche fame, Kylie Minogue’s camp isn’t giving up on demonstrating to the non-gay public the awesomeness of the Aussie, recycling her hits into remixes, live releases and past hit collections. The strategy? Drop a new album, and then get those hits on another album – any album – stat. “The Best of Kylie Minogue” makes its case: The underrated diva’s catalog is a bank of irresistible dance-music goodies, from her classic ’80s-released fame-maker “The Loco-Motion” to 2002’s crossover hit “Love at First Sight.” Those, of course, show up here (the former as the 7” mix), as do 19 other tracks, and their music videos on an accompanying DVD, from the last 25 years: “I Should Be So Lucky,” a bubblegum standout from her 1988 set, “Ultimate Kylie” – even if this is her another cobbled LP after 2004’s two-disc “Aphrodite,” but that hardly warrants Naysayers who thought it was risky business having Tom Cruise take on the rock era might be surprised at the gusto he gives in “Rock of Ages,” the big-screen adaptation of the big-timing Broadway musical. As any good actor will tell you, losing yourself in the role is key – and Cruise, as Stacee Jaxx, does exactly that with his numbers on the jukebox soundtrack. “Pour Some Sugar on Me” is probably too clean-cut for the Gen Xers who can’t see Jerry Maguire blasting testosterone into a Def Leppard sex song, but Cruise is convincing – and completely unrecognizable – as a grunge-rocker that can, yes, sing. Even better, vocally, is the way he reaches for some high notes on “Paradise City” like someone kicked him in the balls. Catherine Zeta-Jones has a damn good time doing her best Pat Benatar in her current-career bluesiness, offering strong sentiments on walking the walk and “If I Ever Get Around to Living” is an endearing letter to himself. His guitar playing, as always, is smooth and drenched in his current-career bluesiness, offering strong sentiments on walking the walk (“Love is a Verb”) and living carefree (“The Age of Worry”). You’re forgiven, John.
Puzzling out the Phelpsians

BY LESLIE ROBINSON

Some people argue that the best way to handle the ever-present, ever-protesting members of the Westboro Baptist Church is to ignore them. That sounds sensible. I just can’t do it. The truth is I find Fred Phelps and his congregation fascinating. I get that they’re among the world’s biggest media whores – they could even give Donald Trump pointers – and will push any boundary for attention. Yet they still manage to surprise me.

Like just recently, when they journeyed to North Carolina. Since Westboro’s religious creed is God Hates Fags, and since North Carolina passed the anti-gay Amendment One, a person might assume the Phelpsians visited the Tar Heel State simply to sniff the heady air of bigotry victorious. That’s not the Westboro way. North Carolinians don’t want gays to marry; Westboro members don’t want gays to live.

So they went to North Carolina to do what they always do, stage a protest. Their target was obvious, a man famous for supporting gay rights, a man who practically bleeds rainbow colors.

Billy Graham. Sec, fascinating. The elder statesman of Christian evangelism a friend of gays? Right. And Billy’s son and heir Franklin is a part-time imam. While Graham has taken fewer political stances in his career than, say, Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson, he jumped into the Amendment One battle.

“At 93, I never thought we would have to debate the definition of marriage,” Graham wrote in an ad that ran in newspapers around North Carolina. “The Bible is clear – God’s definition of marriage is between a man and a woman. I want to urge my fellow Carolinians to vote FOR the marriage amendment on Tuesday, May 8.”

Yup, he’s on our side, all right. Downright ready to head up a PFLAG chapter.

So why, if Westboro and Graham are anti-gay bedfellows, did the Phelpsians protest Graham? Because the reverend isn’t anti-gay enough. Westboro has high standards.

About a dozen church members picketed the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte and other Graham-centric locations. On Westboro’s website, according to WBTV, the church said Graham should use his influence to tell the world “it’s not okay to be a fag, it’s not okay to divorce and remarry, it’s not okay to fornicate, it’s not okay to kill your babies.”

She makes it sound like a radio format.

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Lewis Jewelers......................19
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Mitchell Gold & Bob Williams.....21
Nature’s Garden Center............22
Necto.................................23
Orion Automotive Services Inc....24
People’s Food Coop................25
Performance Network..............26
Peterson, PLLC, Lisa J...............27
PFLAG Ann Arbor...................28
Rosenberg, David...................29
Shnautz Cabaret and Gallery......30

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Jim Toy Pride Dinner to award scholar, advocate Sandra Cole

CNN and ESPN journalist LZ Granderson to keynote

BY BENJAMIN JENKINS

ANN ARBOR—Award-winning CNN and ESPN online gay journalist LZ Granderson will keynote the Jim Toy Community Center’s Pride Dinner, honoring the advocate and scholar Dr. Sandra Cole June 25.

Granderson was named the 2011 Journalist of the Year by the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. He is also a 2009 GLAAD Award winner for his digital journalism. In his weekly CNN opinion column, Granderson often tackles the topics of race, sexuality and gender in both society and sports.

Granderson will also serve as the National Black Justice Coalition’s Third Annual OUT on the Hill’s National Chairman this year. OOTH is a Black LGBT Leadership Summit meant to foster strategy, discussion and organization while educating public officials about black LGBT public policy concerns.

JTCC’s Pride Dinner will award Dr. Cole with the Jim Toy Lifetime Achievement Award and honor her career as a noted sexologist and longtime advocate of equality for transgender individuals. In 1999, Toy and Dr. Cole co-authored new language for Ann Arbor’s non-discrimination policy to include gender identity/ expression. Pioneering LGBT advocate Jim Toy himself will present Cole with the award.

Dr. Cole began her scholarly career on the faculty of the University of Minnesota Medical School alongside her late husband Ted Cole. The two of them conducted groundbreaking research on topics such as sexuality and physical disability. In 1977, the Coles moved to Ann Arbor and joined the faculty of the University of Michigan.

Dr. Cole also founded the University of Michigan Health System Comprehensive Gender Services Program in 1993, an academic program providing health care services to transgendered individuals in need of gender-related care, including endocrinological, surgical, mental and general health care services.

“Sandra has served many communities,” said Toy. “In particular the medical schools at the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan, the transgender community in all its diversity, the UM’s Spectrum Center, and the Jim Toy Community Center.”

“She has presented at countless national conferences on transgender concerns. She has counseled innumerable couples, families and individuals. We are all incapable of sufficiently honoring that work, but we will do our best to recognize Sandra’s vocation.”

After retiring from seven years of service as the health services program’s director, Cole continues to advocate for transgendered individuals and their families’ equality and social justice.

“I cannot imagine a world without the many changes that Sandra Cole has brought to us all on behalf of freedom and justice,” says Toy. “She has been a pioneer, a teacher, an advocate, an ally and a friend to more people than I can begin to count.”

The Jim Toy Community Center Pride Dinner begins at 6 p.m., June 25 at the Morris Lawrence Building at Washtenaw Community College, 4800 E. Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor. Tickets are $85 per person or $150 for two. Tickets are available online via PayPal, at Common Language Bookstore, or by sending a check to Jim Toy Center, 319 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor, MI 48104. For more information, go to www.JimToyCenter.org or call 734-834-0598.
members are related—held a sign reading “God H8S Billy’s Cow.”

I was baffled as to why God would hate dairy products, unless he’s lactose intolerant, but it turned out that a “talking” cow offers stories and songs to young library visitors.

All part of Graham’s money-grubbing, claimed the Phelpsians, who asked, “How many children can you lead to Satan through Bessie the talking cow?”

I guess that depends on the quality of Bessie’s stories and songs.

Only after I’d ruminated over Westboro’s attack on Billy Graham did I remember that this isn’t the first time the cult has targeted a prominent evangelical. In 2007, these folks protested at Jerry Falwell’s funeral, in part because of Falwell’s warmth toward gays.

Yes, Falwell adored us.

How could I forget they protested him? Because their reasoning is so bizarre I can barely wrap my mind around it. But I won’t forget again. When Pat Robertson dies, I’ll expect the Phelpsians to picket his funeral. Since Robertson has always overflowed with love for gay people.

Leslie Robinson wants to meet Bessie the talking cow. Email Leslie at lesarobinson@gmail.com, and read more LGBT funnies at www.generalgayety.com.
really is our favorite way to have fun. Put on a mix, get our friends together and have what we refer to as a “Micro Rave” at my house.

Do you have hotel parties on the road?
Ana: Sometimes. More often than not we have them in the bus. We have what we call “Back Lounge Raves” or “Front Lounge Raves” and, since we’re almost always traveling with Sammy Jo (their touring DJ), we just put him to work and dance on the bus.

What’s your favorite line on this album?
Jake: One of my favorite lines on this album is, “Love your mama’s Cadillac / Had it since the dawn of crack.”

Where did that come from?
Jake: Out of my ass. Look, all these songs just come out of my ass. I seriously make it up as I go along. (Laughs)

You’ve said people in your life inspired this album. Does that include your husband, Chris?
Jake: Chris always plays into it. I wrote him a song when we started dating and he told me it sounded like it had been written by a 12-year-old girl, and I told him, “I’m never writing you a song ever again.” (Laughs) I never stuck to that.

But yeah, of course: There’s “Best in Me.” We’re going on our ninth year, and I don’t know how he has the patience. It amazes me and I really feel like the luckiest man in the world to have him. I don’t think it could be anybody else.

Are you saying you’re a difficult person?
Jake: Yeah. To be with and to be a partner with, I think I’m probably very difficult because I’m never home, and it does get really hard. It can really bum me out sometimes – I know it bums him out sometimes – and it’s tough to live apart for extended periods, but then you also don’t take for granted the time you have together when you are together. On the other hand, I don’t think I’d be in a relationship with somebody that I’d have to live with 365 days a year. I don’t think I could be that. It’s about striking a balance.

What’s a song of yours that turns you on?
Jake: Ew, none of them! Gross. I can’t even imagine. No, no. There’s not one that exists.

You’ve never had sex to any of your music?
Jake: No! Years ago I remember I was making out with some guy – this was, like, 10 years ago – and one of my songs came on shuffle and it was awful. It ruined the mood.

How did the passing of Donna Summer and Robin Gibb, who’ve been very influential on Scissor Sisters, affect you?
Jake: I feel bad for the families and their loved ones, but I don’t get as sad about death when it’s someone who has experienced and had such an incredible life as Robin Gibb and Donna Summer, who have gifted the world with so much outrageously incredible work. I just get reflective. The band’s been talking about this a lot, and Babydaddy and I have always been massive fans of Donna Summer and Robin Gibb and the Bee Gees and the crazy direct influence it had on us – it’s just something to celebrate.

Ana: It’s not often that I get teary over the passing of celebrities, but Donna did make me shed a few tears because she did mean a lot to the gay community. The day she died we played a show in London, so I took some time to pay tribute to her. In New York City it was illegal in the ’60s for men to dance alone together in a space, so men had to be with women dancing. That was one of the many laws that inspired the Stonewall riots. The ’70s were the first time that men could be on a dance floor with other men, and the soundtrack to freedom was Donna Summer. We’re talking people who couldn’t be out at work, walk down the street feeling safe and hold the hand of the person they love, and they’re rejected by religion. The one place they can be free is the nightclub, and Donna Summer’s voice was the voice of gospel. She made dance music spiritual.

What’s your idea of a magic hour?
Jake: The best hour that I’ve ever had in my life is always that hour before sunrise – that’s kind of what the album is named after. There’s nothing that makes me happier than having been out all night with my friends or with my husband and then the sun’s about to come up and you’re at someplace really beautiful. Those are my favorite moments. It could be the hour after sunset, right when the sun is setting or right before sunrise. It’s the time when there are no shadows.

What are your tour essentials?
Jake: Usually my Kindle, which I don’t have on this trip; I’m actually reading real books. I’m a book lover, but the Kindle is a fucking godsend for me when I’m running around. My PlayStation Vita is always with me. I’m a pretty light traveler. I can exist off very little. I’ve been living out of a suitcase for so long that I don’t really bring a ton. I’m a bit of a hippie like that.

Ana: Oh, I have about 50 pounds of tour essentials. (Laughs) I am not a low-maintenance girl by any means. I do my own makeup and hair and the whole nine, so I have to carry around a lot of stuff. If we have one show, I have two bags. And I’ll show up and people are like, “You know, we’re only gone for a week.” And I’ll go, “Do we have a show?” “Yes, we have a show.” Then I have two bags. That is the rule.

Who’s gayer?
Jake: We’re both pretty gay. I think I’m probably gayer than Ana. I couldn’t exactly put my finger on why. Maybe because I’m gay. (Laughs)
Ana: Good question. It’s a tie, to be honest. His sex is a lot gayer than mine.

Tell me about the best prank you’ve pulled on each other.
Jake: Oh god. She was in Florida and she called me and Babydaddy and said there was a stalking that had been showing up at the gigs and she was really freaked out, and then she forgot to finish the prank for some reason and didn’t call us again for a week. We couldn’t get ahold of her. We thought she was dead in the back of somebody’s trunk.
Ana: And they got me back for it. Because they were really concerned and they were going to file a police report, they in turn had our manager write an email to me and say, “Oh, by the way, we’re sending cops by the person’s house.” And I was like, “Oh my god, no! Don’t do that!” I’m making frantic phone calls and nobody’s picking up. They fucking got me back. And that cured me of wanting to play any pranks. But he’s way better at this shit than I am. I don’t really tease people that often because it makes me feel really guilty.

Something we don’t know about the other?
Jake: God, that’s hard. Ana has the craziest memory of anyone that I’ve ever come into contact with. She can remember dates, or something you were wearing one afternoon before some concert in, like, Russia. She has a really crazy memory.
Ana: Do you know that he writes just about one piece of fiction a year? He studied creative writing, and every year he writes something other than a song.

What’s your biggest pet peeve about the other?
Jake: Of course there’s a gazillion, because we live on top of each other and we’ve literally lived on top of each other for 10 years now. You learn to take the pet peeves and laugh at them – and laugh at them when the other person’s not listening. (Laughs)

We don’t fight that much anymore. We used to bicker much more than we do now. We’re a lot happier now on the road with each other. It’s not so intense.
Ana: Oh yeah, totally. We’ve grown up a lot. And touring with him and being confronted with people on a daily basis in a very small space – i.e. the tour bus – will get you dealing with things in a very direct and quick way. We’re very good at arguing now.

But that doesn’t answer the question.
Ana: Do I really have to say this? You’re stirring a pot. He has horrible table manners. Just terrible. That’s all I’m gonna say. (Laughs)
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Ringwald’s Gay Play Series fills the bill with talent

BY JOHN QUINN

While by no means the smallest venue in Metro Detroit, Ferndale’s Ringwald Theatre is bustin’ at the seams this month with 11 one-act plays and scads of your favorite actors and directors. The occasion is the third installment of the Gay Play Series, which has proven so popular that the number of scripts submitted for production has burgeoned from 17 the first year to 175 this season. Presumably we’re seeing the best of the best. Some of them are sketches or vignettes; others are fully realized, but very short, plays. GPS is like a box of chocolates: Not everything is going to be to your taste, but the offerings are so good you’ll be glad you sampled every one.

The plays are split into blocks, played as two separate performances. In Block A, we find Tony Foster’s wildly original “Defrost,” directed by PJ Jacobs. The bliss of new couple Jeremy St. Martin and Travis Pelto is threatened by a possible menace a trois, which includes the mysterious Chef Colette (Michelle Giorlando). “Defrost” is a bright bit of comedy, intelligently played.

“Turnaround,” by Ringwald’s artistic director, Joe Bailey, turns the magnifying glass on the repulsive specimens who lurk in the underbelly of the film industry. Jamie Richards, Melissa Beckwith and Heidi Bennett ably portray some of the most vapid, unpleasant characters in memory - no one could you take home to mother.

“Queer/Trek” by Brian Walker takes a predictable plot and stands it on its ear. We find coming out as gay to the folks may not be as hard as coming out as a Trekkie (or is “Trekker” more P.C.?). As directed by Gary Lehman, the comic build to an unexpected climax is perfect.

“Mate Trade” by Laura Witkowski & Cara Trautman mocks the “Wife Swap” genre of TV reality series. Matios Simonian hosts one half of a lesbian couple, Laura Heikkinen, in his Ann Arbor home. Director Topher Payne follows the playwrights’ lead in deftly managing stereotype for comedy without cliché.

Kristian O’Hare crafted a beautifully insightful piece in “Fanny Packs & Hanky Codes,” directed by Matthew Turner Shelton. Identifying what someone else needs is a lot harder than identifying the color of a kerchief in the dim lighting of a leather bar.

“Homochondria” by Brad Baron and directed by Michelle Leroy is an over-the-top burlesque concerning the cursed Casey Hibbert, his long-suffering partner, Joe Plambeck, and a Ghost of Divas Past and Present (Heidi Bennett). The result is good, silly fun.

Block B consists of five plays, beginning with “Ask Me! Tell Me!” by Andrew Charles Lark. This vignette would have benefitted with a less literal interpretation. Caryn Hottle-Malton spontaneously plays a Cyranos-like stand in at the airport where Curtis Younce is meeting his e-mail pal, Casey, as the G.I. returns from deployment overseas. “Ask Me! Tell Me!” is directed by Nancy Amfield.

Directed by Lisa Melinn, “Pocket Universe” by Duncan Pflaster is a subtle, layered fantasy of unrequited love. Richard Payton and Brian Papandrea play on a bare stage, accompanied by fine lighting and sound effects. This bittersweet script is a totally original spin on an old theme.

“Ten Picnics” by Mark Harvey Levine is a tender homage to the family and the circle of life that drives it. Director Joe Plambeck allows Cal Schwartz to unleash his inner child; Genevieve Jona and Melissa Beckwith play not only his mothers, but all the other women in his life. This is an intelligent script, gracefully handled.

“Trekker” more P.C.? (as directed by Gary McClellan and featuring Pete Podolksi and Brad Stephens, “Trekker” will cause a bad case of the giggles once you accept the preposterous plot.

Joe Bailey tackles the most difficult script in the collection. The others are full of humor and affection, but there’s nothing funny in “Break Your Face on My Hand” by Daniel Talbott. There’s nothing funny in bullying. Jeffrey Vincent Howson and Christopher Burns play a high school bully and his victim. Avoiding suspension by spending time with his victim, the bully nevertheless continues harassment. There is a structural problem with the script that, while the plot moves efficiently, will cause a bad case of the giggles once you accept the preposterous plot.

Audience members for GPS will be voting for their favorite script. The winner will receive an additional performance at the closing ceremonies on Monday, June 25 at 8 p.m. and will subsequently receive a full production at The Ringwald Theatre. Audience members will also be asked to vote for a favorite actor and director. Imagine that: You little people having the opportunity to be critics for a day, possessing the demi-godlike power that goes with an exalted profession! Wield it if you dare!
OUTINGS

Thursday, June 21

LGBT Midtown Job Expo 11 a.m. The first of its kind in Michigan, Affirmations will host over 20 companies from all over the Midwest region to open a welcoming environment for job seekers to feel safe in expressing themselves while pursuing employment. This will also be the first opportunity for companies and organizations to improve their diversity, while also recruiting from one of the best talent pools in the Midwest region, including the diverse Metro Detroit area. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Legal Referral Services 4 p.m. Weekly advocacy program and referral services provided by AL Skilling, AL Skilling P.C., 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

26th Annual Pride Banquet & Awards Ceremony 6:30 p.m. On its 26th anniversary the banquet will honor those who have made outstanding contributions of time and talent to the LGBT community. Nominations are solicited from all over Michigan, but only a select few will be chosen to receive awards. 2901 Main Road, Warren. Goaffirmations.org

KGLRC Group #7 The program. The Resource Center Youth Group helps young people, ages 13 to 18, who are trying to come terms with their sexuality in a sometimes-unsupportive society. Meets every Thursday from 7-9 p.m. at a confidential location. To attend, call or email the resource center. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo. 269-349-4324. KGLRC.org

Monsters, Madmen & The Whimsically Twisted 7:30 p.m. Hear tenors Jay Kaplan, Jeffrey Willets, Soprano Carla Margolis and accompanist Elisabeth Wagner as they serenade you down the sidewalk. Aut Bar, 315 Braun Court, Wagner as they serenade you down the sidewalk. Aut Bar, 315 Braun Court, Wagner and accompanist Elisabeth Wagner. 269-378-6513. TriCityLGBTQ.com

Editor’s Pick

The Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, performs at Detroit’s historic Fox Theatre on June 22. Franklin is a cultural icon and multi-award winning artist with dozens of chart-topping records and timeless classic hits such as “Respect,” “Chain Of Fools” and “Daydreaming.” She has been a recipient of a 2005 Presidential Medal of Freedom honor, 17 Grammy Awards and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Franklin’s ever-distinctive soulful vocal style has graced the music charts for over four decades. She is one of the most influential artists of our time and a true icon of the music industry. With a catalog of over 70 million albums sold, Franklin has been honored with 14 Grammy Awards, nine NAACP Image Awards, and the 1999 Kennedy Center Honors. Franklin is the recipient of the 2008 National Medal of Arts and the first recipient of the 2010 American Music Award for the American Music Lifetime Achievement Award. Franklin’s music has inspired countless artists and has become a testament to the power of music to connect people and bring joy to those who listen. Franklin’s music has been featured in numerous films and television shows, and she has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the National Museum of American History. Franklin’s legacy is one of resilience and determination, and her music continues to inspire and uplift people around the world. Franklin’s performance at the Fox Theatre is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not to be missed!
Editor’s Pick

While many theaters close for the summer months, Ann Arbor’s Performance Network is full steam ahead, offering audiences an array of entertainment options, including the upcoming Fireside Festival of New Works. As part of the theater’s continued dedication to support and provide a voice for playwrights, the series will be held June 24-27, 2012 and will feature staged readings of new plays by four playwrights, including Network regulars Joseph Zettelmaier and Kim Carney.

Each reading will be followed by a post-show discussion with the playwright and director, during which audience members are encouraged to share their thoughts on the pieces that they have seen. The schedule includes “The Queen of Spades” by Joel Gross (Tuesday, June 26, 7 p.m.), “Catbird” by Kim Carney (Sunday, June 24, 7:30 p.m.), “Hungry” by Lia Romeo (Monday, June 25, 7 p.m.), and “Renaissance Man” by Joseph Zettelmaier (Tuesday, June 26, 7 p.m.).

Tickets are pay-what-you-can (suggested donation $10); call 734-663-0681 for details.

ART ‘N’ AROUND


Art Pop! 130 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo. June 1-July 1. $5.


The Gallery Project “Nature As Spirit” A multimedia exhibit in which 30 local, regional, and national artists explore nature as a source of spirituality in contemporary life. 215 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. June 1-July 15. 734-970-7012. TheGalleryProject.com

The New Territory Arts Association and Kraal Art Center “Swinging for Sculpture” Golf Club at Harbor Shores, 400 Klock Road, Benton Harbor. 11 a.m. June 25. 269-983-0271. Kraal.org


Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts “Urbanity” 2 West Fulton, Grand Rapids. May 3-July 5. 616-454-7000. UICA.org


What’s a Matzo

Across
1 Hazard for Sheehan
5 Like some division
9 “Ed Wood” role
13 Gauche side, for Debussy
14 New Age music superstar
15 “Phantom” scar source
16 Start of a Fay Jacobs saying about matzo
19 F.D.R. or J.F.K., e.g.
20 City of Capote’s birth
21 Sked info
22 Home state of J. Nabors
23 “… farewell, auf Wiedersehen, ___”
24 Uncool sort
26 Chat rm. exaggeration?
29 Muscle Mary’s weight training unit
30 Disaster sorting
33 Appear to be
36 More of the saying
39 Responder to “Bite me!”?
40 The “former next president”
43 Present mo.?
46 “___-hoo! Fellas!”
48 Clay Aiken was almost one
49 Flee to a same-sex marriage state
52 Neighbor of Mex.
55 Verb ending
56 Church member named for a member?
59 “Culpa” starter
60 End of the saying
62 A little behind
63 Lickety-split (abbr.)
64 Sgt. Snorkel’s pooch
65 Marvel Comics superhero
66 ___ guys (Robin Hood’s men?)
67 One with a foamy head

Down
1 Neptune’s tool
2 Rosie’s WWII job
3 Prayer to the Queen of Heaven
4 White House souvenir
5 Fair kind of playing field
6 Like unrequited loved
7 “El’s Coming” songwriter Laura
8 Ten of “Tootsie”
9 Worked the hayfields
10 It may cream your face when you bite it
11 Mortgage holder
12 Comes out correctly
17 Bambi character that wasn’t horny?
18 Slangy intensifier
25 Mild oath
27 Data transmission letters
28 Ward of “Once and Again”
31 MD for women
32 Auction web site
34 Subj. for those of a different tongue
35 Threesome who went to see Mary
36 From ___ Z (the whole shebang)
38 Anal type?
41 Tinged with pink
42 She loved Franklin and Lorena
43 Treat, as seawater
44 Christian name of the half-brother of Chaz
45 Open one’s eyes
47 One who’s wanted
50 Juice, so to speak
51 Bowie collaborator
53 Gooze through
54 Caligula’s arts
57 Ask for it while kneeling
58 Cushiness
61 Choreographer Fosse

Solution on pg 31

Say hello to Paris!

This 5-year-old English Bulldog is fully grown at 46 pounds and has a face only a mother could love! Paris is a very sweet dog who loves people and seems to get along with everybody – dogs and cats included. Come meet Paris today! The adoption fee includes sterilization, age-appropriate vaccinations, the MHS adoption guarantee and much more!

For more information, please visit or call the MHS Rochester Hills Center for Animal Care at (248) 852-7420 and provide the pet ID number, 720266. Photo courtesy Heidi Waeschle-Gabel.
Horoscopes

Don’t fuss, Taurus!

By Jack Fertig

Pride festivities peak annually when the Sun enters Cancer, the sign of family and community. This year, issues of spirituality and religion come up to help affirm LGBT spirituality, leading to deeper questions about our individual and collective identities.

Aries (March 20 – April 19): Avoid any games of verbal one-upmanship. You’ll just hurt feelings and have to eat your words. If you’re really so clever, you can figure out what needs work in your relationship. Listening to your partner will help.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20): Arguments over money arise too easily, especially over silly details like splitting a lunch check. Don’t fuss over pennies. There are more important things than money. Think long and hard about what really matters. You may surprise yourself.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20): Try a new look, go shopping for clothes. If money is tight, hit the thrift shops. Your imagination and an open mind are better than any amount of money. Good as your own queer eye is, a friend’s encouragement will help.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22): New insights can be a little scary, but best to look deeper and find out what they’re really about. Irritation with other people, awful and annoying though they are, is more about you than them.

Leo (July 23 – August 22): You need some private down time. Plans with friends may need canceling, but that’s OK. Your real friends will understand, and the rest don’t matter. New creative efforts can cure social ennui, but the real answers are deep inside you.

Virgo (August 23 – September 22): Stay calm, measure your words carefully, and just keep putting one foot in front of the other. Read the myth of Cassandra. Let people take or leave what you have to tell them. They’ll eventually realize you were right.

Libra (September 23 – October 22): Your efforts to smooth out problems at home will only backfire. If you really want things to be nice, be a good listener and get a sense of how you can improve your own self and your actions.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21): Being responsible for a problem does not mean being at fault and solution is more important than blame. How much responsibility you should take is hard to judge. Take on what you can, but overdoing it is self-sabotage. Gauge your capacities carefully.

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 20): Eagerness to explore new sexual techniques can improve your relationship or your chances for getting into one. If your baby balks, let it be “just a suggestion.” Even without pursuing new pleasures the suggestion can open up conversations that build greater intimacy.

Capricorn (December 21 – January 19): Your ability to shut up and listen to job critiques determines your ability to profit from them. There’s always room for improvement. You don’t have to agree with every criticism, but listen and think carefully before responding.

Aquarius (January 20 – February 18): Efforts at having fun are likely to get you into trouble. Unless you’re considering skydiving, that doesn’t have to stop you. How much trouble can you handle? You might find arguments fun, but your opponent is probably not amused.

Pisces (February 19 – March 20): “Family fun” doesn’t have to be an oxymoron, although efforts may seem easily muddled and misunderstood. Listening rather than pushing can help. Or leave them alone and try out some new recipes or restaurants with adventurous friends.

Jack Fertig, a professional astrologer since 1977, is available for personal and business consultations in person in San Francisco, or online everywhere. He can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his website at www.starjack.com, and by email at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.
**LGBT AA MEETINGS**

- **Ann Arbor** - Friday 7:30 pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church Gay AA, 306 N. Division St. Closed/Discussion.
- **Bloomfield Hills** - Thursday 7:00 pm, Sobriety in The Hills Gay AA, Kirk in The Hills Church, 1340 W. Long Lake Rd. Closed/Discussion.
- **Detroit** - Tuesday / Friday 8:00 pm, Downtown Gay AA, Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 West Fort St. Closed / Discussion (Open 1st Friday of every month).
- **Farmington Hills** - Monday 8:00 pm, Suburban West Gay AA, Universalist Unitarian Church, 25301 Halstead (between 10 & 11 Mile Roads). Closed / Discussion.
- **Ferndale** - Monday / Wednesday / Friday 11:30 a.m., Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.
- **Ferndale** - Wednesday 8 p.m., Diversity Wednesday Gay AA, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 540 W. Lewiston @ Livernois. Closed/Discussion.
- **Ferndale** - Saturday 1 p.m., Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.
- **Ferndale** - Saturday 8 p.m., Go After Your Sobriety Gay AA, Drayton Ave Presbyterian Church, 2441 Pinecrest. Closed/Discussion.
- **Livonia** - Friday 8 p.m., West Side Story's Gay AA, Providence Medical Center, 7 Mile & Newburgh. Closed/Discussion.
- **Pontiac** - Tuesday / Thursday / Sunday 8 p.m., Pontiac Gay AA, Shrine of St. Joseph, 400 West South Blvd. Closed/Discussion.

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Dear Jody

Feeling trapped

Q: Almost two years ago I met “Jerry” and fell in love. I knew then – or at least thought – that I had met the man of my dreams and that life would be wonderful. I am still in love with him but life doesn’t feel wonderful, like I thought it would. It’s beginning to feel like a cage.

The problem is that Jerry wants me to myself, all to himself. That is exactly how he puts it every time I want to go out with friends or just do something without him. So, I really don’t see much of my friends anymore. I know that this is pretty normal for new relationships but I’m feeling lonely and needing to see other friends, not just Jerry. In other relationships that I’ve had, my boyfriend and I would finally roll out from under the covers and start being social again, but this doesn’t seem to be a possibility or the plan in Jerry’s mind.

In fact, he has actually said that we don’t need anyone else in our lives, and that we are “complete” in and of ourselves. However, that does not seem to prevent him from stopping off after work and having a few drinks with people he knows. I can’t stop off after work because I don’t “work” anymore. A year ago Jerry wanted me to quit my job and stay home and take care of things, because he has to work a lot and doesn’t have time to take care of all the daily stuff. I’m his stay-at-home wife. At the time I thought that that was a good idea and have actually enjoyed it, but now I’m feeling so lonely.

I tried to tell Jerry all this but he keeps going back to saying that we don’t need others and that his stopping off to have a drink with people is part of having to network, and networking is important to his job.

Last night I told him about a Fourth of July party that I’d like for us to go to – not just me but both of us. There will be a lot of my old friends there that I haven’t seen for a long time. There will also be lots of people that he knows as well, so I thought he’d really like that idea and be for it. Besides it’s the Fourth and I sure don’t want to sit home on that day and do nothing!

Well, guess what? He said that he had plans for us on that day: To have a cozy dinner on the patio that he was going to prepare for me, and then we’d go to a movie, together. I came unglued with that. We had a fight, verbally not physically, but I really thought he was going to hit me. I went to bed and we didn’t talk to each other at breakfast this morning.

I don’t know what to do next or how to get it across to him that I’m not happy being so alone all the time.

A: For starters, you tell him how you are feeling, why you are feeling it, and what needs to happen for you to be happy in a relationship with him. His behavior is controlling, and even more to the point, it is emotionally abusive – that’s the bad news. The good news is that you can do something about it. You can leave if he’s not willing to change his attitude and behavior. Abusers isolate and control their partners, and that’s what’s happening to you. In these situations, things tend to get worse, not better.

I am concerned that his emotional abuse will turn into physical abuse as well – maybe not that far away, given you felt he was going to hit you this last time.

I strongly recommend that you both get into couple’s counseling – and if he won’t go, you go anyway. You need to learn what’s going on in this relationship and how you can deal with it.

For more about abusive, controlling relationships go to Dear Jody Valley on Facebook.

Jody Valley spent 12 years as a clinical social worker. She worked with the LGBT community both as a counselor and a workshop leader in the areas of coming out, self-esteem and relationship issues. The “Dear Jody” column appears weekly. Reach Jody at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.
Cocktail Chatter

Whose dumb idea was this beach house?

BY ED SIKOV

It was well into June before Dan and I came to the distressing realization that we’d be short on housemates this season and would consequently take a big financial hit. Jack Fogg had broken up with Sammy; Sammy was rooming with the volleyball boys and Jack Fogg was doing the Hamptons. (Figures.) Phil Levine found us too boring and declared his intention to find someplace else to spend the summer; it turned out to be Malaysia. There was nothing to do about it at this point. Some of the old gang would return, but all as quarter shares, not half shares.

Dan was taking it more in stride than I was, but then he’s a corporate guy and I’m a writer, so he can afford to be relaxed about money and I can’t. For reasons known only to God, I talked him into taking in a one-time-only boarder named – I am not kidding – Thor. Thor (it’s hard even to type it with a straight face) wanted to stay for a weekend only, so I said sure and Dan said (to me) “Are you out of your mind?” and I said “Yes” and Thor arrived and said, “Hallo. Jeg er en utmerket kokk. Jeg vil lage middag,” which apparently is Norwegian for “Hello, I am going to take over your kitchen immediately,” because that is what he did.

Friday night’s dinner demanded the use of nearly every pot and skillet in the house. Dan got so upset at the mess we were expected to clean up – the house rule is the cook gets to cook and the rest get to clean up afterward – that he stomped upstairs to our room in a huff and wouldn’t come down until Thor cried “Kom, barn! Spis middag!” which is Norwegian for “Admire my pecs while you eat.” Yes, I failed to mention that Thor had been next to naked the entire time he was in our house, having stripped down to a pair of hot pants and nothing else within minutes of arriving. He had a spectacular body, I have to admit, but it was too perfect, and his armpit hair was so blonde it looked like he’d used peroxide.

Dan glumly made his way to the table just as Thor presented the single dish he’d made; why he’d had to use all the pots and pans is anyone’s guess. “Penne alla Vodka!” he proudly announced as Dan and I took our seats. That’s when I stole a glance at my bottle of Absolut and gasped – it was empty! The louse had either poured it all into the sauce or used half and drank the rest. What a total waste of fine vodka. Thor will not be invited back.

Penne alla Vodka

There’s no mystery whatsoever to Penne alla Vodka. You simply make a tomato sauce from minced garlic and salt and plum tomatoes from a can (which you have roughly chopped in a food processor). Add some crushed pepper and 1/4 cup of vodka and let it cook. Boil a box of penne. Before the penne is done, add about half a cup of cream to the sauce. When the penne is al dente, drain it and dump it in a very large bowl. Add the sauce, stir in some chopped parsley if you have any, stir it well, and put two slabs of butter on top, just for the hell of it. Serve with grated Parmigiano cheese.
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