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"Be comfortable with it, but also do things you are scared to do. It’s your turn to be whoever you want to be."

– Michael Christian, member of Motor City Drag Kings, Pg. 6

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Tell Us What You See For 2013

2012 has been a gamechanger for the LGBT community. Now that 2013 is just around the corner, BTL wants to know: What do you see changing in 2013? What’s in store for the LGBT community? Send in your thoughts to Editor@PrideSource.com with the subject line “BTL Opinion” and we’ll publish your letter online at PrideSource.com.
Changing The Faces Of Faith In The Media: GLAAD Speaks To Michigan Roundtable

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

How did an ousted lesbian den mother from Ohio become a national symbol for LGBT equality? One of the main reasons is because of GLAAD, a New York based organization that serves to make sure LGBT related stories are given the fair and widespread attention of the media.

The Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, along with dozens of affirming religious leaders, learned more about GLAAD’s media work at the second annual Celebrating Faith Inclusion breakfast on Dec. 7 at Renaissance Unity Church in Warren.

Ross Murray, Director of Religion, Faith and Values at GLAAD spoke at the event, sharing information about how they too can use the media, and their own experiences, as tools for social change.

Jennifer Tyrrell is one of many examples where GLAAD was able to take a local story and amplify its reach. Tyrrell and her partner live in Ohio with one daughter and three sons. She served as den mother for one son’s Tiger Scouts Troop until she was kicked out of the troop last spring because the Boy Scouts of America do not allow gay people in their organization.

With GLAAD’s help, Tyrrell’s story went viral, and an online petition drive collected over half a million signatures in opposition to the Scout’s practice of discrimination. It also gave celebrities a cause to rally behind. Julianne Moore, Fran Drescher, Jane Leeves, Josh Hutcherson, Benicio del Toro, and stars of Glee and The Real Housewives all spoke up in support of the family. Though the Scouts have not changed their minds, the story has helped bring to light the discrimination LGBT people still face.

Closer to home, the story of Dominic Sheahan-Stahl grew beyond the Mt. Clemens area after GLAAD got involved. Sheahan-Stahl had been a student at Sacred Heart Academy, like others in his family had been over the generations. His younger brother was set to graduate, and Sheahan-Stahl was asked to give the commencement speech.

However, school administrators saw that he had posted engagement photos to his Facebook page, featuring him and his fiancé who is also male. The invitation to speak was revoked.

The graduating class rallied around him, creating a movement called “Let Dominic Speak.” GLAAD too stepped in. After the commencement, hundreds of supporters gathered for a rally at Central Michigan University to hear the speech that Sheahan-Stahl had not been allowed to give.

“They filmed him and sent us the speech,” Murray said. “We took the footage and made a two minute video with parts of the speech and clips from some of the people that were there, and we sent that out to our media contacts, saying here’s what it looks like when we help people who are silenced.”

While the media is increasingly interested in LGBT stories, there are still things that GLAAD must remind reporters and activists of, particularly when it comes to the framework of religion in the LGBT rights dialogue.

Missing Voices

Murray talked about the Missing Voices Study, which examined media coverage of LGBT issues from 2008-2011. The study revealed that three out of four religious spokespeople came from denominations with strong opposition to the LGBT community. “There is an over-representation of Evangelical Christians and Catholics, and not that many pro-LGBT religious spokespeople.” He explained that even when affirming people of faith are in the media, they tend to “speak in secular language” and “avoid using religious terminology or quotes.”

“The frame is that people of faith oppose LGBT equality. These are the things that show up in headlines,” Murray said. “What I see a lot is you can only be one or the other – LGBT or a person of faith. I know this is not true. You know this is not true. But we need to let other people know it’s not true.

“As LGBT religious leaders we have a voice that no one else can use. We have too long let being a ‘true Christian,’ a ‘person of faith,’ and a ‘values voter’ be determined by someone else.”

Murray encouraged people to step up and speak from a faith-based perspective so that the public and the press can see that it’s not religion vs. orientation. There are LGBT people of faith, and people in all congregations that support equality.

“We hear it [religious speech] so much from the other side that we don’t want to sound like them, but we need to… people need to hear faith-based discussion.”

Every denomination has its own unique voice, and when people of faith speak up it is much more effective if they come from their own perspectives. “When you talk to the media or to others, use Bible verses that are meaningful to you. We’ve all had the Leviticus discussion a million times and we don’t need to do that. Instead talk about the parts of the Bible that give you comfort and faith. You can speak from a perspective of God’s love.”

While Murray spoke in terms of “people of faith,” he urged religious leaders to be as specific and authentic as possible in their messaging. As a Lutheran, Murray is able to speak in a way that resonates with other Lutherans. Leaders from other denominations can speak not only to all religious people, but they can connect with their fellow worshipers in a more personal way by naming their affiliation and using its teachings as a framework for sharing their story.

GLAAD provides resources for anyone looking to share their LGBT related stories with a broader media audience. They can help people who are willing to share their stories. They educate members of the media. And they have ways to distribute content to broad audiences. While Murray specializes in religious stories, others on staff work with the general public and activist organizations. Find out more at http://www.glaad.org/resources.

The faith inclusion breakfast had representatives from a variety of churches and synagogues from throughout the state. Working with multiple church leaders, the Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion has been creating change from within congregations. Because of their work over 125 places of worship have made advances toward inclusion. Find out more about the Roundtable at http://www.miroundtable.org.

— Ross Murray
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The 2012 Mr. Heart of Detroit, Drag King Teddy, is spreading the love of music and performance beyond his own ambitions. The 23-year-old drag star from Melvindale has teamed up with Mr. Grand Diva Michael Christian and the fabulous Spacee Kadette, who was National King Entertainer of the Year, to start the Motor City Drag Kings. The troupe is dedicated to connecting reliable drag artists to audiences throughout Michigan and beyond.

The Drag King Industry has begun to blossom after years in the shadow of Drag King Shows. “Usually Drag Kings would be one or two in a show full of Queens. I’ve worked with some of the bigger names for Queens, but it’s hard to get clubs to book Kings,” Teddy said. “Out of town clubs weren’t booking Kings at all, usually because they’ve booked local Kings who aren’t as experienced and they don’t bring in much of a return.”

He explained that for a successful show there must be quality in the performance and the costumes, plus support in promotions. Having a loyal fan base also helps.

Teddy and his friends made a name for themselves by convincing night club owners to do ladies nights, where fans came out in droves to see them dance. Now they perform an average of three nights a week, often at The Birdcage in Detroit.

“I’ve been performing for going on five years now,” Teddy said. “I was dancing at Gigi’s and someone came and said ‘I want you to dance at my bar,’ which was Stiletto’s. I didn’t know what I was doing. I started out doing Christian rock, like Creed. I knew how to dance, but I was nervous, but excited at the same time.

“One thing I learned is that they (the audience) love it when you interact with them. It’s fun to see a big macho guy gettin’ into it. I’ve had guys come up after the show and say ‘Wow, I’m not trying to hit on you or anything, but that takes some real talent and I just wanted to tell you that.’”
Christian also was recruited, approximately 13 years ago.

“It was a Wednesday night and Trixie Deluxe saw me dancing and singing along. She grabbed me and said ‘Come on stage with me. I know you know the words.’ It was a huge adrenaline rush,” Christian said.

Over a decade later Christian still gets the performance high. He also gets the pre-show jitters. “There’s a lot of stress and pressure on ourselves. I stress and get nervous all day, so when I do get up there it really is a rush. All that pent up energy comes out on the stage.”

Christian lives in Chicago, where he works as a bartender and commutes to Michigan for shows. “It’s exhausting, but I love it,” he said. Often the tall thin King will move the crowd with country songs or rock. “My favorite song to perform is “Call Me,” by Shinedown. It’s a little dark so I don’t always get to do it, but around Halloween I was able to bring it out again.”

Christian’s strength is in costume, theatrics and effects and he said he is grateful for Teddy – and for Teddy’s family. “His dad helps me make the props. It’s great to see the way his family gets involved and is so supportive. His mom is everybody’s mom.”

His favorite thing though is “dressing room time, all the chaos and the camaraderie. So much energy. And the crowds.”

For Teddy, his passions helping others get along and building up the business for everyone. These days, when he dances it’s usually to Chris Brown. “Every time you turn on the radio it’s a Chris Brown song. It makes the ladies go wild.”

Christian said they try to incorporate variety into their shows, so “there is something for everybody.” He praised Spacee Kadette as well, boasting that the performer sings his own songs and “does an amazing Dean Martin illusion.”

They also have a call list with dozens of Kings, and some Queens, who they can bring with them to do shows.

“In this business things can get competitive. I work with people who I know will show up on time, who won’t steal, and who will give their all for a show,” Teddy said. “I go about it in a professional way, and that makes it a better experience for everybody.”

Being organized and understanding promotions has helped Motor City Drag Kings take their talent throughout southeast Michigan. “I just got married in March. Now is the time to go out of state and travel, but I do plan on settling down and having kids. I’d like to keep the company going long term and finding more Kings who can come up. This is such a fun thing, and it helps bring more attention to the masculine side. Everyone loves the Queens, and I love the Queens. But I want more Kings to get involved and make this bigger for everyone.”

For those who are thinking about becoming a Drag King or Queen, Teddy advises “When you’re on stage, nobody is judging you. They’re there to have a good time and they want you to do good. And if you mess up, just keep going. Most people won’t even notice it.”

Christian’s advice can help as well. “Be comfortable with it, but also do things you are scared to do. It’s your turn to be whoever you want to be.”

To find out more about Motor City Drag Kings, follow them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/MotorCityDragKings.

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“One thing I learned is that (the audience) love it when you interact with them. It’s fun to see a big macho guy gettin’ into it. I’ve had guys come up after the show and say ‘Wow, I’m not trying to hit on you or anything, but that takes some real talent and I just wanted to tell you that.’”

– Michael Christian
Notre Dame Approves Gay Straight Alliance

BY CHUCK COLBERT

In a move affirming of gays on campus, officials at University of Notre Dame said last week they would recognize an organization for LGBT students — a first for the school.

News of the decision came Dec. 5 in a press release, and comes after a five-month administrative review process and after a decades-long push for a self-governing student club or GSA, a gay-straight alliance.

More than a dozen times and over the same number of years and more, Notre Dame has refused to create a university-recognized student group for gays. Against that historical backdrop, the decision on the South Bend, Ind., campus is considered a breakthrough, especially given the iconic school’s Catholic character and identity.

In announcing the change, Notre Dame also said it would expand support and services for LGBT students, initiating a new advisory committee composed of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff to provide guidance to the vice president for student affairs on questions, concerns and needs of LGBT identified students.

And Notre Dame will hire a student development professional, a full-time staff member who will oversee the new student organization and programmatic activities.

In all, the response on campus and beyond has been positive, if not enthusiastically so, even as some alumni voiced skepticism and guarded optimism.

Current students involved in the efforts could not be happier or more enthusiastic.

“It’s a pretty significant change, given Notre Dame’s reputation as the face of a Catholic university,” said openly gay senior Karl Alexander Abad of Fullerston, Calif., during a telephone interview.

“I foresee a lot more student involvement here with the change,” he said.

Another student leader who participated in conversations with student affairs and school administrators was straight ally, junior Alex Coccia of Columbus, Ohio.

Coccia was a key player in the 4 to 5 movement, the largest coalition for LGBT students at the university, which, last year, brought together students, faculty, staff and alumni in a unified way to tell the administration that they were not doing nearly enough to serve LGBT people in the university community. In fact, social media, like Facebook, raised the profile of the 4 to 5 movement well beyond South Bend.

“I am very excited about it,” he said, referring to approval of an officially recognized student organization. “It has a lot of potential and students are excited. Ultimately, having that passion and effort are going to make it successful.”

Open To All

A name for the organization has not yet been selected.

The student group is not a club and not a political advocacy association. Rather, it is an organization open to all students who will elect officers.

Designation as an organization holds some significance insofar as the student group will have an advisor appointed by the office of student affairs. Clubs choose their own advisors.

During a telephone interview, Coccia said designation of the new group as an organization, on the same par as the student government, student union and the yearbook, for example, raises its visibility and status on campus even as it gives administrators tighter oversight and control.

While Notre Dame has hundreds of clubs, its number of designated organizations is much smaller.

“That’s good for questioning students, he said, “because it will be easier for them to find the organization,” which will also be permanent.

“It’s also good for prospective students because Notre Dame has been on GLBTQ unfriendly lists before,” said Coccia. “They may want to come to Notre Dame now that the university has a commitment to them.”

Still, Notre Dame lags behind other Catholic colleges and universities as any number of them offer legal protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and/or allow self-governing LGBT student groups, including Boston College, Georgetown University, DePaul University, and Santa Clara University, among others.

Georgetown and DePaul also have LGBTQ resource centers. A little more than a year ago, Georgetown’s center received a $1 million gift to fund an LGBT life initiative.

With a new approach on LGBT issues, one characterized by more openness, inclusion, trust and collaboration, Notre Dame outlined its thinking in a six-page document entitled “Beloved Friends and Allies: A Pastoral Plan for the Support and Holistic Development of GLBTQ and Heterosexual Students at the University of Notre Dame.”

The pastoral plan relies on Catholic Church doctrine and teaching on human sexuality and marriage. The pastoral framework cites the catechism of the Catholic Church, writings from the US Catholic Conference of Bishops, and natural law theory. Accordingly, Notre Dame’s plan repeatedly holds out chastity as a theological virtue, along with the cardinal virtue of justice, as guiding principles, along with “respect, compassion, and sensitivity” for all.

While calling students to chastity, the plan, citing the catechism, specifically reminds gays that “homosexual persons are called to chastity” and to “friendship” and should cultivate “the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom.”

Chastity For All?

Ultimately, chastity has different meanings for straights and gays. The church holds out sexual intimacy in opposite-sex marriage and family life for non-gays. But chastity for gays requires mandatory life-long celibacy. Same-sex marriage is not a sacramental option, according to church teaching.

Historically, in considering anything LGBTQ, Notre Dame has a longstanding practice of holding out church teaching by repeatedly singling out gays for chaste living, which seems to imply that, for whatever reason, gays are somehow more prone to non-chaste behavior than non-gays.

Below the surface seems to lay an offensively stereotypical operative equation — gay equals sexual activity. In other words, being gay is all about sex.

Therein lies a rub for students and alumni who voiced skepticism and criticism.

As Notre Dame senior Michael O’Brien of Strongsville, Ohio, (suburban Cleveland) explained, “In terms of the call to chastity, I have frequently been upset by the double standard Notre Dame had used to justify exclusion of the GLBTQ community,” he said in email correspondence through Facebook.

“The GSA (gay-straight alliance) supposedly would lead to many LGBTQ students to hook up, but speed dating, dorm dances, and Hip Hop Night apparently never cause straight students to act immorally.

“There was also always concern that a GSA would need to be heavily regulated to make sure it was in line with Church teaching. However, this standard is rarely ever applied to other campus organizations.

“The administration never criticizes the Right to Life Club for not campaigning for the abolition of the death penalty. College Democrats and College Republicans frequently promote candidates with anti-Catholic stances on issues.

“Why would a GSA be held to a higher standard?

“I see this disparate treatment as a tacit distrust of the university in the LGBTQ community that somehow they are more prone to sin than the rest of the student body.”

Added a 2011 Notre Dame alumna Grace Loppnow on Facebook, “Obviously … we’re supposed to be chaste, and when other student clubs are proposed, chastity isn’t an issue that is explicitly addressed. Do you think the Scrabble Club’s application had a response that said, ‘We’re all called to live chaste lives? I doubt it.’”

Still, Abad said school administrators’ harping on chastity was “there to protect us from external forces that would have a detrimental effect on the student body.”

“I feel it was necessary,” he said, referring to Notre Dame’s incessant chastity appeal.

Abad may be on to something. Earlier this year, a conservative Notre Dame alumnus watchdog group, the Sycamore Trust, voiced reservations about the possibility of an officially authorized gay student group.

“University recognition and support of a homosexual club would be deeply objectionable for even more fundamental reasons,” they wrote on their Web site. “It would give grave scandal damaging to the Church, to the University, to students, and to other Catholic institutions and would establish a potential source of serious mischief within the school.”

Notre Dame’s call-to-chastity strategy is apparently working. The Fort Wayne-South Bend Catholic diocese issued a statement in support of the school’s decision.

Said Bishop Kevin Rhoades, “The University of Notre Dame clearly affirms its fidelity to Catholic Church teaching on human sexuality by affirming that sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman” and “the deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever
This is the last PG column of 2012. Last because the year— as years so quickly have a habit of doing— has come to a conclusion. (The older one gets, the more rapidly they seemingly like to conclude.)

Fortunately the world, as predicted by the Mayan soothsayers, did not itself end in either a poetic whimper or a prosaic bang. Nor did Jesus return in the clouds of glory to rapture his flock heavenward. (Unfortunately for Pat Robertson, and for us left behinders.)

Like it or not, we’re all stuck here for another round of 365, 24/7, 9 to 5. The cultural wars will no doubt continue, and gays will accordingly to be blamed for Lady Gaga, Cher, Jim Parsons, and, to a somewhat slightly lesser extent, BTL’s ever-smiling Chris Azzopardi.

For the 12 or 13 faithful readers of this column— two have ceased finding inspiration, either spiritual or carnal, in my comments and stopped speed reading me— this PG column is number 675. That comes to 371,256 words, and heaven knows how many individual letters. But who’s counting?

To my credit I’ve yet not to meet a deadline. I think this act of anal retentive behavior on my part is the least I can do for my handful of column regulars— each of whom I’m sure is likewise intellectually, if not also physiologically, retentive in their readership loyalty.

I signed on as a BTL writer with co-publishers Jan & Susan (the ampersand says it all) from day one of their ownership. A year or so before they took over the paper from previous publisher Shannon Rhodes and founding publisher Mark “Fanzina” Winestein, I had interviewed Jan for Ten Percent, an early local L/G publication.

Jan liked that what I had to say about her in the interview was flattering, non-controversial, insightful, and had just the right touch of believable human and lesbian interest to underscore an honest 500-word, male opinion that she was emerging leadership material and special. (Susan later, I’m told, confirmed my sageous foresight.)

So began my column odyssey. (And, admittedly, at times it’s been just that: odd.) As for being regular in my writing commitment to a weekly column, that happened in 1999, when for a modest 15 cents a word I wrote 125 words about LGBT history of the past 100 years. (Generously J&S paid me $20 per column, rather than the stipulated going rate of $18.75.)

Oh, yes! I had the bright idea to call my historical walk through (some would say it was a swish through) Parting Glances, after one of my all time favorite gay movies of the same name. What started out as history soon became opinion, satire, fantasy, joy, anger, and often for myself a touching remembering of what it was like to be a gay or lesbian some fifty-plus years ago. Times have changed!

Next year is a biggie for BTL. It’s the twentieth anniversary of “our” paper. I say “our” because that indeed is what it’s all about. The proud, persistent, determined, reliable voice of our collective LGBT struggles and successes. Yours and mine. Thank you Jan. Thank you Susan. Thank you Between The Lines!

Charles@pridesource.com
Confessions Of A Marriage Doubter

When There’s So Much More To LGBT Rights, Why All The Fuss About Marriage?

I’ve been writing about marriage a lot lately, which seems weird to me because even up to my own wedding in 2008, I had mixed feelings about the massive focus on marriage equality over the last decade. I mean, when I came out...well, a different century, we weren’t talking much about marriage as a major goal. We talked about rights, damn it. All of them. Marriage too, I guess, but there was some odd mix in our collective queer psyche that both poo-pooed marriage for aping heterosexual norms (we talked this way then) and thought that achieving marriage equality was about as likely as changing the word “God” to “Goddess” on our money. There were more important things to fight for anyway.

We could enumerate our demands like we could count Madonna hits on our fingers: an end to workplace discrimination, sodomy laws, and gay bashing; access to hospital visitation and adoption; the right not to be declared an unfit parent just because you were gay or lesbian; positive representation in the media; recognition of bi-national couples, and the right to political asylum based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The closest we got to marriage was domestic partnership, which we fought for and won in many places.

All of these things were so practical and necessary and all are still pressing issues somewhere, even if we’ve moved forward in other places. We wanted then, and now, to live our lives like anyone else without running head first into stupidity, ignorance or violence. Marriage, though, was different. Marriage had baggage. If you were someone’s wife not long ago - and today in some cultures - you were his property. Marriage in history was about securing money, property and power. And for me, chronically single and compelled to chase after indecisive idiots throughout most of my 20s and 30s, marriage didn’t have a thing to do with my freedom as a lesbian. If you asked me in 2000 what the biggest issue facing our community was, I’d have said employment discrimination. Domestic partnership was important too, of course, and I was happy, single as I typically was, to fight for it. It made good, practical sense if you were lucky enough to hook up with a normal person.

What’s happened now? I’m beating the drum for marriage equality? Did I finally drink the Kool-Aide? Am I a patriarchy-and-heterosexuality-blinded zombie? No, and I still don’t like to be called anyone’s wife. I just got to the core of the thing: The difference between marriage and domestic partnership, aside from the fact that “domestic partnership” will always look better on a numbered administrative form than embossed in fancy curlicues, is a sense of dignity.

If we had civil unions under the law for everyone, and marriage were only a spiritual contract, then I’d be all over the domestic partnership thing. But that’s not the way our culture does it. Marriage is the brass ring of agreements. The courts have held it to be the bedrock relationship of our society since the Magna Carta. (In fact, the 1879 Supreme Court case that upheld bans on polygamy didn’t mention morality; instead, it spoke about protecting the democratic system: If a man could have a dozen wives, he became, essentially, a despot). In its most basic form, everyone knows, more or less, what you mean when you say, “We’re married.” Likewise, everyone understands why you sometimes need a divorce, but I once had to explain to someone, repeatedly, why she needed to dissolve her domestic partnership when the relationship tanked.

As the right wing reminds us, marriage is special and important - which is why we’re fighting so hard for it. Marriage equality could happen as soon as 2013. It could move us dramatically closer to legal equality in all realms, regardless if we’re single, married or otherwise arranged.

I get why some people don’t give a toss about conventional marriage. I’ll fight for their rights too. But most of us, LGBT or not, and me too, are inevitably drawn back to our cultural roots. It can be a beautiful thing as long as we don’t get all zombiefied about it.

We wanted then, and now, to live our lives like anyone else without running head first into stupidity, ignorance or violence.
MICHIGAN’S LGBT YELLOW PAGES

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ENDA Fight Likely Same Track
As Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal

BY LISA KEEN

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act - or ENDA - has always been a top priority for the LGBT community politically. It’s been around in one form or another for almost 40 years, passed the House once, and nearly passed the Senate once.

Now, as President Obama - the most pro-gay president in history - readies to begin his second term, a Republican-dominated House still makes passage of ENDA extremely unlikely.

Many LGBT activists have pressured Obama in the past to go around the Republican House and issue an executive order barring discrimination in employment at least by contractors who do business with the federal government.

At a routine White House press conference Dec. 12, Washington Blade reporter Chris Johnson asked press secretary Jay Carney whether the president might consider doing that, now that he’s secured his second term. But Carney said the White House has no such plans under consideration. Instead, he said, the White House plans to follow the same path on ENDA as it did on repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell - and that path winds through Congress.

Michael Cole-Schwartz, a spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, said his organization would continue to press the White House to sign an executive order.

“ENDA is a critically important piece of legislation, and the political reality in Congress is that there is not an immediate, clear path to passage,” said Cole-Schwartz. He said HRC also believes the potential paths – through Congress and through executive order – “don’t have to be separate tracks.”

In the 2011-12 Congressional session, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions gave ENDA a hearing, and four of five witnesses favored it. The one witness opposed to the legislation, National Religious Broadcasters Association spokesman Craig Parshall, claimed it would have a chilling effect on the right of religious organizations to exercise beliefs concerning homosexuality.

However, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - which prohibits employers from discriminating based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin - already exempts “religious organizations” and “religious educational institutions” from the mandate concerning religion, enabling such organizations to give preference to employees who share their religion. It does not allow religious organizations to discriminate against employees based on race, sex, or the other covered categories and simply claim the discrimination is religiously-based.

The ENDA bill introduced in this past Congressional session included a “Exemption for Religious Organizations” section, stating: “This Act shall not apply to a corporation, association, educational institution or institution of learning, or society that is exempt from the religious discrimination provisions of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964....”

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) introduced ENDA in the current session of the Senate. In the next Congressional session, the Senate’s first openly gay elected senator, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, will likely sit on that same Senate committee and be a part of ushering the bill forward.

In the Republican-dominated House, where the chief sponsor has been Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), who is retiring, the new most veteran openly gay member of the U.S. House, Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.), will take over the chief sponsorship of ENDA.
Redefining Success

BY ANDRA POTEET

“I don’t think a success story is just because your pockets are full,” Angelo Brown says in his cheerful tone. “I think a success story is because you get what you want in life.”

For Brown, 28, success is now measured in smiles brought to faces, his way of continuing the outreach he did with AIDS Partnership of Michigan’s REC Boyz program until it was disbanded due to budget cuts at the end of last year.

After working as a coordinator for the program for six months, Brown suddenly found himself without a job. He was interested in volunteering, but battling diabetes and without transportation to get to a nonprofit organization’s headquarters made it difficult. So he applied some of the principals he learned working with youth in the program to his own life.

“I’ve kind of been just taking care of the people that I know personally and talking to people on Facebook,” he says. “I haven’t been doing that much with my time but I’ve been making sure the people I know are growing up doing more with themselves. If they are feeling a little down I make sure I talk to them the way I used to and make them feel a little better and it works.”

His current situation is far from the mobility he most misses about the REC Boyz, an acronym for “real enough to change,” who traveled to night clubs and other spots where men ages 13 to 24 hung out to teach them about safe sex.

“Most of the places I know, they want the people that they reach out to, to come to them,” he says. “We went to the clubs, we went and did events that were out in the open and people would walk by and go ‘oh that looks fun’ and that’s when we would reach out and talk to them. Our major goal was to go to the people and make sure the people who need the help were found.”

While working with the REC Boyz, Brown said his desire to help sometimes manifested itself in odd ways. Bent on helping youth in the program use their minds in creative ways, Brown often set up debates, encouraging participants to critique the thought patterns of each other. He said it sometimes took a lot of energy to make sure the debates did not turn into verbal arguments.

“I always feel like you learn the most about what you talk about when you have to defend it,” he says. “My boss, Hal Smith, pulled me aside one time and said ‘why are you always ending it so that they argue with each other?’ When you have strong minds, it’s kind of hard to make sure that punches don’t get thrown, but as time went on, I get better at it.”

After the group disbanded, several members instituted “underground” meetings, in which they attempt to spread the group’s message with little or no funding. Brown said he can’t afford transportation to its meeting, but he follows the group online and is glad that it is still, in some sense, active.

“What I like about it is that they haven’t let the soul of the REC Boyz die,” he says.

His love for helping others began as a volunteer with Ruth Ellis Center, where he met former staff member Cynthia Goodman. She treated volunteers like “her kids,” Brown said, and Brown took notes on how she built connections with
**What Is Your Legacy?**

People, applying those skills to his own work there.

“When you work with youth, you want to teach them values, but at the same time, you want to make them feel like their work is important,” he says. “A lot of people that work with youth try to constantly tell the kids what they should do but they don’t listen.”

Seeing what the youth did and did not respond to help build his own successful approach, he said.

“When I volunteered, I would suggest things and I would try to make what everyone was doing possible,” he said. “I found that it not only was rewarding, but it constantly made the next day better. That’s what kept me trying to do more within the community. I felt like if I could make someone think bigger and better, it would make me that way too.”

Brown said he became interested in AIDS Partnership Michigan and the REC Boyz as a way to educate himself on safe sex and STD prevention.

“The thing I loved about working with that organization was it made you feel like you can make safe sex fun, you can instill it in yourself where it’s the first thing you think of; it becomes a reaction,” he says.

In addition to using his time at REC Boyz and Ruth Ellis to help those he cares about, Brown, a self-described “video game nerd,” is focusing on starting his own business; he hopes to start a console-driven arcade where video game players can socialize with others who share their interests.

Fiscal year-end donations to our favorite organizations, would like to consider naming one or more charities as beneficiaries of all or a portion of your retirement plan, whether 10 percent, 50 percent or a specific dollar amount.

In the alternative, consider gifts that may provide income to a loved one for life, with a remainder to charity. Your gift, no matter its size, can have a permanent impact upon our community.

For more than 28 years, the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has helped individuals, couples, and families, meet their charitable and financial goals.

Making a planned gift can be as simple as a beneficiary designation, while others can be more complex, depending on your unique financial, personal, and business situation. If you are considering making a planned gift, the staff at the Community Foundation can work with you and your professional advisors to identify the best giving opportunities for you.

Whether you are interested in establishing a named endowment fund to support your favorite organization, would like to contribute to the endowment of one of our existing partner agencies, are interested in leaving a gift to the HOPE Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (see side bar), would like to explore whether or not a certain giving vehicle might be right for you (such as a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Remainder Trust), consider the Community Foundation as your partner in philanthropy.

For more information please visit http://cfsfm.org/hope-fund or contact Lindsey Rossow-Rood at the Community Foundation at 313.961.6675 or lrossow@cfsfm.org.

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**What Is The HOPE Fund Of The Community Foundation?**

For more than 28 years the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has helped community members meet their charitable and financial goals by providing tools and resources that make giving easier, flexible, and effective.

One way that the Community Foundation has partnered with the local LGBT non-profit community is by establishing The HOPE Fund, which was launched in 1994 as a grantmaking and technical assistance program focused on strengthening organizations and projects which serve the LGBT community in southeast Michigan.

Since its inception more than $1.7 million in grants have been made to 128 projects at 45 nonprofit agencies.

We also helped the following organizations establish endowments for their long-term financial stability:

- Affirmations Community Center
- AIDS Partnership Michigan Inc.
- Equality Michigan
- Michigan AIDS Coalition
- Ruth Ellis Center Inc.

Please help us support programs and services that serve the LGBT community in southeast Michigan by:

- Making an outright gift of any size to support The HOPE Fund, The HOPE Fund Endowment, or one of the endowment funds of our agency partners.

- Establishing a new named endowment fund.

- Making a planned gift through your will, revocable trust, or through a beneficiary designation of your pension, profit sharing, IRA, 401(k) or 403(B) plan.

- Learning more about gifts that benefit you, your loved ones and charities, such as charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts or charitable lead trusts.

To learn more about gift opportunities, the impact of The HOPE Fund on the community, or to make a gift online, please visit http://cfsfm.org/hope-fund or contact Lindsey Rossow-Rood at the Community Foundation at 313.961-6675 or lrossow@cfsfm.org.

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**Redefining Success**

Continued from p. 13

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**Lindsey Rossow-Rood** is a Philanthropic Services Officer at the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, and Henry Grix is an Estate Planning Attorney at the law firm of Dickinson Wright.
Meet Alfredo Smith: Anyone working for a nonprofit organization that fights against AIDS with information, outreach and support is obviously driven by a desire to do good and help those in need. But while that is also the case for Alfredo Smith, who has worked with AIDS Partnership Michigan for five years, he admits that what initially drew him to his first AIDS-related volunteer stint, with Ruth Ellis Center’s Young Brothers United, was something a bit more practical. Condoms. But though he came for the freebies, Alfredo stayed for the one-on-one connections he was making with the 13-to-24-year old men the program targeted – connections that would lead him to the work he does today.

“At the end of the day I learned that a lot of youth aren’t worried about protecting themselves, they are worried about where they are going to sleep at night.”

– Alfredo Smith

Meet Roland Leggett: For Roland, absence from Michigan not only made him fonder of his home state, it made him roll up his sleeves and start fighting to change it. In 2009, Leggett had just moved back to Michigan after working for Obama for America in Chicago. He said moving from progressive Chicago back to a state with so much anti-LGBT legislation was a shock. When he returned, he started working for ACLU of Michigan for two years before landing in his current job as a field organizer at Equality Michigan. Roland didn’t like what he saw when he got back to Michigan, so he started trying to change it.

“Initially, I wanted to work for NPR or PBS. But I got more interested in affecting the story than just telling it.”

– Roland Leggett
Lance Hicks

“’We felt like a lot of media representation of LGBTQ youth was either not presented by members of the community, it was kind of by other people about us, or it didn’t represent youth of color.’”

– Lance Hicks

Meet Lance Hicks: Growing up Detroit’s Northwest side, Lance did not have it easy in school. Growing up with a white parent and a black parent, his peers would deny him his identity, only seeing a white man. But his race is not the only part of his identity people often misread. Hicks, 22, has been correcting them about his gender since coming out as transgender at 15. After coming out, Lance’s mother would drive him to Affirmations’ youth group every week. There his passion for activism emerged. He became involved in OSASS, Oakland County Substance Abuse Services and through Affirmations, he helped organize a Midwest trans youth conference that ran from 2007 to 2009.

– Andrea Poteet
BTL, Oct. 11, 2012

Kibibi Blount-Dorn

“I think the spirit of organization in Detroit is so unique. I feel like organizers in Detroit sort of have this, ‘this is our city and whatever we can imagine, we can create it to be.’ We don’t have to be bound by any of these superstructures, we can build our own.”

– Kibibi Blount-Dorn

Meet Kibibi Blount-Dorn: Kibibi loves food. It’s not just its flavors, smells and textures, or even the process of turning ingredients into a meal. For her, its about food’s story from the farm to the table and the people and places it touches along the way. But it’s more than that. Since accepting a job as program manager of the Detroit Food Policy Council, Kibibi has worked closely with the council to improve access to healthy food, advocate for urban agriculture and to bring broader education about food and health to Detroit.

– Andrea Poteet
BTL, Sept. 6, 2012
Marland Colyer

“I couldn’t find any work, so just having a change and being able to come somewhere else and saying ‘let me start over here and see where it takes me’ was kind of my push to come to Detroit.”

– Marland Colyer

Meet Martin Colyer: This 29-year-old Chicago native, who moved to Detroit last December, has a lot of big plans for changing the world through leadership. After graduating from KICK’s first Learn, Educate, Advocate and Drive (LEAD) program in May, Martin said he has the tools to make those dreams come true. And to Colyer’s surprise, his chance for an out-front role would come before he left the LEAD class. His classmates unanimously voted that he should give the class’ graduation speech. Though he’s not sure where his love of helping people, especially those in the LGBT community, will take him, he says he is sure whatever he does he will be able to make a positive difference.

By Andrea Poteet
BTL, July 26, 2012

Bre’Ann Campbell

“For the longest, I’ve been searching for someone who is strong and looking out for trans women. I didn’t realize that I was becoming that person.”

– Bre’Ann Campbell

Meet Bre’Ann Campbell: After being denied housing for being trans, Bre’Ann took her case to Equality Michigan and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and was launched into the public spotlight. Although investigators could not make a sufficient case that she had been the victim of discrimination, the incident awakened an activist within her. Bre’Ann didn’t set out to change the world, but in the process of finding herself this confident 26-year-old Detroiter has become an unwitting advocate for trans women everywhere.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, June 28, 2012
Tony Johnson

“I decided that I can’t stay at home and do nothing. I have to get out and help others.”

– Tony Johnson

Meet Tony Johnson: Johnson, is disabled and lives on a fixed income. In 1993, he discovered that he was HIV-positive, but the virus has been undetectable in his blood since 2004. In 2005 Tony got involved in KICK’s mission to create a stigma-free, safe space for LGBT African Americans who are HIV-positive. Johnson was so taken by the mission, he started catching the bus three days a week to manage KICK’s calls and to become an intake specialist. But don’t bother talking to Johnson about his leadership in Detroit’s African American, LGBT community, it would only embarrass him. He’s more interested in talking about service and change.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, May 24, 2012

Rosemary Linares

“I’m a bisexual woman with heterosexual privilege. When you have that kind of privilege, it’s important to explore your feelings around it. Do you feel guilty or powerful? Having explored my own privilege, I’ve come to the social justice movement with humility and self-awareness.”

– Rosemary Linares

Meet Rosemary Linares: Rosemary is a bubbly 29-year-old with a master’s degree from New York University, a supportive husband and an adorable stepson. From the outside, it looks like she has it all, including what she calls “heterosexual privilege.” What is not so obvious is that Linares is a bisexual Latina. In 2010, Rosemary founded Cross Movement Social Justice Consulting to advance social justice by increasing the capacity of nonprofit organizations and building alliances across social movements. Last year, she joined the board of Detroit Latin@s, a community based group formed to bring greater influence and visibility to the Latino/a LGBT and straight allied community.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, March 22, 2012
Growing up, I thought if I was a lesbian, I would never have kids, etc. I had accepted what I'd been told means to be gay, versus what it's really like to be gay.

– Adrienne Maree Brown

Meet Adrienne Maree Brown: Since her early 20s, Adrienne has worked on the ground floor of social movements in order to hone her skills. From 2006 to 2010, she was the executive director of The Ruckus Society, a California-based organization that trains activists in non-violent direct action. Today, Adrienne helps social justice groups and progressive movements as an organizational guru, a facilitator, a networker and a life coach. While her organizational consulting takes her nationwide, her home base is Detroit’s Cass Corridor, working closely with groups like the Food Justice Task Force and the East Michigan Environmental Council.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, Dec. 15, 2011

LGBTQ parents face the issues that other parents don’t face. They have to deal with outsiders who do not believe that gays can be parents. And they have to deal with their own children not accepting them because of what other children may say.

– Royale Theus

Meet Royale Theus: As a member of an African American LGBT health organization, Royale went to Detroit’s Palmer Park to pass out health information. After graduation, he eventually landed a job in the Detroit Health Department’s HIV mobile testing unit, bringing healthcare services to soup kitchens, methadone clinics and distressed neighborhoods. When he was only 20, the Detroit native discovered he was going to be a father. It wasn’t exactly what he had planned for his future. “Having a son saved my life,” said Theus, whose son is now 11. But instead of throwing him into a tailspin, fatherhood was a wake-up call. “He was my ‘Stay Out of Jail’ card. I knew there was someone depending on me.”

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, Feb. 9, 2012
Ryan Oliver

“...I’m committed to there being a more visible trans movement in our society – a more confident movement.”

– Ryan Oliver

Meet Ryan Oliver: At 28, Oliver’s view of manhood has been hard-won. From his youth in a violent Detroit neighborhood, to his isolation as a black college student in a white environment, he has struggled to define himself and his masculinity. It’s a challenge that’s been even more daunting because Oliver is biologically female. As his journey to adulthood took a toll on Ryan’s cultural footing and his confidence suffered, he found support in the words of his sociology professor at EMU. Today, Ryan uses the passion ignited by his professor to advocate on behalf of the invisible transgendered community.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, Oct. 27, 2011

Kirsten Ussery

“...We need to help people get out of the closet. We need to grow more leaders. There’s a lot of potential out there.”

– Kirsten Ussery

Meet Kirsten Ussery: She has worked on behalf of LBGT children in the Detroit Public Schools and her leadership in the lesbian women of color support group SPICE - Sistas Providing Intelligence, Creativity and Empowerment. She has also become part of the young brain trust dedicated to the city’s renaissance. She belongs to the inner circle of one of Detroit’s most influential politicians, City Council President Charles Pugh, who, in 1999, ran as an openly gay candidate. Working closely with organizations like the Downtown Detroit Partnership and Business Leaders for Michigan, she has been privy to plans for the city’s revitalization. Ussery is truly not afraid of a challenge.

By Desiree Cooper
BTL, Sept. 27, 2011
Gayby Making

Stars Of Acclaimed Indie Talk Awkward Sex Scenes & What Their Film Says About Family

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

There are lots of ways to have a baby if you’re a gay man who wants one with his platonic girlfriend. Surrogacy is one option. You could adopt. Maybe even go the donor insemination route. Or you could just get naked and stick it in.

“Gayby,” an acclaimed indie film from writer/director Jonathan Lisecki (recently nominated for Best First Screenplay by the esteemed Spirit Awards) now on DVD, is the story of two besties, Jenn and Matt (real-life friends Jenn Harris and Matthew Wilkas), who decide to finally fulfill a lifelong promise to have a kid … by having sex together.

Love at first sight

Jenn: We met during our freshman orientation at Boston University, and it was literally and completely love at first sight. I don’t mean love like, “Oh my god, I want to marry that guy”; it was like, “You’re coming with me.” He’s just one of those soul-mate people that knows you. We go together really well; he’s very much my brother. So I can’t even think of him having sex. It totally creeps me out. But neither of us really can. We get grossed out.

Matthew: Yeah, we’re never going to have sex. That’s never gonna happen.

The real-life Jenn and Matt

Jenn: I remember reading, “Jenn’s walking around the city depressed and she falls into a bush” and thinking, “I can’t wait to fall into a bush!” I thought it was this big moment, like I’m gonna fall from a cliff into a bush, and it wasn’t. I have as much fun as my character does and I work hard like she does, but it’s obviously high comedy – I’m not walking around falling into bushes. I was also a spinning instructor for years, and that is my motorbike.

Matthew: We’re both really neurotic. I think we both share that quality, so I don’t think Jenn is the only neurotic one in this relationship like she is in the film.

Having babies

Matthew: I have no desire to have a baby. Jenn wants to have a baby. She always says that I’m gonna be involved in the child’s life, and I’m sure I will be.

See Gayby Making, page 25
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‘The Grinch’ in Detroit

Opera House Takes On Classic Seuss Story

By Martin F. Kohn

With songs that vanish from memory even as they’re being sung, an ensemble garbed in reds, whites and pinks, looking like a bowl of candy canes left on the stove, and choreography straight out of a grade-school show – everyone take two steps to the right, everyone take two steps to the left, everyone raise both hands way up – “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” begins inauspiciously even for a kid-friendly holiday musical.

But a little more than halfway through the 90-minute, intermissionless production, something wonderful happens: The show gets very good very fast. Either that or somebody’s heart just grew three sizes.

“How the Grinch Stole Christmas” gets better when the Grinch comes down the mountain to swipe all the Yuletide goodies – presents, stockings, Christmas dinners, decorations, even trees – from the relentlessly cheery Whos down in Whoville in their reds, whites and pinks. The tale zeroes in on its handful of main characters and suddenly, there’s action.

The Grinch, played by Stefan Karl with rollicking, child-friendly menace, scoops up presents and tosses or soccer-kicks them to his dog, young Max (Seth Bazacas), who deftly catches the objects in an oversized pillowcase; at one point he executes a sliding catch worthy of the Tigers’ Austin Jackson.

Meanwhile, the older version of Max (Bob Lauder), who serves as narrator and sometime participant, sings “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch,” with deep-voiced gusto, and subsequently reprises it as a sing-along which, judging by the response, is precisely what the audience has been waiting for. Later on, the Grinch himself engages in some audience give-and-take, which Karl manages with consummate skill: The kiddies get to holler their lungs out but things always stay under control.

And then there is little Cindy Lou Who, an adorable child with a big, Broadway voice (Jenna Iacono at the performance I attended; she alternates with Georgia Kay Wise). Cindy Lou’s big number occurs as she wakes up from a bad dream and discovers the Grinch disguised as Santa Claus. “Oh no,” says the Grinch, “it’s a ballad.”

It is, indeed, and it’s one of just a couple of decent new songs in the musical. At least the two standards from the original 1966 TV special – “Welcome, Christmas” and the aforementioned “Mr. Grinch” – have been retained, as has enough of Dr. Seuss’ original poetry to make fans of the original feel at home.

You take risks when you make a 90-minute stage show out of a 30-minute TV cartoon. Some pay off, some are problematic. Like Santa’s sack, it’s a mixed bag. And it is, ultimately, a gift for the holidays.
Editor’s Pick

“Faberge: The Rise and Fall” features more than 200 precious objects from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, home of the largest collection of Faberge in the United States. The show traces Karl Faberge’s rise to fame, his privileged relationship with the Russian aristocracy. Despite the firm’s abrupt end in 1918, the legacy and name of Faberge continues to hold a place in popular culture.

Visitors will have the rare opportunity to glimpse imperial Russian treasures made by the House of Faberge, including jewel-encrusted parasol and cane handles, an array of enamel figures, animals carved from semi-precious stones and miniature egg pendants.

The objects on view will be exhibited with images, text and activities meant to help visitors imagine the ways in which such luxury items would have been manufactured in a workshop, displayed in a storefront and used to adorn the interior of the imperial palace. This exhibit runs through Jan. 21 at the Detroit Institute of Arts. For more information visit Dia.org.

OUTINGS

Thursday, Dec. 27
Euchre Tournament - Benefit for Out Loud Chorus 7 p.m. Entry: $10. Cash prizes available. No partner necessary. All levels of ability welcome. Food and beverage service available. Out Loud Chorus, 1595 S. Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor. 734-652-0801. OutLoudChorus@gmail.com Ozline.com

Saturday, Dec. 29
Loudcast 4 p.m. Ann Arbor book group for Lesbians. Meets the last Saturday of every month. LozReads, 213 Brown St., Ann Arbor, 734-995-9837. LozReads@yahoo.com LozRead.com

Sunday, Dec. 30
Conversation Station 5 p.m. LGBTIQ (and allies) 35 and over. Join GMAB each week for discussion, food and fun. Topic: What is your purpose in life? Do you believe you have a unique mission? GoAffirmations.org

Monday, Jan. 1
Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. Offering support, education, resources and a social structure for transgender individuals. Facilitated by Arlene Kish, Lorraine Brown, Jessica Ma. 6:30 p.m. Open to persons 18 and older. Younger are welcome with parent or guardian permission. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo, 269-349-4324. Traci@Kglrc.org Kglrc.org

Tuesday, Jan. 1
Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. Offering support, education, resources and a social structure for transgender individuals. Facilitated by Arlene Kish, Lorraine Brown, Jessica Ma. 6:30 p.m. Open to persons 18 and older. Younger are welcome with parent or guardian permission. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo, 269-349-4324. Traci@Kglrc.org Kglrc.org

Wednesday, Jan. 2
Ladies Who Lunch 11:30 a.m. Ladies meet 35 and over for lunch and conversation. Contact Angie to make a reservation. The Resource Center, 1710 W. Grand Blvd., 313-567-0000. theresourcecenter@kalamazoo.org

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL


OTHER

Sing Out Detroit “Sing Out Detroit” Rehearsals are open to join Sing Out Detroit Choir. LGBT and Allies’ Welcome. Jewish Community Center, 15110 W. 10 Mile Rd, Oak Park, Jan. 8 - March 26. 313-567-1411. singoutdet.org
Editor’s Pick

The Purple Rose Theatre Company will present “Jeep Danies’ Onstage & Unplugged” for a limited seven-show engagement from Wednesday, Dec. 27 through Monday, Dec. 31. All performances will be at The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., in Chelsea.

A prolific songwriter as well playwright, Daniels will perform an arsenal of songs that are alternately humorous and poignant. Daniels has toured nationally with his music, but has reduced his concert appearances since landing the lead role on HBO’s acclaimed series “The Newsroom.”

Jeff will be joined by special guests Brad Phillips and Jed Fritzemeier, the Ben Daniels Band and Luc, “The Roadie” Daniels and his Big Bay Shuffle for both New Year’s Eve performances. Tickets are $75. A special event ticket price of $250 for the 8 p.m. show on New Year’s Eve will include dinner, celebratory drinks, special guests and prizes.

For tickets, call 734-433-7673.

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Jenn: If gay-couple friends of mine wanted me to have their baby or something – I’m not in the market to do that right now. I’m not ready to mother at this moment – but I’m not against it. I’m not even against having sex with a gay man!

Does this really happen?

Matthew: I would say maybe, like, less than 1 percent of the time. But maybe it’s more. I don’t know anyone who’s done it this way. I feel like people are more apt to go the turkey baster method.

If sex were the only option, I think I’d be able to handle it. I mean, it’s very strange. It’s obviously more an excuse to write a really funny scene than something that happens in reality. (Laughs)

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The first sex scene

Jenn: That was actually our favorite scene to shoot. It was really hard not to break. We had actually shot that scene in the short a couple of years ago, when “Gayby” used to be a short. It’s longer in the film, obviously, but it’s pretty much what we did in the short. I think we were just so comfortable. Matt and I travel. We’re always sleeping in the same bed. It was really easy, like, “Oh, this is a familiar moment.”

Matthew: It was a blast. There’s a comfort there that I wouldn’t have had it if were with someone I didn’t know. A lot of the awkwardness was authentic in that it was so easy to imagine how awkward it would be in real life to have to go through that, so I think part of that added to the fun of making that scene. It’s totally awkward but doable.

(The shoot) was pretty casual. Jonny is one of those directors where I didn’t feel like I was under his control too much. It felt a lot looser than that. I guess for the physical stuff it would depend on the shot, like if they needed the shot of me jerking off under the sheet and Jenn’s face in the background, there was definitely a specificity to have that be done – the angle of the camera and how high my hands could jerk upward. That sort of thing. (Laughs)

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Sex work

Jenn: People who say that sex scenes – at least with the gorgeous gentleman I’ve been given the pleasure to be cast opposite of – are awkward, hard and weird are lying. They’re lying because they want to be artsy-crafty. It’s bullshit. There is nothing weird about it. People were watching! People were filming! Come on, that’s great. I was given my best friend and three gorgeous men who are wonderful gentleman. Going to work to make out with someone? Not difficult. I can see the allure of the porn industry.

Advice to gay men

Matthew: My character, Matt, has it right. He suggests that he gets off outside of her and then rolls over and sticks it in when it’s just about to happen. That’s the best way for a gay man to go about having sex with a woman. It saves you from actually having to go through with it for too long.

Family is what you make it

Jenn: The film is very much about the family that we create. We have our biological family and then we grow up and move to big cities, or we move away from our family of origin and we build our own little family with our friends, coworkers and our neighbors. We get to choose who we want in our family when we get older. We have the gift of choice. Just like I choose Matt, and not chose me. He’s definitely my gay husband.

Matthew: The definition of family isn’t exclusive to just blood relatives. It’s really beyond that. I am not very close to my family, and I moved to N.Y. and I had to create my own family, essentially. That’s what the film is about. It’s about creating your own family when you don’t necessarily have one.
Meet Queenie!

This 3-year-old Shepherd/Akita mix is fully grown at 49 pounds. The Michigan Humane Society found Queenie and a litter of 3-week-old puppies in an abandoned house in Detroit. After giving them time to acclimate and let the puppies grow up a bit, each of the puppies were adopted. Now, we are hoping we can find a forever home for Queenie! She loves to be petted and is very affectionate. Come meet her today!

The adoption fee includes sterilization, age-appropriate vaccinations, the MHS Adoption Guarantee and much more.

For more information, please visit or call the MHS Detroit Center for Animal Care at (313) 872-3400 and provide the pet ID number, 733885.

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4 One in bondage
5 Queen toppers
6 You must remember this
7 Balkan dweller
8 Work under Barney Frank
9 Where the Mets waved their sticks
10 Pillow covers
11 Catechism content
12 Conductor Toscanini
13 Guy with a "third leg"
18 HRC's equal sign
21 Devilfish
22 ___ UP
23 Luggage
24 Mabius of "The L Word"
28 Elusive craft
29 Metric measure
30 Name that rhymes with a dick?
31 Not closet-bound
34 Vidal's Breckinridge
35 Vet, of a sort, for short
37 Number of sides to a gay symbol
38 Foot fetish digit
39 Apples with chips
40 Of grades 1-12
43 Kevin's "Superman Returns" role
44 African desert
45 Cartoonist Bechdel
46 Easy mark, in slang
48 Tobacco wad
49 They're not out-of-towners
51 Climax at the end of an action film
52 No-tell motel meeting
55 Spice holder
56 Sons of, at Beth Chayim Chadashim
57 Says further
58 Fast food pioneer
61 Heston's "Ben ___ "
62 Fruit sugar ending
63 61-Down author Wallace

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Viggo Mortensen & Kirsten Dunst are ‘The Two Faces of January’

Eventually they’ll run out of Patricia Highsmith books to adapt into films, but until that day, the late bisexual author’s body of work continues to make for great entertainment of the rich-people-plus-crime variety. Currently in production is “The Two Faces of January,” based on Highsmith’s 1964 novel and starring Viggo Mortensen and Kirsten Dunst. Set in Greece and France, the psychological thriller concerns a con man (Mortensen) who accidentally kills a Greek police officer. The con man’s wife (Dunst) and a stranger (Oscar Isaac) help to cover up the incident before fleeing the country in some really impeccable period costumes. And if all of that sounds more than a little bit like “The Talented Mr. Ripley,” give or take a handful of details, that’s because Highsmith wrote that one, too. The film is set for a late 2013 release. Make sure your shoes are properly shined and your necktie is knotted just-so before then.

New gay HBO pilot: the names behind the camera

Some people call it jumping the gun when you talk about a show with no cast yet. But when the behind the scenes people are accomplished and generate excitement all by themselves, it’s never too early to start buzzing. Proof: HBO has picked up a comedy pilot about three thirty-something gay friends in San Francisco. Title? Not yet. Actors? Nope. But it’s from creators David Marshall Grant (“Brothers and Sisters”) and Sarah Condon (“Bored to Death”), written by Michael Lannan (assistant director of James Franco’s upcoming experimental “sequel” to the film “Cruising” called “Interior. Leather Bar.”). The pilot will be directed by acclaimed “Weekend” filmmaker Andrew Haigh, whose presence alone is cause for confidence. True, if you’re not already paying attention to who actually makes and produces the gay-themed shows and films you love then these aren’t names you’ll know. But you should. And if this thing goes to cable you will. Look, nobody used to know who Lena Dunham was, either.

‘Pan’s Labyrinth,’ this time with more singing

If we learned any lessons from the all-singing stage adaptations of “Les Miserables” and “Carrie,” it’s that just about anything, for better or worse, has musical theater potential. Even the Spice Girls have their own jukebox show happening right now in London. That’s why it’s not really much of a shock to hear that Guillermo Del Toro’s critically acclaimed cult hit, the horror-fantasy-historical-drama “Pan’s Labyrinth”’s stage life has been quietly taking shape for a few years now and del Toro has already co-written the book. Meanwhile, Paul Williams and Gustavo Santaolalla (composer of “Brokeback Mountain”’s score) are on board to write music and lyrics. The costumes for the sheer variety of creatures alone cry out for the Julie Taymor treatment. And if and when it all comes together (Note to “Smash”: promote this thing!) it’ll make for a genuinely freaky Tony Awards broadcast.

Romeo San Vicente has met more than his share of monsters already.
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