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Mike Wallace is a member of the AmeriCorps / AIDS United Team Detroit. As part of his AmeriCorps service, he works at the HIV/AIDS Resource Center in Ypsilanti as a prevention specialist.

1. What do you do as a prevention specialist at HARC?
I do counseling, testing, referrals, one-on-one consultations, health fairs, and I’m on the social media team.

2. How do you use social media to get your message out?
For the Team Detroit Facebook page, I’ll post news articles on HIV updates or if there are any health fairs happening in the area. At HARC in Ypsilanti we have a Facebook, Twitter and YouTube account. It’s a lot of networking. So if there’s an agency in the area that we work with that’s having an event we’ll go ahead and post that to our page as well, to spread the word.

3. What advice would you give to another agency that’s thinking about using social media?
You have to get a team together and you have to have a strategy. What do you want to let the public know? What information do you want to put in their hands? You have to focus on that. You can’t try to do everything at once. Social media is one of those things that is changing constantly. You have to look at ways to change the way you’re giving information to the public. You can’t keep saying, “come to our health fair.” You have to go into the public’s homes and put information in their hands.

4. What’s one of the biggest benefits of using social media?
It’s a great opportunity because a lot of it is free. All we needed to pay for at HARC was a Flip video camera. And there’s no better way to raise awareness and prevent a whole epidemic from expanding than to do it free.

5. Do you think you’ll keep doing work like this in the future?
I pretty much fell in love with this kind of work in the first couple of months I got involved. What really helps is my teammates. It shouldn’t just be me in this interview, because all of us put in the same amount of effort.

You have to look at ways to change the way you’re giving information to the public. You can’t keep saying, “come to our health fair.” You have to go into the public’s homes and put information in their hands.

The whole team, and everyone in this field really, they put their heart into it. You kind of have to in this field if you’re working with HIV/AIDS. You have to stay involved. You have to love what you do even though you hate what you’re battling.

Between Ourselves is a bi-weekly feature that highlights members of Michigan’s LGBT and allied community. To recommend someone for Between Ourselves, e-mail our news editor Tara Cavanaugh at tara@pridesource.com.
BY BENJAMIN JENKINS

LGBT students at Central Michigan University walk a fine line between acceptance and rejection. While they know they can take solace in supportive student organizations, they’re also wary of a vocal opposition that sometimes lashes out against progressive groups.

Last year, CMU’s lesbian and gay student organization Spectrum put together a unique event for its Coming Out Week in October. “Many statistics estimated that ten percent of the American population identified as LGBT,” said Sarah Winchester, political chair of Spectrum. “So we determined how many students would be LGBT on campus, and put a flag out in front of the CMU library for every one of those students.”

The flags caused some students to speak out against them, some even expressing their opinions with chalk on campus sidewalks. The First Amendment protects these responses, but the chalk was washed away after one day. Winchester said no one in Spectrum was involved, but another student organization cleaned the pathways and wished to remain anonymous.

While Spectrum focuses on addressing issues for gay and lesbian students, another newly-formed group, Transcend, advocates for transgendered students and provides a support group for those who are transitioning. Kylee Meade, a two-year member of Transcend, explains that the two organizations serve very different ways of identifying oneself.”

“Campus has changed in my four years here. I didn’t feel comfortable four years ago.”

– Sarah Winchester

“When we first started the group, none of us were in hormone therapy, none of us had been fully dressing as the identity we wanted to present ourselves,” Meade said. “Four of us have started the physical process now, which is a huge breakthrough. For me, it wasn’t until I got the support from Transcend that I started the process. The whole coming out process is a huge obstacle that most of us overcame because of Transcend.”

Meade also said support from Shannon Joliff, the director of the Office of Gay and Lesbian Programs, helped him start the transition process.

Joliff’s office is one of six units of CMU’s Office of Institutional Diversity. The OID’s goal is to create a more accepting and inclusive campus. CMU seems to take Joliff’s position more seriously now than it did previously. Before Joliff was hired in 2008, the position was only part-time. Joliff’s title is now a salaried, full-time position that offers her and her partner benefits (CMU has a “plus one” option for their staff). She has two student assistants and two interns on staff.

Joliff has planned events for Pride Week, Coming Out Day and Transgender Day of Remembrance. She also brings panels into classrooms and residential halls to provide information about LGBT students and to tackle discrimination.

Joliff’s office also supports Spectrum and Transcend, and the three organizations sometimes band together around a cause. In 2010, a few housing staff members proposed a gender-neutral housing option. Now, Transcend, Spectrum, and the Office of Gay and Lesbian Programs are working together to create an LGBT or gender-neutral floor in the residence halls.

The initial proposal was denied. “A policy change in the middle of Michigan, in the middle of nowhere — it wasn’t taken very well,” Winchester said. Students from both organizations created petitions, wrote letters, and utilized social media to argue a case for LGBT-friendly housing and applications. They collected 700 student and staff signatures, in hopes of convincing the administration.

For now, the university’s housing administration and residence life are willing to work with transgender students on a case-by-case basis, as is the policy of most colleges.

CMU also has a non-discrimination policy that protects LGBT students. The university added the phrase “sexual orientation” to its policy in 1999 and “gender identity and expression” in 2009, according to the university’s independent student-run newspaper, Central Michigan Life.

Overall, Winchester argues that Central is doing well and the student body is supportive, despite the conservative influence of Mt. Pleasant and the state of Michigan (which supplies very little protection to LGBT Michiganders).

“Campus has changed in my four years here. I didn’t feel comfortable four years ago,” Winchester said. “I’ve seen many freshmen come out to their roommates this year. I’ve seen those roommates turn around and say ‘Yeah, my roommate is gay, I don’t really care.’ I think that is so exciting to see. I am really happy for incoming students that will be coming to a campus much better off than the one I came to four years ago.”

BTL Rating: 3.8

CENTRAL AT A GLANCE

• Office of Gay and Lesbian Programs, two student organizations, and tentative plans for “Queer Persons of Color” organization.
• Counseling Services staff thoroughly trained in LGBT issues.
• Immediate response to gay teen suicides, reaching approx. 350 students on campus.
• Though a supportive campus for gay and lesbian students, cases of harassment and ignorance towards transgendered students.
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Republicans seek to reverse benefits for non-married partners of state employees

Reversal likely to happen this week

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

Senate Republicans have begun the process of reversing the decision by the Michigan Civil Service Commission to offer benefits to partners of state employees.

The MCSC made the 3-1 ruling in January to offer one “other eligible adult” of state employees benefits. The OEA has to live with the employee, share finances, and not be a tenant. The OEA’s dependents are also eligible.

Republicans need a supermajority of support to overturn the MCSC ruling. State Senator Rebekah Warren, D-18, said it will be easy for Republicans to get a supermajority in the state Senate, where they outnumber Democrats 26-12, but she said it might be more difficult to pass it in the state House, where Republicans hold a 63-47 majority.

“We certainly have less allies this year than we’ve had in a long time. So I’d be nervous that they’d be able to get the vote,” Warren said.

The Senate and the House will vote on overturning the MCSC decision this week. “I have concerns about stepping in to reverse something that the independent commission put forward,” Warren said. She said she does not know of any other instance where the state legislature overturned a MCSC decision.

“The elections were pretty hard on Democrats,” Warren said. “I think the appropriate place to handle something like this is at the bargaining table,” said Ray Holman, the legislative liaison for the UAW Local 6,000, the biggest union of Michigan state employees. “This was negotiated. We deal with the office of state employer who speaks with the governor and the MCSC, and it’s not really appropriate for the legislature to try to overturn the civil service commission.”

TheMCSC is a state constitution-created entity of four officials that administers civil services and human resource services. It was formed in 1908.

Even though the MCSC decision does not only offer benefits for same-sex partners, it was celebrated by the LGBT community. It was also decried by many state Republicans as wasteful spending. Gov. Rick Snyder said he was “frustrated and disappointed” at the additional cost.

Debbie Drick, spokesperson for Sen. Mark Jansen, R-28, said Jansen believes that “we can’t afford what we have, so it just makes no sense to add more widespread debt.”

The biggest problem, Drick said, is that the “Other Eligible Adult” label is unstructured, so it seems that nearly anyone could access the benefits. “There’s no distinction between partner or roommate or a person off the street,” she said, adding that the argument against the benefits has nothing to do with social issues: “It’s all about money.”

Estimates on the cost vary. Some Republican leaders have projected the cost could be as high as $20 million. Warren said that she’s heard estimates that the benefits could cost up to $6 million, but “it all depends on how many of our workers choose to participate. We just don’t know.

“But we do know when our workers have good health care, there’s less absenteeism,” Warren continued, “and if you have a sick partner or child that’s another leading cause of absenteeism in workers.”

Holman doesn’t think the cost would go as high as Republicans think. “I know that other institutions and businesses have similar benefit programs and it’s not running them into the ground,” he said.

Offering OEA benefits does cost more than just offering same-sex partner benefits, Holman said, because more people are eligible for OEA benefits. In order to make the benefits legal in Michigan, the offer had to be expanded to more than just same-sex partners.

Prior to the MCSC’s decision in January, former Gov. Jennifer Granholm negotiated same-sex partner benefits with the state employee unions. But in 2008, the state Supreme Court ruled that such benefits, called “domestic partner benefits” or “same-sex partner benefits,” were illegal because marriage, and any benefits attached to it, is restricted to one man and one woman, due to a law voted on by Michigan citizens in 2004.
Peace Prom March 19

JACKSON – The second annual Peace Prom, a dance for LGBTO youth in southeast Michigan, will take place Saturday, March 19 from 8-11:30 p.m. Tickets are $5 each and are available at the door. The theme for this year’s event is “Masquerade!” Masks will be provided to those who need them.

The prom, held at the Commonwealth Center at 209 East Washington Ave. in Jackson, is open for those as young as high school freshmen and as old as age 20.

For more information, contact organizer Cylor Fagan at cylorrainbow@hotmail.com.

HUD gives 1.2 million to fight housing discrimination in MI

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development March 3 awarded more than $1.2 million to fair housing organizations and non-profit agencies in Michigan to educate the public and combat housing and lending discrimination.

The Ann Arbor Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan, The Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit, Legal Services of Eastern Michigan in Flint and the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan in Grand Rapids will benefit from the HUD grants.

“Ending housing discrimination takes more than the efforts of Washington,” said John Travina, HUD’s assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity. “These grants enable community groups all over the nation to help HUD enforce the Fair Housing Act, make the public more aware of their fair housing rights and ensure that housing providers understand their responsibilities under the law.”

Unitarian church votes to welcome LGBT community

GROSSE POINTE – The Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church, the only church located within the borders of the city of Grosse Pointe, voted on March 6 to be recognized as a “welcoming congregation.” This designation defines the church’s bylaws will now have an additional paragraph with fully inclusive language: “The congregation declares and affirms its special responsibility to promote the full participation of persons in all of its endeavors without regard to race, color, gender, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, age, or national origin.”

The church is located at 17150 Maumee in Grosse Pointe. Sunday services begin at 10:30 a.m.

‘Queer & Career’ conference addresses workplace hurdles April 2 conference takes place at MSU

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

LANSING – Michigan State University’s LGBT Resource Center and Career Service Network will hold a “Queer & Career” conference on Saturday, April 2 from 12:30 to 6.

The conference will help “prepare LGBT persons for what they might experience in the workforce,” said Deanna Hurlbert, MSU’s LGBT liaison. “Although the focus population is students, almost everything will be applicable to every LGBT person in the workforce.”

Hurlbert said the conference was just announced on March 3 and it’s already attracted an “unbelievable amount interest.” She has received e-mail inquiries from people from other states who want to attend and speak, and said the conference is now seeking sponsors in order to raise more money to accommodate more attendees.

Hurlbert thinks the conference has become so popular because it addresses the tough issues LGBTs face on the job. “They have additional stresses that perhaps their heterosexual or cisgender counterparts wouldn’t have,” she said. There are no federal or state laws that protect LGBTs from being harassed or fired in the workplace due to their sexual or gender identity.

The conference will feature keynote speaker Ronald Moore, a MSU alum who was the director of Hewlett-Packard’s human resources for 23 years. Moore, who is also gay man and African American, is recognized as a "world class diversity and issues expert," Hurlbert said. Riley Folds of Out for Work will also speak about coming out in the workplace.

“Figuring out a place you can work in line with your personal values is really hard.”

Sarah Glassman, a graduate student who is also the conference coordinator, said having these kinds of discussions is particularly important on campus.

“For a lot of students, the first time they come out is in college, and it’s been a really supportive environment,” she said, “so whether they want to come out on the job is the big question. Figuring out a place you can work in line with your personal values is really hard. And students are already feeling pressure to find a job in the first place.”

“Graduating students find they have to totally renegotiate identity when they leave campus,” Hurlbert said. “Whether or not they’re willing to move for a job may depend on if they can get married or adopt in that state.”

“They really are faced with a major existential crisis in deciding how to negotiate their identity when they’re trying to keep a roof over their head and feed themselves,” she said.

Conference registration will be available online March 11. Until then, those interested in attending, speaking or sponsoring may contact Glassman at glassm10@msu.edu.

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Metal art with heart

AIDS Team Detroit seeks donations for unique statue

BY JACK VANHECKE

Why build a silly RoboCop statue when you can create a piece of art with a lasting message? The AmeriCorps/National AIDS Fund Team Detroit members are raising money to make an HIV/AIDS awareness statue in the Heidelberg Project in Detroit. Detroit is one of only eight cities nationwide that has an AmeriCorps team specifically focused on assisting non-profit agencies with HIV/AIDS programs.

“HIV/AIDS need to be back in the conversation,” said Sarah Dettloff, AmeriCorps member and co-leader of the initiative. “We feel the statue will have a positive public health effect in the community.”

The statue would be constructed of reclaimed parts from scrapped cars welded together in the form of an AIDS awareness ribbon. Dettloff said that by using scrapped auto parts, the statue echoes the art made of found objects that are already in the Heidelberg Project.

Tyree Guyton created the Heidelberg Project 25 years ago. In two blocks on Detroit’s Eastside, Guyton has used found objects, such as doors, shoes and abandoned buildings to make art that calls attention to urban abandonment but also offers hope for the future. The project, which has gained both international fame and local controversy, was featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show and the Today Show and also in Time and Essence magazines. Even though the city of Detroit leveled many of the works with bulldozers in the 1990s, it attracts nearly 300,000 visitors every year. Some of its exhibits have traveled to Harvard and Venice.

Dettloff said that Guyton welcomed the concept of the AIDS awareness statue in the Heidelberg Project. Just as the Heidelberg Project calls attention to urban abandonment but also offers solutions, the statue would be a symbol of the epidemic and also the need for awareness, testing and treatment, she said.

The statue, which the team hopes to unveil on June 15, would also have a plaque which would include more than just donors’ names: it would give information about getting HIV testing.

Local metal worker Carlos Neilbock, of C.A.N Art Handworks, Inc., agreed to fabricate the parts into a fifteen-foot tall AIDS memorial ribbon. Dettloff said she hopes volunteers want to “get their hands dirty” and help Neilbock build the statue.

The team started planning the AIDS awareness statue in December 2010, but the recent popularity of a RoboCop statue (in honor of the 1987 movie of the same name that took place in Detroit) sparked Team Detroit to go viral and use Facebook to rally support.

“In just six days of fundraising, the proponents of the RoboCop statue surpassed their $50,000 goal, helped by a $25,000 donation from Peter Hottelet, owner of Omni Consumer Products. Hottelet’s company is named for the firm in the movie that built RoboCop. In real life, Hottelet’s Omni Consumer Products creates licensed products from television and film, such as Stay Puft Marshmallows, Tru Blood, and Sex Panther Cologne.

The total project budget for the AIDS ribbon statue is $56,000, most of which is for artists’ fees, fabrication and installation costs. So far, the team has raised $12,000, and is facing a big problem: If it team doesn’t raise enough money by April 1, the statue may never be made.

Dettloff said private individuals have donated, but so far no corporate or foundation sponsors have given money to the cause. “We sent sponsorship packages to between 75 and 100 potential sponsors,” Dettloff said.

For those interested in sponsorship, Team Detroit is conducting tours of the Heidelberg Project for potential sponsors. For those interested in donating, Team Detroit can be contacted via e-mail at acaidsunitedteamd@gmail.com or through Team Detroit’s Facebook event page (search Facebook for “HIV/AIDS Awareness Sculpture for Detroit”).

Affirmations annual gala supports LGBT community

FERNDALE – Equal rights supporters across metro Detroit will enjoy a unique and theatrical experience at the area’s largest fundraising event for LGBTs on Saturday, March 19th. Affirmations’ 12th annual gala supports the LGBT community.

Affirmations annual gala supports LGBT community

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Local metal worker Carlos Neilbock, of C.A.N Art Handworks, Inc., agreed to fabricate the parts into a fifteen-foot tall AIDS memorial ribbon. Dettloff said she hopes volunteers want to “get their hands dirty” and help Neilbock build the statue.

The team started planning the AIDS awareness statue in December 2010, but the recent popularity of a RoboCop statue (in honor of the 1987 movie of the same name that took place in Detroit) sparked Team Detroit to go viral and use Facebook to rally support.

“In just six days of fundraising, the proponents of the RoboCop statue surpassed their $50,000 goal, helped by a $25,000 donation from Peter Hottelet, owner of Omni Consumer Products. Hottelet’s company is named for the firm in the movie that built RoboCop. In real life, Hottelet’s Omni Consumer Products creates licensed products from television and film, such as Stay Puft Marshmallows, Tru Blood, and Sex Panther Cologne.

The total project budget for the AIDS ribbon statue is $56,000, most of which is for artists’ fees, fabrication and installation costs. So far, the team has raised $12,000, and is facing a big problem: If it team doesn’t raise enough money by April 1, the statue may never be made.

Dettloff said private individuals have donated, but so far no corporate or foundation sponsors have given money to the cause. “We sent sponsorship packages to between 75 and 100 potential sponsors,” Dettloff said.

For those interested in sponsorship, Team Detroit is conducting tours of the Heidelberg Project for potential sponsors. For those interested in donating, Team Detroit can be contacted via e-mail at acaidsunitedteamd@gmail.com or through Team Detroit’s Facebook event page (search Facebook for “HIV/AIDS Awareness Sculpture for Detroit”).
S/he said

Propaganda and Rights

**Compiled by Howard Israel**

“In far too many instances, the press goes after these words as if they were gold—and in a way, they are, if you want to sensationalize your news and get as much traffic as possible to your site. We live in an era in which news sources of all kinds are competing for views. And we also live in an era in which the general public is obsessed with trans people. They can’t get enough of us—on reality shows, talk shows, and in sensationalized news headlines. Because the culture seems so completely enamored of us, at least news-wise, we (and particularly trans women) tend to show up in headlines when being trans has absolutely nothing to do with the story. The trans part is just there to get readers, viewers, or clicks.”


“Some of these radical gay groups are willing to do anything in the world to have their way of doing sex legitimized by this country. They’ll tear down any institution in order to have their way.”

—Pat Robertson, responding to the Obama administration’s announcement that it would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, on The 700 Club, towleroad.com, Feb. 24.

“I know the judges ruled according to the Constitution, but it just seems so damn unfair to the families and friends. I do hope the dudes on motorcycles gather with them.”

—Jack Miller

“Some of these radical gay groups are willing to do anything in the world to have their way of doing sex legitimized by this country. They’ll tear down any institution in order to have their way.”

—Pat Robertson, responding to the Obama administration’s announcement that it would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, on The 700 Club, towleroad.com, Feb. 24.

“President Barack Obama’s decision to no longer defend marriage and federal law is a threat to the common good and must be opposed. He is relentlessly dismantling the moral order and fiber of America. Every civilization until now has understood marriage as the union of one man and one woman for the purpose of procreation and education of children. Traditional marriage is the foundation of the family.”

—Jeremy Strondt, in a letter to the editor of the Detroit Free Press, about the Obama administration’s announcement that it would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, freep.com, March 4.

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.

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**Between The Lines** • March 10, 2011
Time marches on, and on

I recall a cartoon that appeared in The New Yorker magazine a goodly while ago. It appeals to old timers. Like myself.

Two or three Walt Disney animals are gathered deep in a sunlit forest. A cuddly rabbit looks up at a wise, chirpy owl on a tree branch, and asks, “Where were you when Bambi’s mother died?” Where, indeed.

It’s a lighthearted way of dealing with mortality and memory, gently posing a question we often ponder: “Where were you when so-and-so-important died (was fatally run over by a car, was kidnapped, or outed for being gay)?”

Or, for those of us who are older LGBTs, “Where were you when San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk was assassinated by Dan White? (If you’re too young to know who Harvey Milk was, it’s time to read, and hopefully to learn from, your gay – ever possibly repeatable – history.)

I was five when my mother took me to see Disney’s 1941 “Bambi.” Like hundreds of kids I cried during the fatal forest fire, but was reassured it was make-believe. “Bambi’s mom’s safe in Heaven,” my mom cuddled me, and I felt secure knowing that there could be happy endings after all in my storybook kingdom.

I was 9 when President Franklin Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia, just days before World War II ended. Mrs. Weeks, our music teacher, made the sad announcement. We sang patriotic songs.

“I’ll bet Nazi Hitler’s glad,” I ventured at the dinner table. “Yes, Boy; but not for long,” said my dad. Soon the war that killed 50 million people ended. We celebrated with 100,000 others in Downtown Detroit.

And now, 48 years after a fateful 1963 November day, I still vividly recall President John F. Kennedy’s assassination. I was working at Wayne State, returning from lunch to hear unthinkable news. Coworkers located a TV set, and we huddled in stunned silence, watching stark, black-and-white history unfold moment by tragic moment.

Two days later I watched as Jack Ruby stepped boldly into a lax, police-cordoned garage, hand gun blasting Lee Harvey Oswald in the stomach. “Oh, God! I can’t believe it!” I shouted, shaken, sickened by what I saw, alone in my off-campus apartment. (Joyce Berman, the gay friendly co-owner of the deli where I have morning coffee, is Ruby’s niece. She says her relatives maintain he killed Oswald in cold blood because he had a fanatical admiration for the charismatic Kennedy. Conspiracy theorists would disagree.)

A year after the JFK assassination I sat next to Larry, a U.S. Army sergeant, at Detroit’s Woodward Bar. He was on leave. I gave him my address, promptly forgetting about it (sobering up the next morning). A month later I received a letter.

When Larry was discharged, we saw each daily, eventually living together for seven years. I learned he had been in Kennedy’s funeral as a member of the Honor Guard. He’d accompanied our beloved President’s body for burial at Arlington. A gay sentinel to history.

When Princess Di died in August, 1997 I was staying with Chicago friends. There was a tentative TV interruption, followed minutes later by a cautious note of hope. Finally came the official word: the tunnel crash was fatal. Another sad, numbing weekend for everyone.

I joined the queue of mourners who signed a memorial book at the British Embassy. Princess Di was the epitome of glamour, a fairy tale princess abandoned by Charles, a philandering prince. Her AIDS charity work set her apart as regally special. What will become of boys William and Harry, I wondered? (What indeed?)

Opinions

We'll leave regressive Republicans in the dust

In the past few weeks, we have seen progress vehemently opposed and hastily unraveled. President Obama stopped supporting the Defense of Marriage Act and told his legal department to stop fighting for it in court; now, Republicans are likely to get their own lawyers and fight for it themselves. On the state level, Republicans are set to undo a decision to give state employees partner benefits. The decision by the independent, constitutionally-created Michigan Civil Service Commission was supposed to take effect in October, but now it’s likely it won’t happen at all: if Republicans can get a supermajority in the House and Senate to vote against it, the decision will be undone.

Republicans are basing their support on fear tactics (“The sky is falling! Gays want to destroy marriage! And recruit our children!”), have the power for now. They can undo legislation for now. They can get their older, conservative voting bases freaked out for now. But there’s one thing these regressive Republicans can’t undo.

It’s called social progress.

Republicans can’t undo the fact that the mainstream media likes gays, who are no longer just the butt of the joke onscreen. They can’t undo the presence of gays as main characters in sitcoms and dramas that are popular with teens and young adults. They can’t undo the influence of popular musicians such as Lady Gaga and Jason Mraz, who are using their fame to lobby for LGBT rights.

Republicans can’t undo the vocal and powerful group of LGBT teens who are standing up to authority figures and fighting for equality, and they certainly can’t make illegal the love of those teens’ supportive parents, either.

Republicans can’t change that so many of today’s teens and young adults, who – LGBT or not – just don’t get what the Republican fuss is all about. These young adults have grown up with out LGBT friends and family members. Many of them went to college, where they learned to think critically and reasonably. They spend free time watching Ellen and Glee. To them, Republicans look stodgy, unreasonable and decidedly old-fashioned.

Republicans can’t undo the effort of the social media revolution. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are all making it possible for people to connect with one another across states, countries and continents. Connecting with each other enables people to feel less isolated and to band together for more organized and effective change.

Spaces like Facebook also tend to become forums for clumsy but open public debates, as acquaintances’ views clash on Facebook walls and posts. Republicans can’t undo these challenging, questioning and mind-expanding exchanges.

Republicans can legislate from the top all they want, but they can’t legislate social change. Try as they might, they can’t control the minds of the masses – minds that are slowly getting over their fear of LGBTs through education, acceptance and love.

And even though laws and policies are subject to the zigzag of progress – one step forward, two (or three) steps back – social progress tends to go in one direction. Once a parent decides to side with the LGBT community because their kid’s a part of it, it’s all but impossible to undo.

So when you think about it this way, Republicans’ tantrums about LGBT rights don’t look like roadblocks. They look like pathetic attempts to postpone the inevitable. It’s as if they’re flailing in vain against the rushing current. Time only moves forward. Every day the sun rises and sets. Every day, we work for progress, and every day we win – if only just a little.

Republicans can legislate from the top all they want, but they can’t legislate social change.

Viewpoint

Westboro thrives on publicity

BY KEITH ORR

I have a history with the Westboro Baptist Church. They picketed me. I was not the first. Their first pickets go back to the 1980s. They would show up at funerals of people who had died from HIV/AIDS. Outside of the gay community no one was taking issue with this. Legislators were not passing bills limiting how far picketers had to stay away from funerals. In fact, it appeared that most of America had no problem with the WBC.

They first made mainstream news when they picketed Matthew Shepard’s funeral. The brutality of that murder actually brought some compassion from folks outside the gay community. There was even a bit of outrage that this nutcase was picketing this funeral.

The Phelps family has always thrived on publicity. They were drunk with pleasure from all the publicity they got from picketing Matthew Shepard. Pissing off gays wasn’t getting them what they wanted. They needed to piss off a lot more people.

Queers who paid attention understood that WBC pissed people off so that other people would engage them. If they engaged the Phelps physically, the family took them to court. The Phelps also sued local municipalities for not protecting their First Amendment rights.

This is a major source of funding for the Phelps clan.

That is VERY important to note. Let me rephrase it. If the Phelps can get you into court, they make money.

Fred Phelps holds no degree from any religious seminary or other institution. The “Reverend” title is self-proclaimed. Note that I NEVER call him Rev. Phelps. No one else should, either.

Phelps is a disbarred lawyer. He was disbarred for an enormous number of nuisance lawsuits. Several of his children are lawyers. They do the courtroom work.

If you ever go to one of his protests, you will see a guy nearby videotaping everything. His job is simple. He is collecting evidence.

When those planes slammed into the twin towers, the Phelps clan put out a news release that they were happy this happened. It happened because America was being so nice to all of its gay citizens. And then they picketed the funerals of people who died in the 9/11 attacks. As America went to war in Afghanistan, and then Iraq, they started picketing military funerals. Brilliant. That really pisses people off, and they had a lot more lawsuits. If you are a member of the Phelps clan, that means business is good.

One of those funerals was for Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder.

Snyder’s father sued the Phelps Clan. I feel sorry for Albert Snyder. He lost his son to war. And then he had some nutjobs show up at his son’s funeral. I know how horrible it is because Phelps has been doing this to the queer community for 25 years.

But I am very angry with him for engaging the Phelps family in court. What was he thinking? The Phelps clan got a lot of publicity. They LOVE bad publicity.

And they have a Supreme Court judgment in their favor, and I am sure a hefty monetary settlement is on its way, if it was not a part of this judgement.

That will keep them picketing for a long time to come.

But I was entirely predictable. If Mr. Snyder had asked a queer, we could have told him what was going to happen.

I actually completely agree with the Supreme Court decision. If unpopular speech is not protected, well, we wouldn’t have even had an LGBT rights movement. The answer to hate speech is not to legislate against it. The answer is to use the hate speech to educate rational people of your cause.

I am proud that when Phelps picketed me in 2001 we beat him at his own game.

I wish Mr Snyder had
Supreme Court rules in favor of Westboro Baptist Church
Court says hate protests are protected speech

BY LISA KEEN

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled March 2 that the First Amendment protects an anti-gay protestor’s demonstrations in close proximity to a private funeral service.

The case, Snyder v. Phelps, arose out of a conflict around anti-gay activist Fred Phelps and his followers, the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., staging loud and hate-filled protests near the funerals of American soldiers. The now-infamous protest signs claim soldiers deserve to die because American society tolerates homosexuality.

One family of a service member decided to take action to stop the protests and filed suit in federal court, claiming the protests amounted to intentional infliction of emotional distress, a violation of the family’s right to privacy, and civil conspiracy.

The conflict began in March 2006 when the family of Matthew Snyder, a Marine killed in Iraq, held a funeral service for him in Maryland. Later that day, they saw television news reports of the funeral being picketed by Phelps and his followers carrying signs, saying such things as “Fag Troops,” “Semen Fi Fags,” “God Hates Fags,” and “Thank God for dead soldiers.” Phelps had also posted his comments on his website.

The family sued Phelps in 2007, and were awarded a total of nearly $11 million, which was later reduced to $5 million. Phelps appealed the ruling in 2008 to a federal appeals court, which sided with the church on the basis of First Amendment rights and threw out the $5 million judgment.

In an 8-1 decision, with only Justice Samuel Alito dissenting, the high court agreed with the appeals court, saying that the free speech clause of the First Amendment protects public speech, which includes speech related to “any matter of political, social, or other concern to the community.”

The vote was somewhat of a surprise. At oral arguments in October 2010, most of the justices challenged Phelps’ attorney, his daughter Margie Phelps, about their “outrageous conduct” and “exploiting” a family’s time of grief.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor had said she had trouble with Phelps’ claim that the protests were simply engaging in public discourse about a public issue, given that some of their speech was “directed at the Snyder’s” and “talking about them raising Matthew for the devil, teaching him to defy the creator, to divorce and commit adultery.”

Chief Justice John Roberts said the case largely turned on whether the Phelps’ protests were “of public or private concern, as determined by all the circumstances in the case.” Citing several Supreme Court precedents, he noted that speech on public concerns is entitled to “special protection.”

Roberts said the content of the protests “plainly relates to broad issues of interest to society at large.” He reiterated the messages on several posters, including “God
dhatesfags.com,” “Fags Dooms Nation,” and “Fag Troops.”

“While these messages may fall short of refined social or political commentary,” wrote Roberts, “the issues they highlight – the political and moral conduct of the United States and its citizens, the fate of our Nation, homosexuality in the military, and scandals involving the Catholic clergy – are matters of public concern.

In evaluating the context of the messages, Roberts said that, although the protest was staged outside a private funeral, it took place “peacefully on matters of public concern at a public place adjacent to a public street.”

Such speech, he wrote, “cannot be restricted simply because it is upsetting or arouses contempt.” The majority also held that the funeral site did not justify the charge that the Westboro group had violated the family’s privacy, given that the protest was only barely visible to the family.

Roberts referred to a 1995 Supreme Court decision in Hurley v. Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston to support his argument. In that decision, the Supreme Court said a St. Patrick’s Day Parade organizer had the right to exclude an openly gay contingent from the annual event, which took place on a public street. But in that case, the high court ruled that the parade organizer was a private party and that the parade was, in essence, the organizer’s speech.

“Westboro believes that America is morally flawed;” wrote Roberts, “many Americans might feel the same about Westboro. Westboro’s funeral picketing is certainly hurtful and its contribution to public discourse may be negligible. But Westboro addressed matters of public concern. In a peaceful manner, in full compliance with the guidance of local officials.”

Justice Stephen Breyer concurred with the decision but added his own statement saying he felt the opinion did not address other important aspects of the case – such as the fact that the protests were broadcast on television and that the messages were also posted on the Internet.

Justice Alito said he does not believe the First Amendment is “a license for the vicious verbal assault that occurred in this case.” Alito said Westboro members have “almost limitless opportunities to express their views” but that that doesn’t mean “they may intentionally inflict severe emotional injury on private persons at a time of intense emotional sensitivity by launching vicious verbal attacks that make no contribution to public debate.”

Alito said he believes Westboro has “devised a strategy” to maximize publicity for their messages by targeting specific funerals and sending out press releases “to ensure that their protests will attract public attention.”

“This strategy works,” Alito said, “because it is expected that respondents’ verbal assaults will wound the family and friends of the deceased and because the media is irresistibly drawn to the sight of persons who are visibly in grief.” He pointed to the Westboro church’s recent protests around the funeral for a nine-year-old girl in the Tucson shootings this year and around the funerals for five Amish girls killed by a gunman in 2006.

In Matthew Snyder’s case, said Alito, the Westboro’s picket signs “would most naturally have been understood as suggesting – falsely – that Matthew was gay. Homosexuality was the theme of many of the signs,” he noted. “A bystander seeing those signs would have likely concluded that they were meant to suggest that the deceased was a homosexual.” He noted that the church members followed up with statements on their website, saying that Matthew’s parents “sent him to fight for the United States of Sodom.”

Such comments, said Alito, go “far beyond commentary on matters of public concern.” He said he would allow the Snyder family to recover damages for the intentional infliction of emotional distress caused by speech on a matter of private concern.

“In order to have a society in which public issues can be openly and vigorously debated,” said Alito, “it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims like petitioner.”

Chief Justice John Roberts

“Westboro’s funeral picketing is certainly harmful and its contribution to public discourse may be negligible. But Westboro addressed matters of public concern. In a peaceful manner, in full compliance with the guidance of local officials.”

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

I’m sure glad my last name isn’t Santorum. For one thing, I wouldn’t want to be related to Rick Santorum. For another thing, his name means “The frothy mix of lube and fecal matter that is sometimes the byproduct of anal sex.”

And that’s the first thing that pops up on Google.

Santorum’s “Google problem,” as it has been dubbed in the media lately, is something he brought on himself when he compared gays getting married to marriage between humans and orcas. Shortly thereafter, a reader of Dan Savage’s “Savage Love” column suggested coining “Santorum” as a sex term. Savage obliged. And “santorum” was born.

In 2007 Santorum was voted out of his U.S. Senate seat and we didn’t hear much from him. But he’s back with his eye on being President Frothy-Mix-of-Lube-and-Fecal-Matter of the United States, and making sure gays and lesbians aren’t allowed to marry is still one of his biggest concerns.

Needless to say, President Obama’s recent decision to stop defending the Defense of Marriage Act in court because it is unconstitutional has got Santorum riled up. Tuesday night he said he believes Santorum’s “Google problem,” as it has been dubbed in the media lately, is something he brought on himself when he compared gays getting married to marriage between humans and orcas. Shortly thereafter, a reader of Dan Savage’s “Savage Love” column suggested coining “Santorum” as a sex term. Savage obliged. And “santorum” was born.

In a March 4 column for the Des Moines Register, Santorum wrote, “Intellectually, morally, and constitutionally President Obama’s claim is absurd. And it is a dagger aimed at the heart of a core constitutional value: the free exercise of religion.”

This is, of course, not true. The anti-gay right has been crying about how treating gays equally is akin to banning God and demanding everyone worship Perez Hilton. No one is advocating locking pastors up or turning churches into gay bars. What Santorum is really arguing for isn’t the freedom of religion; it’s the freedom to discriminate and the freedom to legislate using an anti-gay “morality” code based on religion.

Oddly, to defend his argument he used the example of Catholic Charities in Boston who stopped doing adoptions because they didn’t want to adopt gays. According to The Boston Globe, “[Catholic Charities decided] to abandon its founding mission, rather than comply with state law requiring that gays be allowed to adopt children.” Mind you, the state wasn’t forcing Catholic Charities to hand over all of their children to a pillaging gay mob. The state was saying, “Look, you can’t judge a parent unfit just because he or she is a homo.” That was, obviously, too much to ask, and the organization chose dogma over kids who needed help.

“With the redefinition of marriage, religious groups of all types will be forced to make the same type of choice – get out of the business of helping people or compromise your constitutionally protected convictions,” Santorum wrote.

Let me get this straight: if gays are treated equally then religions of all kinds will abandon social services? Like the local church-run soup kitchen won’t give out soup anymore because they don’t want to give soup to gays? It’s as if the only thing between the teachings of, say, Jesus and abject indifference to human suffering and need is homosexuality.

So long as religious organizations can discriminate against gays, all is right with the world. Makes perfect sense.

In his column Santorum charitably added, “I believe if two adults of the same sex want to have a relationship that is their business. But when they ask society to give them special recognition and privileges, then we should be able to have a rational debate about whether that is good public policy.”

Aww, isn’t that sweet? Santorum thinks gays deserve to mind their own business. So long as they aren’t asking to be treated fairly, everybody’s cool.

As for the “bad debate” part, that’s pretty suspect coming from someone who thinks a man having sex with his husband is the same as a man fucking a dog.

Between The Lines • March 10, 2011
News

National Briefs

Gay marriage safe in New Hampshire for now

New Hampshire’s Legislature will not vote in 2011 on either of two bills aimed at repealing the two-year-old law that made same-sex marriage legal.

Members of the House judiciary committee voted 15-0 without debate March 3 to place the bills on hold until 2012. The committee unanimously voted down a third bill that would have converted same-sex marriages into a new kind of civil union different from the civil unions New Hampshire used to have.

An estimated 1,400 same-sex couples have married in New Hampshire.

Wyoming Senate kills anti-gay-marriage bill

Wyoming’s Senate voted 16-14 March 2 to kill a bill banning recognition of same-sex marriages entered into in other states and nations.

The bill was designed to counteract a state law that recognizes legal marriages from other states and countries. Wyoming lawmakers also recently killed a proposal to amend the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

Immigration Equality to sue federal government

The LGBT group Immigration Equality is planning to sue the federal government over the Defense of Marriage Act. The group says DOMA prevents married U.S. citizens from bringing their foreign same-sex spouses to live with them in U.S. states that allow same-sex marriage or recognize same-sex marriages from elsewhere.

The planned lawsuit follows President Barack Obama’s recent instruction to the Department of Justice that it stop defending in court the section of DOMA that bans the federal government from recognizing legal marriages from other states and countries.

Ed DuMont is Obama’s only openly gay nominee to a federal appeals bench

Republican Congress members introduce bills to expand, defend DOMA


“Rev. Gomes was instrumental in shaping how a new generation approaches the Bible and the discussion of sexuality,” Groves said. “Gomes deftly demonstrated in the pulpit and on the page how the Bible has systematically been used as a tool of both liberation and oppression.

“But Gomes did more than rail against religious bigotry; he offered a way for religious people to claim their faith and their sexuality ... In his 1996 bestseller, ‘The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart,’ he taught people to pay attention to the spirit of the Bible rather than viewing it as a convenient shield for their prejudices.

“He was a paradigm-shifter who gave religious and secular leaders alike a way to see how the dream of equality for all people had a real meaning place among the faithful. He will be deeply missed.”

Boehner calls for House group to defend DOMA

House members introduce bills to expand, defend DOMA

Republican members of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee have been holding up the nomination of President Obama’s only openly gay nominee to a federal appeals bench.

President Obama nominated Washington, D.C., attorney Ed DuMont to the Federal Circuit bench on April 14 last year, but the nomination has not progressed through the usual committee hearing and vote to move to the Senate floor. At the end of the last Congressional session, the committee returned DuMont’s nomination to the president, along with those of several other appeals court nominees who had not gained confirmation. The president re-nominated those candidates at the start of the new congressional session and several have seen movement – either their first hearing or even a second one.

But DuMont’s nomination has not received even one hearing. In fact, only one other nominee on the committee’s list of pending federal appeals court nominees has waited longer than DuMont for a confirmation vote: controversial liberal nominee Goodwin Liu.

Liu was first nominated in February 2010 and was reported favorably out of committee in May. But his nomination never reached the floor.

Boehner’s press release, is a five-member panel consisting of the house speaker, the majority and minority leaders, and the majority and minority whips.

“Under House rules, the advisory group has the authority to instruct the non-partisan office of the House General Counsel to take legal action on behalf of the House of Representatives,” noted the press release.

Revs. Peter J. Gomes dies after stroke


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Republicans hold up gay nominee confirmation

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Revs. Peter J. Gomes dies after stroke


“Rev. Gomes was instrumental in shaping how a new generation approaches the Bible and the discussion of sexuality,” Groves said. “Gomes deftly demonstrated in the pulpit and on the page how the Bible has systematically been used as a tool of both liberation and oppression.

“But Gomes did more than rail against religious bigotry; he offered a way for religious people to claim their faith and their sexuality ... In his 1996 bestseller, ‘The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart,’ he taught people to pay attention to the spirit of the Bible rather than viewing it as a convenient shield for their prejudices.

“He was a paradigm-shifter who gave religious and secular leaders alike a way to see how the dream of equality for all people had a real meaning place among the faithful. He will be deeply missed.”

Boehner’s press release, is a five-member panel consisting of the house speaker, the majority and minority leaders, and the majority and minority whips.

“Under House rules, the advisory group has the authority to instruct the non-partisan office of the House General Counsel to take legal action on behalf of the House of Representatives,” noted the press release.
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Open gays elected to Irish Dail

Two gay men made history by being elected to Ireland’s lower house of Parliament, Dail Eireann, on Feb. 25.

Dominic Hannigan will represent Meath East, a parliamentary constituency in the northeast of the nation, for the Labour Party. And John Lyons will represent the constituency of Dublin North West for Labour.

Hannigan currently is a member of the Seanad Eireann, or Senate. Members of that body are not directly elected, and its powers are weaker than those of the Dail.

Hannigan will have to give up that seat, to which he was appointed in 2007 by fellow politicians.

Ireland’s only other openly gay member of Parliament—current or past—also is a senator. Since 1987, David Norris has represented voters who are graduates of the University of Dublin.

Mozambique LGBT group still unregistered

Mozambique’s only LGBT group, Lambda, said March 1 that it has been waiting three years for the government to complete its official registration.

The group, also known as the Mozambican Association for the Defense of Sexual Minorities, submitted its documents to the registry office in January 2008.

The registrar responded that the group’s existence “offends current morality,” and forwarded the forms to the Justice Ministry for review.

In early 2009, Justice Minister Benvinda Levi suggested the group submit a recounting of facts and law to the ministry, which it did.

Nothing has happened since then, which Lambda says amounts to a violation of its constitutional right to freedom of association.

Honduras special unit to investigate LGBT hate crimes

Honduras is creating an investigative unit and task force to tackle hate crimes against LGBTI people, women, youth and journalists. The government ministers of human rights and public security will be directly involved in the undertaking, which will utilize 150 researchers.

Officials estimate that Honduras has seen 200 anti-LGBTI killings in the past five years.

In January, the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa urged the Honduran government to “vigorously investigate” five murders of LGBT people that took place since Dec. 18, 2010.

The embassy expressed “great concern” about the killings and said “the protection of Honduran law extends to all citizens regardless of sexual orientation.”

The government must “take all necessary steps to protect LGBT persons, who are among the most vulnerable to violence and abuse in Honduras,” the U.S. officials said.

Cuban TV airs Glee

Cuba’s Cubavision channel is airing the_uebergay_U.S. television series Glee, each Saturday at 5:45 p.m. State TV also recently aired Six Feet Under.

Belarus LGBTs hope to march in May

Gay activists in Minsk, Belarus, applied to the city government March 4 for permission to hold a “March of Equality” on May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

Last year, the city’s Executive Committee banned a gay pride march and, when activists ignored the ban, several of them were aggressively arrested for taking part in an unsanctioned public action.

The march, if approved, will wrap up four days of “Festival of Equality” events that include a film screening, a photo exhibition and other activities.

Report: Int’l AIDS Conference shortchanges at-risk populations

A new report charges that the biennial International AIDS Conference, the premier gathering for people working in the HIV field, shortchanges groups most likely to become infected with HIV, including gay men, transgender people, sex workers and drug users.

An “audit” of conference programming, conducted by the Global Forum on MSM & HIV, analyzed last year’s gathering in Vienna and found that the percentage of sessions exclusively focused on such groups was 2.6 percent for men who have sex with men, 1.1 percent for transgender people, 3 percent for sex workers and 4.5 percent for drug users.

“While the International AIDS Society turns a blind eye, HIV rates among these populations continue to climb around the world,” said the forum’s executive officer, Dr. George Ayala. “The IAC is the world’s most important opportunity for international exchange and collaboration on HIV and AIDS. Such abysmal representation of most-at-risk groups only serves to reinforce the invisibility, discrimination and disregard that drive the epidemic among these communities.”

The report recommends that conference organizers ensure a transparent process for reviewing abstracts and designing programming, increase their support of authors developing abstracts focused on key populations, and broaden representation on the committees that develop conference programming.

“It is incumbent upon the organizers to ensure that the IAC becomes a vehicle for change, shifting the global landscape so that funding, research and programs are directed to those who need them most. Right now it’s part of the problem,” Ayala said.

LGBT group forms in Montenegro

An LGBT organization has formed and been officially registered in Podgorica, capital of the former Yugoslav republic of Montenegro. The group, LGBT Forum Progress, is pressing for a law granting gay couples the rights of marriage.
Actress on new film, Meryl stealing movies and her latest role – as fairy godmother

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

I

t’s no stretch really that Morgan Fairchild’s latest role in the queer-themed “eCupid” has her trying to connect two gay men. She’s been connecting with gay people her whole life, even before the bombshell-with-brains went lesbian for Sandra Bernhard on “Roseanne.” In the indie romantic comedy, which premieres for the first time ever during the Detroit Independent Film Festival at 8 p.m. March 11 at the Burton Theatre, the actress stars as a mysteriously wise waitress who knows her gays.

Recently, Fairchild talked about her “eCupid” and “Roseanne” roles, and the progress we’ve made with LGBT characters. The 61-year-old also chatted about breaking the AIDS stigma in the ’80s, why actresses over 40 can’t find work (hint: Meryl Streep), and how her Twitter followers get more than they bargain for.

Essentially you play the fairy godmother of the gays in “eCupid.”
Yeah, that’s my role in life. (Laughs)

‘eCupid’
8 p.m. March 11
Burton Theatre
3420 Cass Ave., Detroit
detroitiff.com

How did you get involved in the movie?
They offered it to me, and so I read the script and I thought it was really cute. It’s a traditional romantic comedy with two guys instead of a guy and a girl, and I’m just a big supporter of the LGBT community being treated equally – that they have real lives, that they can be cute, that it all doesn’t have to be strange and dark stories, or even sexy stories. This one is just a light romantic comedy that could’ve been done in the ’30s.

You make a good point. So many gay films, especially in the ’80s and ’90s, were about AIDS and, well, AIDS.
Yeah, bathhouses, guys in leather and a lot of S&M. (Laughs) I have so many gay friends and relatives, and I’ve been involved in the theater since I was 10 – all my friends were always gay. There are a lot of different kinds of people, so I was just happy to see a cute movie that just happens to be gay.

The detective series I did with Chad Allen, “Shock to the System,” was the same kind of thing. It’s a detective story with a guy who comes home to his lover who’s gay. I think it’s very important to show a broad spectrum of emotions and lifestyles – just people living their lives.

Are you doing any other gay-themed projects?
I’m getting ready to do one right now called “Happy Ending,” and it’s not exactly gay-themed, but it’s sort of. I don’t even know if I’m allowed to talk about it yet, but I’ll just say it’s an interesting story about a woman who comes to terms with her life and has an affair with another woman who isn’t gay – ostensibly they’re both straight but end up having an affair that becomes very meaningful and changes both of their lives. So to me, that’s gay themed, but I don’t know if the director actually thinks it is. (Laughs)

It’s a really nice script, and that’s what you’re always looking for – good stories of all kinds being told, whether it’s drama or comedy, or a romantic comedy where people just happen to be gay. It’s the same way in real life. I mean, so many conservative people would be shocked to know that friends of theirs are gay and just have normal lives.

They always say everyone knows at least one gay person.
God, I know millions! A lot of my fan base has always been gay, and I just grew up around everybody being gay, so I’ve known since a very early age that the gay and lesbian friends that I had were exactly the same as the others. They went through the same heartache; they had the same hope and aspirations. Everything was the same – except the sexual orientation.

Why do you think your fan base is mostly gay?
Oh, because I play those sort of vampy bitches. I’ve been told that a lot of guys do me in clubs, so I guess I’m up there with Cher and Liza.

See Fairchild, page 23

*“eCupid”* makes its worldwide premiere during the Detroit Independent Film Festival on March 11 at the Burton Theatre.
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BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Oh Land stops in Pontiac on her first-ever North American tour. Photo courtesy of Epic Records

Nanna Oland Fabricius is in her own world again. That’s where the Danish artist – who goes by Oh Land, a play on her middle name – imagines a mystical, anything-goes life for herself. And it’s from that place that she wrote her self-titled American debut, an electropop piece of dreamy dance songs like the first single “Sun of a Gun” and destined-to-be-gay-anthems “We Turn It Up.”

She recently launched her first-ever North American tour, one that promises to be a visual dazzler with balloon video projections and her cool couture sense. From the road, Oh Land spoke to us about her wacky dreams, being a “Black Swan” ballerina and how sexuality in pop music and her no-rules world.

Danish import talks gay fans, sex in pop music and her no-rules world

Oh Land is Our Land

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Oh Land stops in Pontiac on her first-ever North American tour. Photo courtesy of Epic Records

No, I don’t actually. Whoever wants to listen to my music and whoever can relate to it somehow or get some kind emotion out of it, I’m just really, really happy for every single fan I get. I’m not competitive in that way.

OMD with Oh Land
8 p.m. March 11
Crofoot Ballroom
1 S. Saginaw, Pontiac
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Between Lady Gaga and Katy Perry and all the other gay–admired dance divas, do you feel like you have to compete for some of the gay love?

I see a lot of girls that have to play on sexy and I just think it can be a little boring.

Were you a Natalie Portman/“Black Swan” ballerina?

(Laughs) When I saw that movie I definitely could relate to it in a way. Not literally, but I could at least sympathize with her because it’s more than just being a ballet dancer. It’s about what you sacrifice for the arts, whatever kind of artist you are.

You don’t tear your fingernails off, do you?

No! (Laughs) But you know, when you do something really passionately, it’s very common that you kind of become what you do – and that’s always dangerous.

Would you still be a ballerina if you didn’t injure your back?

I would still be dancing but I feel – and it probably sounds overly religious – there’s a meaning behind what happened in my life, and I think it needed to happen for me to get to music.

You’re always told how much you look like a model. Have you ever considered modeling?

No, never. I would be a terrible model. It would be a disaster.

Between The Lines • March 10, 2011
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Between The Lines • March 10, 2011
When they offered it (‘Roseanne’) to me, I knew that the last person in the world that anybody would see walking through that door after the big buildup of ‘Sandra (Bernhard) has a new girlfriend’ would be Morgan Fairchild.

Well, look at Meryl Streep.

Well, look at Meryl Streep — she takes every good part for any woman over 40. I knew that the last person in the world that anybody would see walking through that door after the big buildup of “Sandra has a new girlfriend” would be Morgan Fairchild. That’s the last person they’d expect. But I think we’ve come a long way, and we’re getting away from stereotyping and just thinking some new out there. I had warned one of them I tried to warn that there was something new was out there.

How did that role change your career?

Oh, it didn’t really — except that a lot of people then thought I was a lesbian! I even had my lawyer say, “I know you’ve been with your boyfriend for a lot of years, but has something changed?” (Laughs) But that’s how weird Hollywood is. You just have to say, “No, I believe in stepping out and being iconoclast and breaking barriers and opening up the world for people.”

It’s the reason I took such a very strong stand on AIDS early on. I’m a virus nut. I was following AIDS news very concerned about him because I knew he was gay. I was very concerned about him because I knew he would do drugs and get drunk and party a lot then go home with anybody. At an AIDS fundraiser I was sponsoring in Beverly Hills, he came over to me and he said, “You were the first person I ever heard say the word AIDS, and I wish I had listened.”

You’ve played many roles on TV, in film and in commercials. What gets you recognized the most?

It depends on the generation. Older people tend to remember the series that I did — the three series I did in the ’80s — and some people still remember me from “Search for Tomorrow” from the ’70s. Certain generations love the first TV movie I did called “The Initiation of Sarah” and then “Flamingo Road.” Younger people tend to love the “Friends” or Old Navy stuff, or even right now with “Chuck.” People who go to a lot of theater are big fans of some of the theater work I’ve done. It just depends on what generation they are from.

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@YourBTL
selling jewelry to get by. Lower-class and upper-class don’t blend well at first, but eventually the two women bond—a friendship forged in part through the three teens—in this in-touch-with-the-times novel about home foreclosures, government cutbacks and a degrading downward economic spiral. Carrie and Jen both start out straight, but they aren’t destined to fall in love—the lesbian twist involves a third woman. Instead, Chadwick’s expertly constructed novel (she was once a master carpenter) focuses on the process of women learning to discover their strengths and to trust themselves.


The male narrator in this essentially two-character novel comments on catching a peek of chest under his partner’s shirt, not blushing; the couple has sex in Central Park; both cruise passersby on the street. Does the two-year relationship (maybe more, maybe it’s over) this inventive book encompasses involve two men? It could be. After all, the mystery-genre character snored when sharing a bed with a woman friend on a college trip. On the other hand, the same character explains away not drinking on an early date by declaring, “I’m pregnant,” and then “cracking up”—because “he” is making a joke about abstaining, or because “she” is playing with a new beau’s emotional edginess about previous beaus? Levithan’s first novel for grown-ups—his several previous novels are targeted at young adult readers—is purposely, and triumphantly, enigmatic about gender. It’s also told entirely, from “aberrant” through “juxtaposition” and “kerfuffle” to “zenith,” as entries in a dictionary defining the arc of two people who hope they’re deeply in love—but who aren’t truly certain.


Yep. Johnny Weir is a big homo. In what he calls his quarter-life memoir, the flamboyantly controversial figure skater makes his queerness clear. He was a virgin until age 20 (“Figure skating, where jealously runs as rampant as rhinestones, is a fucked-up place to find your romantic future”), he writes that a relationship with his first boyfriend was stumped into the closet, not by Weir’s choice but because of the U.S. Figure Skating Association’s don’t-tell demands. Those details aside, however, this isn’t really a coming-out story. It’s a young man’s poised, poignant and powerful account of his passion, since age 11, for a grueling discipline that blends on-ice artistry and athleticism, both of which Weir embraces, along with a readily confessed flair for fashion: “Once I went through my growth spurt around seventeen and got my man body, I was ready to act like a man—and design my own costumes.”

Weir doesn’t shy away from recounting his colorful public life, but this unexpected complex memoir also depicts a private homebody grounded in love of family, love for friends—and fondness for vacuuming.

Richard Labonte has been reading, editing, selling, and writing about queer literature since the mid-’70s. He can be reached in care of this publication or at BookMarks@qsyndicate.com.

Featured Excerpt

"The Lover’s Dictionary," by David Levithan

Carrie Angel is a working-class mother scraping by in Section 8 housing while apprenticing for her carpentry license, dealing with her demanding and emotionally abusive ex-husband for custody of her two teenage sons (one a feisty queer boy), and trying to contain her fiery temper. Jen Manners is a more hoity-toity woman—but, in the aftermath of an ugly divorce, she’s forced to move onto Carrie’s subsidized housing block with her aggrieved daughter, Cara. Angel, 35, is still a virgin. Carrie Angel says, "I’m pregnant; my family says, ‘Why isn’t Easter on the same day every year like Christmas?’ And, ‘Will My Bunny Go to Heaven?’"

Footnotes

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‘The Godfadda’ hits Novi! Ba-da-bing!

BY JOHN QUINN

Now that another Academy Award season is over and that pale period piece “The King’s Speech” has gobbled up the goodies, I find myself missing the good old days – 1972, to be exact. Mario Puzo’s “The Godfather” – now there’s a flick for the ages! It has everything! Gore! Guns! Sex! Spaghetti! Brando refusing the Corleone clan’s soap opera. But hey! For some great slapstick. Yet we don’t sense the film even at the most inappropriate times. It’s sort of like Tourette’s syndrome for the Cosa Nostra. His way out was provided by Don Vito himself, now merely a disembodied voice from the rafters. If Isler can flesh out the memorable scenes of this demon child and clearly in love with the Corleone clan’s soap opera, he will have hands full – of soggy costumes. This show is full of sight gags, and timing is everything. We’re not disappointed. The audience will indulge the slow, choreographed set changes if they realize that those down times are Isler’s only chance to do mundane things like change costumes and breathe.

The performance is slick, witty and thoroughly entertaining. I wish I could remember more of the film, but my memory is picking up bits I was missing, yet I found myself watching not so much WHAT was done, but HOW it was done. And it’s a tour-de-force.

Allow me to mention that the show was opened by the musical talents of tenor Aaron Caruso who sang some Italian things called “Nessun Dorma” from Touring Dot. While he never did explain who Dot is or where she’s touring, a little Puccini was welcome for the top of the evening. You can catch Mr. Caruso’s act (and with a name like Caruso it’s Gotta be good!) at Andiamo in Warren this October.

Dark comedy lights up Ann Arbor

ANN ARBOR – The University Musical Society presents the Druid and Atlantic Theater Companies in four performances of Martin McDonagh’s “The Cripple of Inishmaan” from Thursday, March 10 through Sunday, March 13 in Ann Arbor’s Power Center, located at 121 Fletcher Street.

In 2009, the New York run of the Druid and Atlantic Theater co-production of “The Cripple of Inishmaan” ran for over three months and was twice extended due to popular demand. Described by The New York Times as “a production that no theater lover should miss,” this multi-award-winning production is a brilliant comic masterpiece, complete with suspense and a great deal of heart. Written by Academy Award-winning writer/director Martin McDonagh and directed by Tony Award-winning director and Druid Theater Company founding member Garry Hynes, this production won nine major international theatre awards in 2009 including Outstanding Director, Best Actress, and Druid Theater Company founding member Garry Hynes, this production won the 2009 feature film, “In Bruges,” won a BAFTA award for Best Original Screenplay. For tickets or additional information, contact the University Musical Society at 734-764-2538 or online at www.ums.org. Tickets start at $18 and may also be purchased in person at the League Ticket Office (911 North University Avenue). UMS Ticket Office hours: Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., closed Sunday.

Irish and American theater companies team up to co-produce “The Cripple of Inishmaan” coming to Ann Arbor March 10-13. Photo: Courtesy University Musical Society.
Outings

High school proms for LGBT teens can be nothing short of a nightmare. Jackson High School’s Gay Straight Alliance has created a safe and affirming solution which allows teens to celebrate their prom with the partner of their own choice: The 2nd Annual Peace Prom.

Last year, over 150 students attended the school’s first Peace Prom. This year, attendance is expected to double, after receiving attention from both local and national media outlets and equality Michigan.

The prom will be held in St. Johns United Church of Christ in Jackson with a theme of Masquerade. Tickets are $5. Masks will be provided if needed. Young adults age 14-20 are all welcome, provided state or student ID is presented. For more information, search Facebook for Peace Prom 2011 Masquerade.

Music & More

In the stand-up world, there is no act quite like Maria Bamford and her unique set of voices. Her impressions range from the cynical hoarse L.A. agent, to an archivist from high school, to Bamford’s passive-aggressive mother, to a 30-foot monster that loves Jesus and Capri pants.

“I’ve been thinking about having kids lately. I already have names picked out: Doughnut and The Golden Hen,” Maria explains in her joking shtick. “I know what you’re thinking, ‘How do I know they’ll be girls?’ But a mother knows, a mother knows.”

Bamford performs March 10-12 at the Comedy Showcase located on E. Liberty in Ann Arbor. Tickets available online at acmeedy.com.

Theater

Jeff Daniels has a knack for telling great stories about Michigan — and St. Dunstan’s Theatre Guild has a knack for presenting top-notch productions of his plays. “The Tropical Pickle,” which runs March 11-27, is no exception.

“The Tropical Pickle” is set in beautiful Macomb County, Mich., where Bob Lee, played by Thom Grifﬁn, is the plant manager at the Shanklefer Pickle Company. The show revolves around the wheelings and dealings of Bob’s somewhat unscrupulous family as they are bound and determined to be selected as the company’s representatives for an all-expenses-paid trip to the annual Continental Convention.

Performance dates are March 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26 and 27. All performances are at 8 p.m. except for March 20 and 27, which are at 2 p.m. Tickets are $18 each for adults and $16 each for students and seniors. To reserve tickets, call 248-737-3587.
DEAR JODY

Rear View

Got problems? Send letters to: “Dear Jody,” C/O Between The Lines, 11920 Farmington Road, Livonia, MI 48150. E-mail her at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com

No more (daddy) drama

Q: Jody, I think I need to tell you some background stuff so you can understand where I’m coming from. My mother used to tell me that my father was killed in a car wreck shortly before I was born. After that, she moved across country, as she said, “to get away from all the memories.” I was born after the move, so I never even had a chance to meet anyone who knew my dad. My mother had told me that my dad’s parents were dead and he had no other brothers or sisters. So, I had never had a chance to know much about him. My mother, when asked by me, said that there wasn’t much to say about him, though she gave me some sketchy details, which in retrospect, seemed pretty canned. I felt my dad was a dad with little interesting about him. It wasn’t a good feeling for me.

Now to the present: Recently I came out to my mother. She didn’t take it very well, but at least she didn’t go the I’m-going-to-disown-you route. She just sort of went into a quiet stunned mode; didn’t say much. I left that day not really knowing what she had on her mind, though I knew it wasn’t a congratulations-for-finding-out-who-you-are moment.

I rudely found out that she had a coming out to do as well. It took her a couple of days, but I got this phone call from her. Mind you, she chose the phone to let me know that my father wasn’t a dead husband, but a “sperm donor.” I was reeling from this information – trying to process it – when she then threw another fast ball to my head: “I’m not to fault because you’re a pervert; it’s your sperm donor father who had to be gay… or have it in his genes.” Then, she proceeded to tell me how sorry she was, that it really wasn’t my fault, but she was sure we could get help for my “condition.”

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She said all this, trying to slip by the sperm donor statement, to excuse herself from fault and on to how I could get cured – and even who could cure me. She had researched, through her pastor, who could help with “my condition.” It sounded like some right-wing deprogramming set up.

Mother was blabbing on about this so fast that I could hardly absorb it, let alone respond to her. I felt like I was going to vomit so I told her that I was sick and had to hang up. Neither of us has called the other since then.

I’m feeling so confused and upset. I don’t know what to do next. I’m sorry that I told my mother that I’m gay. It feels like she is sort of paying me back for telling her that I am gay. It’s like I opened Pandora’s Box and all the family secrets came bursting out.

I don’t know where to go from here. I don’t even know what I’m asking you. It’s just that I feel so bad and stuck.

Son of Sperm Donor

A: I can only imagine how confused, deceived, betrayed and angry you must feel. Her ignorance toward your sexuality certainly has expressed itself in a hurtful way. I think you need some time to deal with all that your mother threw at you. It’s not just that your mother sees your sexuality as something to fix, but she has been deceptive to you about half of your heritage.

I recommend that you seek counseling to help you deal with your emotions through this time. Counseling can also help you think about all the new information you’ve gotten from your mother.

I care about what has happened with you. Keep me informed.

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. To reach Jody, send an e-mail to dearjodyvalley@hotmail.com. Letters may be edited.

Jody’s on Facebook! Find her by searching for “Dear Jody Valley.”

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BTL is Changing it Up!

1. Search this issue of Between The Lines for the one ad that is the fake ad. Here’s a clue: the fake ad will include the words: “Other Eligible Adult”

2. Go to www.Pridesource.com and click on “Click Here to Win!”

3. Scroll down to the entry form for the fake ad contest and enter your name, etc.

4. In the notes field, put the date of the BTL issue, page number where you found the fake ad and the name of the fake advertiser.

Search this issue for the Fake Ad
Indulge, Libra!

BY JACK FERTIG

Spring fever hits early with Venus sextile Jupiter tempting us to new friends, fun, and flirtation. Then she aspects Mars, eager to realize the dreams inspired by Jupiter. Venus and Mars will aspect Saturn, bringing everything back down to earth. Get grounded with fresh new perspectives and you’re ahead of the game!

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Too many social temptations make it harder to get things done, but you could organize your friends in a productive way, especially in a charitable service. That could introduce you to your next mate, or cement an existing partnership.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Your initiative and innovations are getting good notice. Opportunities and responsibilities are about to grow. Share the credit along with the work and you’ll get lots of support from behind the scenes.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 20): Friendly encouragement is welcome, but remember that’s what friends are for. When you parlay their faith into actual constructive efforts you’ll run into new obstacles. Accept those creative challenges and justly the regard of your admirers.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22): Your public reputation and career advances will enhance your opportunities for private fun and games. That could feed a cycle of benefits on both sides, but all that could be a distraction from necessary work at home.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Being very accommodating to your partner, especially in bed, will help you reach new understandings in your relationship. You may then hit a wall, but that was always there. It will give you a better understanding of how to negotiate limits.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Getting too clever at work can confuse your colleagues. Listen at least twice as much as you talk. Taking the lead, you’ll just go in circles. Stick to what everyone knows you’re good at and trust others on your team.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Indulge those playful urges, even your wicked streak. Just remember your partner is with you against the rest of the world. If single, any prospective partner will be all the more eager to be on your side.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Creativity, and perhaps even a dash of perversity, is the key to getting through any task, no matter how onerous. If you can hold on to that attitude you can clear away a lot of household drudgery.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Your efforts to be brilliant and playful could prove more confusing than amusing to the folks at home. Your friends kind of get it, but the act still needs a bit more work. It’s OK; they all still love you.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): To get ahead more effectively you have to appreciate where you came from. Siblings, even if they seem angry or confused, have important lessons for you. Make a gratitude list.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Try a new look based on your most underappreciated asset, physical or otherwise. That will start some fun discussions and then some arguments, but that’s the point! You’re used to stretching other people’s brains, now push your own to new limits.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Worries? Doubts? Not sure where you’re going? Never forget to meditate! Getting into frenzy and going off half-cocked carries a huge price. Calm that overheated brain and answers to your problems will come into focus.

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 e-mail at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.
### That’s a Fact, Jack

#### Across
1. Bride and bride’s vehicle
2. The d. of k.d. lang
3. Rock costar
4. Declare openly
5. Nastie of the net
6. Standing up straight
7. Character in 63-Across
8. Kind of blitz
9. Hit in the family jewels
10. Caesar’s final reproach
11. What an octopus shoots off
12. Actor who played 17-Across
13. Come out on the beach
14. Tear up
15. AZT, e.g.
16. Break for Heather’s mammies
17. Made less difficult to bear
18. With 41-Across, actor who played 51-Across
19. With 39-Across
20. See 39-Across
21. Ventriqoist Bergen
22. Bottom line
23. Village People hit
24. Fish stories
25. Coins featuring Eleanor’s husband
26. ___ Gay
27. Husband of a Duke
28. Bottom lines
29. Letter abbr.
30. Isolated individuals
31. Greek queen of heaven
32. Islamic leader
33. Cover for locks
34. Hag transport
35. "Like ___ not"
36. "There Is Nothing Like a Dame" fruit
37. "Six Feet Under" character
38. Where to look, in “Misty”
39. ___ Gay
40. Hag transport
41. Put the whammy on
42. ___ Gay
43. Ventriloquist Bergen
44. Bottom line
45. Village People hit
46. Plant collections
47. "Poppycock!"
48. Hag transport
49. “Inglourious Basterds”
50. Coins featuring Eleanor’s husband
51. Greek queen of heaven
52. Bottom lines
53. Letter abbr.
54. Isolated individuals
55. Greek queen of heaven
56. Islamic leader
57. “Like ___ not"
58. “There Is Nothing Like a Dame” fruit
59. “Six Feet Under” character
60. Where to look, in “Misty”
61. Greek queen of heaven
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63. “Like ___ not"
64. “There Is Nothing Like a Dame” fruit
65. “Six Feet Under” character
66. Where to look, in “Misty”
67. Greek queen of heaven
68. Islamic leader
69. “Like ___ not"
70. “There Is Nothing Like a Dame” fruit
71. “Six Feet Under” character

#### Down
1. Be deficient in
2. Russian John
3. “Oliver!” request
4. Bottom line
5. HMO concern
6. Like ___ not"
7. “There Is Nothing Like a Dame” fruit
8. “Six Feet Under” character
9. Where to look, in “Misty”
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11. Islamic leader
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### Pet of the Week

**Sundance** is a six-week-old Labrador/Bulldog mix who weighs just 10 pounds right now, but still has lots of growing to do! She came into the Michigan Humane Society with her brother, Butch Cassidy, and both of them are waiting to meet you today at the Michigan Humane Society’s Rochester Hills Center for Animal Care. The adoption fee includes sterilization, age-appropriate vaccinations and much more. For more information, visit or call (248) 852-7420 and provide the pet ID number, 12452809.

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**ODDS & ENDS**

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**Rear View**

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**That’s a Fact, Jack**

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**Pet of the Week**

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**A Couple of guys**

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**INQUISITION**

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**Rear View**

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**That's a Fact, Jack**

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**Pet of the Week**

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**A Couple of guys**

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**INQUISITION**

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#### Social Club
Forming a social club for Gay Men in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Detroit Area. Leave a message for Pat... reply asap... 734.547.0156

#### Ladies4Ladies
1st Sunday @ Erotic City L4L presents a Strip Club Venue for Ladies LBGTQ event & Speed dating. Contact Walter & Tom 248.234.6356 or e-mail walterandtoms@aol.com

#### To place an ad
Visit PRIDESOURCE.COM or call us at 888.615.7003

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### Announcements

#### Groups
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For Gay and Bisexual Men. Learn some massage techniques and meet others in a safe and caring environment. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m. Thursdays at 2 p.m. $10 per session. 209 West Kingsley in downtown Ann Arbor. (734) 662-6282 or email Massage4@aol.com. http://www.trymassage.com

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  Massage Therapy by David Rosenberg
  (734) 662-6282
  Therapeutic Massage gets rid of back, neck and shoulder pain

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### Massage Class

**Massage Class for Men**
Learn some massage techniques. Meet others in a safe and caring environment.

- **2 Downtown Locations**
  - Ann Arbor
  - Berkley
  - 209 West
  - W. 12 Mile Road
  - Kingsley
  - (just west of Greenfield)

- **Couples blocks**
  - west of
  - main between
  - Ashley & 1st

- **“I can bring my massage table to your home, too!”**

- **Thursday at 2 pm**
  - Tuesdays & Saturdays at 8pm
  - $10 per session

- **209 W. Kingsley St.**
  - Ann Arbor, MI
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### More Information

- Find me on the Internet at [http://www.trymassage.com](http://www.trymassage.com)

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The problem is my boyfriend is preparing a romantic spaghetti dinner, and I have every intention of paying him back for it. In other words, I’m going to put out. Or so I hope!

I mean, this is the first time we’ve been alone in awhile. Why? Well, it’s been hard rescheduling my life after nine months of being single.

Fine, I’m going public with it – I have no idea what I’m doing with my life. Therefore, I update my Facebook status with positive self-statements just to make it look like I know what I’m doing. Is that common? Am I allowed to be my biggest fan? I can’t stop myself. I guess I’m trying to be optimistic about my future, even though my agent called today, advising me to completely rewrite my latest novel. It’s too dark, he says. It reads like the catharsis of someone going through a bad breakup, and nobody is going to read that. Not when they’re surviving their own bad break-ups. Still, I’m not going to be upset. So what if I’m stuck cohabitating with my dad for the rest of my life? I need to remain strong because my friend Hank is having a real problem.

Lately, he says I haven’t been there for him. Not since I got back with my boyfriend. So tonight, he’s on a first date, and I’m supposed to prove myself by being available by cell, just in case he, you know, wants to flee.

God knows, it’s happened before….

“Just once!” Hank exclaims. “And that’s ‘cause some guy said I reminded him of his son. Who says that on a date? It made me want to dial the predator hotline.”

Oh. That’s the thing about Hank. He likes to date older men, but he can’t handle it when their age difference comes up. Therefore, he makes certain to steer the conversation during dates, leading to mindless banter and awkward revelations, such as confessing his daily battle with anorexia. He thinks admitting his disorder will make older gentlemen feel bad for him, ultimately causing them to fall in love with him because there’s no chance he’ll ever get fat. The theory is flawed, yes. But then again, Hank finds it best to “keep it real.”

That is ‘til tonight, when his dating life takes an eerie turn. “Oh dear God!” Hank shrieks, calling me. “Can you believe the nerve? This guy says he won’t allow me to leave the restaurant. He thinks admitting his disorder will make younger gentlemen feel bad for him.”

“No. I’m anorexic, not bulimic,” he scoffs, as if he were seated on the high throne of an eating disorder hierarchy. “Listen. I need you to prove yourself by being available by cell, just in case he, you know, wants to flee.”

“You had time for me when you were single,” he blows up, stating I just want off the phone. “You had time for me when you were single,” he states. “I liked you better when you were alone. You were miserable enough to have empathy!”

“Ugh. Are we arguing now?”

“I suppose.”

Through his clever tone, I sense he’s smirking. But I’m not going to feed into his drama. Instead, I’m going to hang up. Quite the idea, except Hank has me on speed-dial. Too bad, I’m not answering. Rather, I’m twirling spaghetti strands on a spoon, as my boyfriend curiously eyes me each time the phone buzzes.

“You’re awfully popular tonight,” he says.

“Well, I’m the dating columnist. And everyone needs advice on Valentine’s Day.”

“Really? Then why aren’t you answering the phone?”

“Honestly, because I need advice too. Tell me, how do you go from being single to being coupled without losing a single friend? Lately, I feel caught, having to choose which person I can see each night.

But tonight is Valentine’s Day. Therefore, the boyfriend wins. But who was there for me when I didn’t have a boyfriend? Hank…”

“So what I do? You answer the phone,” my boyfriend instructs.

And I realize he’s not been the one putting me in the middle; I’ve been putting myself there. I don’t need to be everything to everyone all of the time. I just need to be someone to some people sometime in the time, particularly when they need someone to listen. So I answer, and you know what? Hank doesn’t make me up a bit. Maybe because he doesn’t eat….

Or maybe because answering reminds him I care enough to tell him he needs to.
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DEEP INSIDE HOLLYWOOD

Lee Daniels eyes Bradley Cooper

What movie will Lee Daniels (“Precious”) make next? It seems like he has a new potential project every few weeks. Will it be “Selma” like we keep hearing? “The Butler”? That remake of Fellini’s “Nights of Cabiria”? Well, the answer is maybe “none of the above” if “The Paperboy” happens. Based on Pete Dexter’s 1995 novel, it’s a crime thriller about two brothers pulled into the investigation of a rural sheriff’s murder and it’s set to star “I Am Number Four”’s hot young thing Alex Pettyfer. Word is that Daniels is already reading actors for roles and has made offers to both Bradley Cooper to play Pettyfer’s older brother and to “Modern Family”’s Sofia Vergara. Of course, what “Precious” fans want to know is if there’s a part for Gabourey Sidibe in all this, because given the fleeting nature of deals and shelved projects, literally anything can still happen at this point. So stay tuned for further speculation.

Griffin’s ‘Glee’-ful Tea Party

It wouldn’t be a proper week of entertainment news if the “Glee” PR machine didn’t have some kind of announcement. And this week’s flash is the addition of a new right-wing character to the cast. A Tea Party-loving, homeschooling, Sarah Palin type. Played by Kathy Griffin. Now, contrast that casting announcement with creator Ryan Murphy’s stated intention to make this character part of the show’s inclusive vibe. Does anyone think it’s possible to have it both ways? Will it ride the outside edge of insulting, like the way Ashley Fink’s character Lauren Zizes gets to be powerful “and” the butt of fat jokes? Will the show simply abandon the character and her story lines when the next sensational musical guest star comes along? Can politically outspoken Kathy Griffin play a sympathetic right-winger without smirking? And, more to the point, how long before Sarah Palin takes to the Internet with a video explaining how offended she is?

Tilda’s Thai debut?

That tiny sound you just barely heard was the collective swoon and sigh of art film fans who very much want the following project to hurry up and become real: hyper-acclaimed gay Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul, whose latest film “Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives” won the Palme d’Or at Cannes and is currently in a handful of U.S. arthouse cinemas, is working on his next film, “Mekong Hotel.” And it looks like it “might” star Queen of Everything Cool, Tilda Swinton. What’s it about? The director says it will “address the relationship between man and water, the catastrophic flooding which is blamed on Chinese dams and diseases spread by industrial-scale pig farming.” Of course, if that’s the case then expect those themes to be dealt with obliquely; Weerasethakul is infamous for plotlines that feel baffling right down to the closing credits.

Lesbian directors are all right

Everything’s coming up deals for two lesbian directors. One of them is hot off an Oscar-nominated success story. The other one brushed up against Academy Award acclaim a few years ago. And both of them have high profile projects lined up. Lisa Cholodenko, whose “The Kids Are All Right” is the movie to beat in the Best Actress race, is taking on the film adaptation of Tom Perrotta’s novel “The Abstinence Teacher.” In the same vein as Perrotta’s earlier stories, “Election” and “Little Children,” it will mine anxiety in suburbia when a New Jersey sex education teacher has to battle local conservative forces that would seek to silence her curriculum. Meanwhile, tough-minded “Boys Don’t Cry” filmmaker Kimberly Peirce has set up “The Knife” at Universal, a true crime drama about an L.A. gang member-turned-FBI-informant whose life is in constant danger. No casts or start dates for either of these projects, but details are sure to come soon enough.

Rhonda L. Kobold, D.O. and Becky J. Smith, D.O., PC

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