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NOVEMBER 2015



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NOV. 2015 FEATURES

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OutSmart



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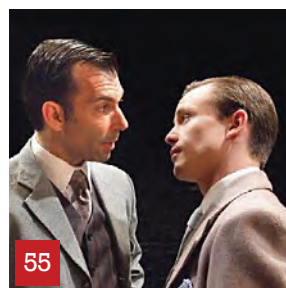
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HPV, CANCER, AND GAY MEN.
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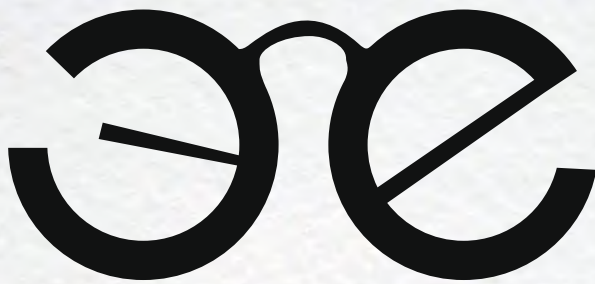
Design: Terry Klump

A young man with short brown hair and light skin is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is looking off-camera to his right with a slight smile. He is holding a smartphone in his left hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with red and white structures.

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Finally Wed

Couple who sued Kentucky clerk Kim Davis marry.

By Claire Galofaro, AP

Say Yes
Karen Roberts (l) and April Miller kiss after renewing their vows in a public ceremony on October 24, 2015, in Morehead, Kentucky.



On October 24, April Miller and Karen Roberts stood before a minister, hand-in-hand, and said the two words they fought for months to exchange.

"I will."

The people packed into the room around them jumped into a standing ovation. They all wore matching rainbow buttons that read #LoveWins.

The couple, the first denied a license by Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis, celebrated their wedding, capping a months-long saga that landed them in the middle of a national firestorm over religious freedom and civil rights.

They laid out one rule for their guests: no one was to mention Davis. "This is about us and our wedding," Roberts said.

When the Supreme Court effectively legalized same-sex marriage across the nation in June, Davis cited "God's authority" and stopped issuing marriage licenses. Miller and Roberts, along with three other couples, filed a lawsuit against her.

Davis continued to refuse them, again and again, in defiance of a series of federal court orders. U.S. District Judge David Bunning held her in contempt on September 3 and ordered her to jail.

Miller and Roberts, a couple for 11 years

and caring for a disabled daughter together, got a license the next day, issued by a deputy clerk who agreed to sign it in Davis' absence. The couple, who still had to return the license to the clerk's office for recording, worried about what might happen once Davis got back to work. So they scrambled together a private wedding, alone at their home, the following Thursday.

Roberts said it was not how she imagined her wedding would be. So they held a second ceremony on October 24 in a reception hall at the Pines at Sheltowee in Morehead and invited 125 friends, family, and dozens of people they met just four months ago on the courthouse lawn outside Davis' office.

On June 30, the morning after the clerk announced she would not issue licenses, couples and activists flocked to the courthouse. They returned day after day, and over time formed

friendships and a grassroots advocacy group they called the Rowan County Rights Coalition.

Its roster now numbers in the dozens, with formal committees and elected positions, said Mary Hargis, a member of the group. They've created an outreach program for transgender youth and are starting an initiative to distribute stickers to gay-friendly local businesses.

They sat in the back of the room on the night of October 24, hugging and weeping.



They laid out one rule for their guests: no one was to mention Davis.

"It's really affirming to see their love validated," said Michael Aldridge, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky, one of those present. The ACLU had sued Davis on behalf of the couples originally denied their wedding licenses.

"It's been an amazing journey, and we'd like to thank all the people who stood with us from June 30 to today," Miller announced at the wedding. "This is your party, too."

Though they got what they wanted, the couple acknowledges their legal battle is far from over. The lawsuit, titled *April Miller et al v. Kim Davis*, is likely to drag out for many more months.

But the couple tried to turn the conversation away from Davis and the ongoing legal questions on the night of the wedding. They exchanged vows, promising to love each other in "joy as well as sorrow, triumph as well as defeat." They kissed and swayed into a slow dance.

Months ago, as the controversy reached a fever pitch, Miller was driving to work when a Chicago song came across the radio. "Will you still love me for the rest of my life?" the band sang, and she pulled her car over and wept.

The couple chose that song for their first dance.

Nashia Fife, a member of the Rowan County Rights Coalition, wiped her tears as she watched from the back of the room. "It's a really big reward for all our hard work to culminate in a big, beautiful party," she said. "It's so wonderful, so long overdue." ■

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On October 5, Mayor **Annis Parker** held her 2015 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award Ceremony at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Pictured are **James Lee**, **Gloria Zenteno**, **Jose Adan Trevino**, Mayor Parker, **Judge Josefina Rendon**, **Gilbert A. Garcia**, and **Daniel R. Bustamante**.



OutReach United held its 2015 Houston Comes Out Party at Jaguar Central on October 10. Pictured are **Jason Stewart**, **Bonnie Alvis**, **Gary Wood**, and **Irwin Palchick**.



The Houston Pride Band held its #LovesLove: Houston's Fabulous Wedding concert at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church on October 17. Pictured are **Lisa Mace** and **Michael Roberts**.



On September 28, the new group Homeless Gay Kids-Houston held its first open-house fundraiser, raising \$50,000 in-cash and in-kind donations to support homeless LGBT teens in the Houston area. Pictured are **Bill McDugald**, **Chris Lewis**, **Ernie Manouse**, **Bruce Smith**, **Tony Carroll**, and **Jonathan Mitchell**.



On Oct. 8, **Don Gill** of PWA Holiday Charities presented a check to Bering Support Network director **Larry Leutwyler** for the group's holiday dinners.



The Houston Stonewall Young Democrats (HSYD) held a fundraiser and meet-and-greet with the group's endorsed candidates on October 7. Pictured are HSYD president **James Lee**, **Jim Kovach**, and **Ben Montalbano** with political candidates.



On October 17, **Houston Unites** held its Super Hero Party featuring DJ Madonny at South Beach. Pictured are members of the Houston Unites team.



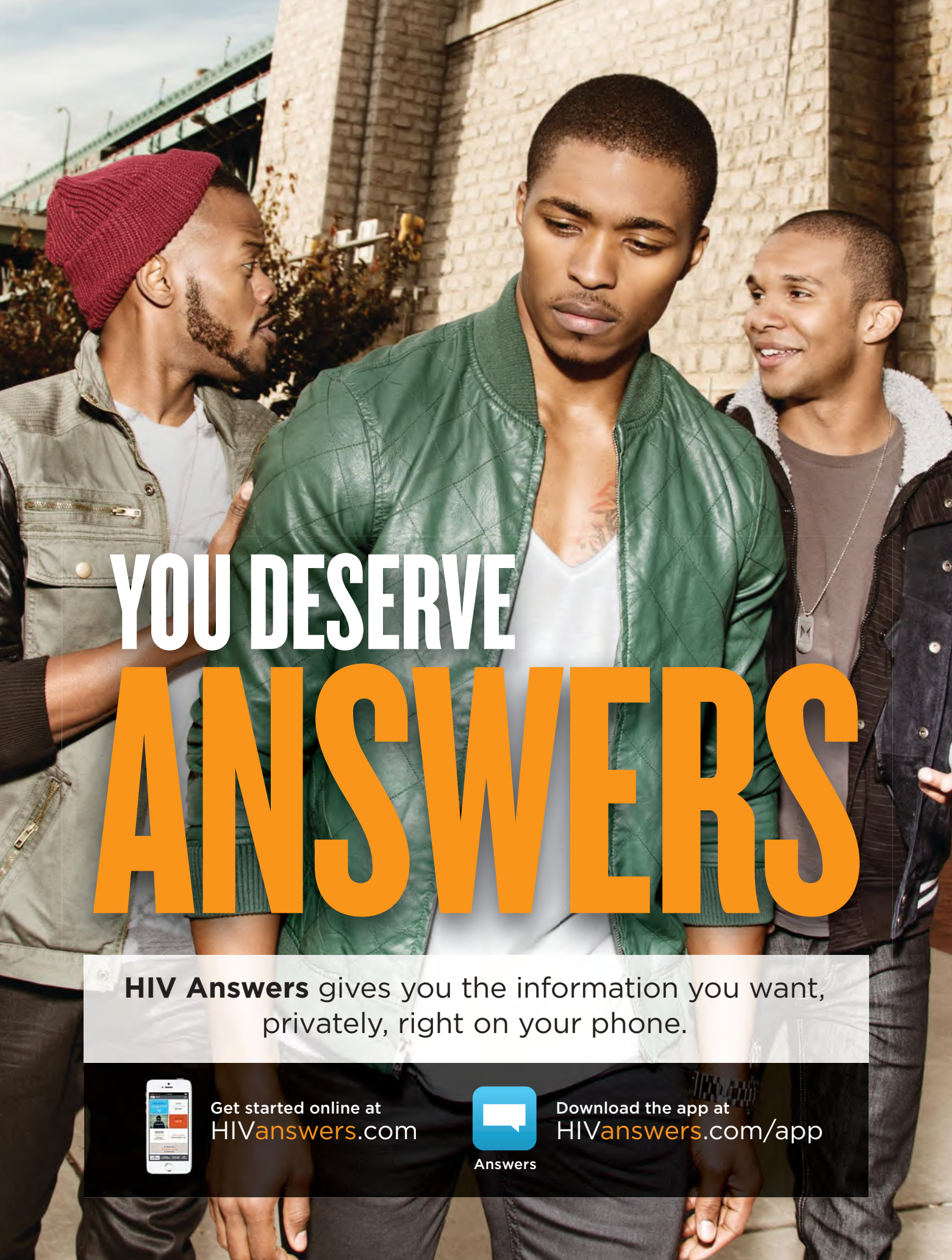
On October 10, the Harris County Democratic Party held its annual Johnson, Rayburn, Richards Dinner at the Crowne Plaza Houston ballroom. Pictured are **Lane Lewis**, **Barney Frank**, Congressman **Al Green**, and State Representative **Ron Reynolds**.



The Houston GLBT Political Caucus held its 2015 Equality Brunch at L'Olivier on Oct. 19. Pictured are **Fran Watson**, **Sarah Schimmer** and son, **Leslie Jackson**, **Dr. Maria Gonzalez**, **Dane DeVerl Cook**, **Brad Pritchett**, and **Maverick Welsh**.



On October 20, **Charles Armstrong** presented a donation check to **Ryan Wilson** in support of Houston Unites and the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO).



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'Carol' at Houston Cinema Arts Festival

A love story for the ages.

WILSON WEBB / THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY; HAYNES - JOHN PHILLIPS/GETTY IMAGES



Houston Cinema Arts Society launched its five-day film fest in 2009 and hasn't looked back since. Stars attend, audiences love the film selections "by and about artists," and the festival has really put the city on the map in terms of silver-screen fans. This year, the festival promises five more must-see films: *A Woman Like Me*; Laurie Anderson's heartbreaking *Heart of a Dog*; the Carter and Cash family folk-music tale *The Winding Stream*; *Youth*; and *Carol*. The last is a 2015 film by

Todd Haynes (pictured at left) starring such luminaries as Cate Blanchett (above right), Rooney Mara (above left), Sarah Paulson, and Kyle Chandler. Based on Patricia Highsmith's 1952 semi-autobiographical novel *The Price of Salt*, the movie follows the story of a photographer/salesgirl who falls in love with a married woman she sees shopping in a 1950s New York City department store. The Academy Award-winning Blanchett plays the older, married Carol Aird, while Rooney Mara (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*) is Therese, the shop girl.

This romantic drama, shot on

16 mm film, is a luscious feast of love in a time gone by. A deeply emotional and complex love story, *Carol* ends, as *Variety* says, "on a triumphant note of emotional clarity that, for all its frozen-in-time period restraint, speaks stirringly and unmistakably to the present moment."

This lesbian love story for the ages is one you won't want to miss.

Carol is scheduled for November 15 at 8 p.m. at the Sundance Cinemas. —Marene Gustin

**Houston Cinema Arts Festival
November 12-19**
houstoncinemaartsfestival.org

🔊 Radio ★ Performing Arts 📷 Art & Photography 🔄 Ongoing + Other Things 📅 Save The Date

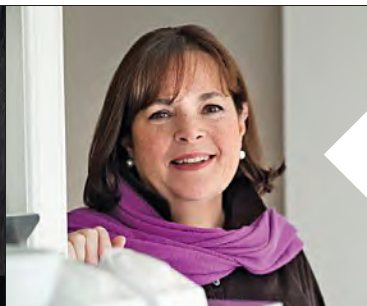
1

Day of the Dead + Dia de los Muertos celebration. nmfh.org
Holiday Can Food Drive + thru 7th
Two dollars off museum admission with a can donation. nmfh.org



4

The Barefoot Contessa + Ina Garten in Houston. spahouston.org
From Broadway to Obscurity ★ thru 8th
A musical by Theater LaB Houston at their new home in the MATCH. thelabhou.org



5

Fall for All Wonderweek + thru 11th
Children's museum weeklong fun events. cmhouston.org

6

Intensio ★ Daniil Simkin and members of American Ballet Theatre perform. spahouston.org
Azar Lawrence and Band ★
Part of Da Camera's jazz series. dacamera.com

Veterans Appreciation Week + thru 15th
Free museum admission for veterans. nmfh.org
Cinderella ★ Catch a free flick. Arrive one hour early for contests and activities! discoverygreen.com

8

Theatre Under the Stars Vine & Dine +
An annual charity dinner for the theater's education programs. tuts.org/winedinner

9

The 25th Annual Matt Musil All Star Golf Classic + Swing to benefit Career and Recovery Resources' programs. careerandrecovery.org



11

Eleanor's Story ★ *thru 15th* A one-woman show about an American girl in Hitler's Germany. thelabhou.org

12

Writers in the Schools Gala + Annual fundraiser for WITS. wits-houston.org
The Nutcracker Market + Get your shopping on at this one-stop buying extravaganza. houstonballet.org

13

A Coming-Home Gala + The Galveston Arts Center returns to its historic home on the Strand. galvestonartscenter.org
Eugene Onegin ★ *last day* houstongrandopera.org

14

ComedySportz Houston 25th Anniversary Celebration + Big silver anniversary for Houston's favorite comedy event. cszhouston.com
Ice Land + *thru Jan. 10* Two million pounds of ice. moodygardens.org

15

24th Houston Turkish Festival + *14th and 15th* It's time to embrace the Turkish culture once again. houstonturkishfest.com

16

Susan G. Komen Houston Golf Classic + Putt for the Pink! komen-houston.org
Joe Turner Has Come and Gone ★ A celebration of Playwright August Wilson. ensemblehouston.com

17

Holiday Show at The Grand ★ *thru Jan. 9* *The Nutcracker*, *A Christmas Carol*, and more at The Grand. thegrand.com

18

Sister's Christmas Catechism ★ *thru Dec. 27* CSI meets the Bible. stages-theatre.com
The Twentieth-Century Way ★ *thru 22nd* Based on L.A. gay history. See page 55. thelabhou.org



20

Gender Reel Houston Film Festival ★ *thru 22nd* Transgender and gender-diverse film fest. See page 39. genderreelhouston.com
Winter Holiday Art & Market 📅 *thru 23rd* winterholidayartmarket.com

21

Discovery Green Flea + A destination market. discoverygreen.com
Houston Whatever Fest + *thru 22nd* Features food trucks, music, and more. houstonwhateverfest.com

22

Lyle the Crocodile ★ *thru Dec. 22* He's a singing and dancing reptile. mainstreettheater.com

23

Contingent Beauty: Contemporary Art from Latin America 📅 *thru Feb. 14* MFAH highlights contemporary Latin American art. mfah.org

24

Frostival + A winter celebration at Discovery Green. discoverygreen.com
The Ice + *thru Feb. 7* Ice skating comes to Discovery Green. discoverygreen.com

25

Thanksgiving with Santa + At the Children's Museum. cmhouston.org

26

66th Annual Thanksgiving Day Parade + Then go home and stuff yourself. houston.tx.gov/thanksgivingparade
Uptown Houston Holiday Lighting + ... then head for this party and lighting fest. uptown-houston.com

27

The Nutcracker ★ *thru Dec. 27* Classic holiday treat from Houston Ballet. houstonballet.org
Santa Sightings + *thru Dec. 27* Surfing Santas, a Santa race, more. galveston.com/holidaymagic

28

An Old English Christmas with Herman's Hermits, Starring Peter Noone ★ There's a kind of hush all over this holiday special. thegrand.com

29

Meet Santa's Reindeer! + At the Children's Museum. cmhouston.org



Dec 1

World AIDS Day + See page 29.





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Calendar of Events

continued from previous page

David Sedaris

November 7

7

One of America's preeminent humorists returns to Houston to share readings from new and unpublished works. If you only know him from the play version of his NPR essay *Santaland Diaries*, you should really go to see him in person. While his dry wit and scathing social commentary jump off the pages of his best-selling books, they come alive even more when he reads them on stage. Brought to you by the Society for the Performing Arts, one night only at Jones Hall.

spahouston.org



③ David Sedaris, seen here on *The Tonight Show*, visits Houston for one night this month.

Astrology Orchestra

November 14

14

In this symphonic performance project by Katie Grinnan at Rice University's James Turrell Skyspace, each instrument represents a planetary position and maps the artist's astrological birth chart as seen from the perspective of each planet. The performance starts at 3 p.m. and is free to the public. It is co-sponsored by DiverseWorks and Rice Public Art.

The performance is presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Katie Grinnan: Nocturnal Hologram*, on view at DiverseWorks through November 14.

diverseworks.org

Houston Whatever Fest

November 21-22

21-22

It's the most eclectic two-day festival in Houston's East End (around Warehouse Live), featuring live music, comedy, art, food trucks, and much more! This is the second annual fest, and this year features more than 90 acts—everything from DJs, bands, and stand-up comics, to wrestling matches and football on a giant TV. There are five stages, street performers, and a live painting competition. What more could you ask for? You can get an early-bird two-day pass for just \$45.

houstonwhateverfest.com ■

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Gun Crazy

Is that a gun in your backpack, or are you just unhappy to see me?

Our Texas Legislature, in its dastardly wisdom, has decided that one of the biggest problems in Texas is that we don't have nearly enough college-campus shootings.

Being bottom-notch problem solvers, the Republicans in the Texas Legislature pushed through a "campus carry" bill last summer. That means any 21-year-old student who takes a one-day class can strap on a holster or conceal a handgun under his coat and go on a college campus. After all, what Texas really needs is more 21-year-old frat boys out partying on Saturday night with a bottle of Jack Daniels and a damn gun.

I know you are wondering how the police (or anyone damn else) will be able to tell the good guy with a gun from the bad guy with a gun when they arrive on the scene. There's a solution for that problem. When this law goes into effect next year, the good guys on a college campus will wear white hats and the bad guys will wear black hats. People who are undecided on the whole good/bad issue will wear charming polka-dot hats. Honey, this could work as well as any other idea the Texas Legislature has ever come up with.

I love the University of Texas. Not only did they beat OU and bring home the Red River trophy, but they're also making news in an even more important way.

Hundreds of students at the University of Texas at Austin will protest the new law that will allow

more guns on campus, not with signs or sit-ins, but by strapping gigantic swinging dildos to their backpacks.

Their mantra? #CocksNotGlocks

They even have a Facebook page, y'all. This is a *thang*.

Now, if you're gonna protest with the students, I do need to inform you of the law. The Texas penal code reads, "A person who possesses six or more obscene devices or identical

Unlike guns, dildos can be elected to public office—just look at Texas.

or similar obscene articles is presumed to possess them with intent to promote the same."

So if you own six or more dildos, you're going to jail. If you own six or more guns, however, the NRA sends you a free Thanksgiving turkey.

Top 20 Ways a Dildo Is Better Than a Gun

1. People are rarely killed while cleaning their dildos.
2. Using a dildo to rob a store might work better than a gun. "Open the cash register and I'll use this" might result in more open cash registers. You never know.
3. You still have to hide a dildo from your mother and your children, so this point is a draw.
4. Like guns, comparing size would still be a thing.
5. The only way to stop a *bad girl* with a dildo is . . . umm . . . okay, gimme a second . . .
6. Dildos come in delightful colors. At least that's what I am told.
7. Most dildos don't set off metal detectors at airports.
8. Target practice is much more fun with a dildo.
9. You don't have to continually buy new ammunition for a dildo.
10. They can have my dildo when they pry it from my hot, sweaty hand . . .

11. Dildos: freeing people from the onus of having sex with Republicans.

12. Unlike guns, dildos can be elected to public office—just look at Texas.

13. I am not anti-dildo, but I'm not sure why peaceful citizens would need a dildo with a magazine that holds more than 10 batteries.

14. Laser sights aren't necessary for accurate dildo use.

15. You don't need a concealed dildo permit. Good thing, too, because your facial expression may give you away.

16. Sawed-off dildos are neither illegal nor desirable.

17. With dildos, "Go ahead, make my day" takes on a whole new meaning.

18. Drive-by dildos are practically unheard of, and never result in innocent victims being killed.

19. If someone comes onto campus with half a dozen dildos and starts using them on the quad, umm . . . I'm guessing nobody dies.

20. One is a substitute for an adequately sized phallus; the other is a dildo.

21. (One final bonus reason, to make you want to hit me.) Darlin', it's Texas. You have the right to armadillo.

Susan Bankston lives in Richmond, Texas, where she writes about her hairdresser at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc., at juanitajeane.com.



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Living within Your Means

And what about your savings?



It seems that more and more lately, people tend to have more month left at the end of their money—and unfortunately, that isn't a very good strategy for investing for the future. Setting the course for a comfortable retirement—which includes having ample investments from which to draw income—starts by having good savings habits. Good savings habits start by living within your means.

Determining Needs Versus Wants

To truly live within your means, you need to spend less each month than what you bring in. But for many people, this is much easier said than done. In addition to basic living expenses, such as rent or mortgage, utilities, and transportation, there are usually a lot of other items that are vying for your money's attention.

New clothes, a weekend vacation to Vegas, concert tickets—it all adds up. And while you might like to take part in all of the above, you really need to determine what is truly a *need* versus just a *want*.

Avoiding Debt—Your Biggest Enemy to Wealth

Over the years, retailers have made it easier to purchase things—whether we really need them or not. “Buy now, pay later” promotions, along with easy access to credit, have allowed people to rack up impulse purchases at an unprecedented pace. Unfortunately, this has also led to a substantial amount of debt.

According to credit.com, the average credit card balance sits at just under \$3,800. But that's just an average—which means there are many people who carry a significantly larger amount of high-interest debt. Without paying off credit cards in full every month, unpaid balances can literally snowball out of control if you aren't careful.

Staying out of debt, however, means saving for big purchases rather than buying items today on credit. For example, instead of buying a \$1,200 smart TV now, set aside \$100 per month and purchase it with cash next year.

Living within your means also involves waiting for items to go on sale rather than buying at full price, using coupons, and shopping around.

When you think about it, doing this can really add up. Even if you just save \$20 per week on groceries or other items, that's a savings of more than \$1,000 per year. Those saved funds can then be invested for the future.

When paying down your debt, it's often a good strategy to pay off the high-interest items first, ridding yourself of debt that is costing you more before moving on to the lower-interest obligations.

But even if you're currently carrying a heavy debt load, there are still ways that you can start—or continue—to save for the future. By cutting out unnecessary expenses such as going out to eat, premium cable channels, and other extras—even if it's only temporarily—you can shift those dollars over into more of a savings ca-

capacity. It's amazing how much extra money can be “found” when we actually focus on finding it.

Live for Today, but Plan and Save for Tomorrow

While living in the moment is important, planning for the future is also crucial in order to ensure that you will have the financial means to pay your living expenses once your employer's paycheck stops when you retire.

The best way to move forward is to have a well-defined plan. By setting specific goals, you will be better able to determine how much you need to accomplish your objectives. In the case of saving for retirement, you should initially get an idea of how much you may need in terms of living expenses. From there, you can determine what it will take to generate that much in retirement income.

For example, if you determine that you will need \$40,000 per year (before taxes) in order to live the retirement lifestyle that you desire, then it would require approximately \$1 million (in today's dollars) in order to generate that.

Although \$1 million may sound like a lot of money, it really isn't. Because people are living longer than ever before, it isn't unusual to see retirement last 20 or more years. With that in mind, \$1 million may not even be enough for some people.

And because defined-benefit pension plans are quickly disappearing (and Social Security is actually becoming “Social Insecurity” for many younger folks), it's clear that the earlier people start saving for themselves, the better. →

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continued from page 20

One way to help yourself in planning for tomorrow is to take advantage of your company's retirement plan—if you have that option. Many companies will also provide at least some amount of matching contribution for their participants. This is essentially “free money.”

Pre-tax retirement-account contributions will also help to lower your taxable income—yet another key advantage to these types of plans. And because the funds in these plans are allowed to grow tax-deferred, the power of compounding can essentially work exponentially on your invested funds.

One way to gauge approximately how long it will take your money to double at a given rate of return is through the Rule of 72. Using this rule, divide the return into 72, and the result will be the number of years that it takes. As an example, if your investments are returning 7.2 percent, then it would take approximately 10 years for your money to double (72 divided by 7.2 equals 10).

Taking the Right Steps toward a Prosperous Financial Future

While many people don't realize just how much it takes in order to generate a comfortable retirement income, the good news is that if you don't yet have enough saved (or if you are behind and need to catch up), there are a number of savings and investment vehicles and strategies available that can help.

For instance, depending on your income, putting money into a Roth IRA allows you to take advantage of tax-free growth, along with tax-free withdrawals in retirement. For those who earn over the income limit (\$116,000 for singles and \$183,000 for married couples filing jointly in 2015), there are Roth IRA alternatives that will allow you to deposit more than the annual IRA plan limit into an investment, and also take advantage of tax-free withdrawal methods.

The plan that is right for you should be based on your specific needs and goals, and should be developed with the assistance of a professional who can work with you on all of your potential options. Given the many changes with regard to marriage equality over the past few years, it is often best to work with an advisor who is also well versed in how the new laws affect the tax and financial issues of the LGBT community.

Personal finance-related questions may be emailed to grace.yung@lpl.com.

Grace S. Yung, CFP, is a certified financial planner practitioner with experience in helping domestic partners plan their finances since 1994. She is a principal at Midtown Financial LLC in Houston and was recognized as a “Five-Star Wealth Manager” in the 2014 September issue of Texas Monthly.

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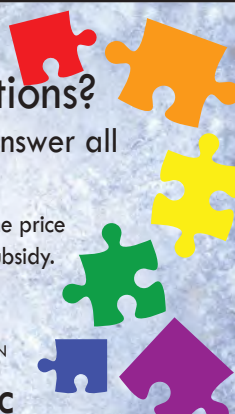
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November 7: Lesbian Health Initiative Fall 2015 offering complimentary lifesaving tests and services. INFO: lhihouston.org

SAVE THE DATE

December 1: World AIDS Day Events. See page 29 for details.

December 5: HIV and Aging Coalition 2015 Christmas Party, 7 p.m. The Montrose Center, 401 Branard Street.

December 6: Bayou City Performing Arts presents **A Merry Midwinter's Air**, a holiday concert. INFO: bcpahouston.org

December 10: Out@TUTS Night presents **A Christmas Story: The Musical**. Join us the first Thursday performance of each show. After the performance, mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your LGBT friends. INFO: tuts.com/out

December 31: Lumiere Nouveau, A New Year's Masquerade, presented by Pride Houston, benefiting various LGBT charities. INFO: pridehouston.org

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MONTROSE



The Status of a Healthy Relationship

Relationship gurus
David and Johnny
go online.

By Bradley Donalson

With World AIDS Day approaching next month, it is good to know that people are still fighting to inform the public about HIV/AIDS prevention. It's even better to know that some people are still taking the time to fight for relationships between people with different HIV statuses (also known as serodiscordant couples). And maybe the best thing to know is that there are people who treat everyone the same, regardless of their HIV status. One couple that does all of the above is David and Johnny.

David L. Massey Jr. was born in Chicago and now lives in Atlanta as a management and program analyst with the Centers for Disease Control's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention. When he's not busy with the CDC, he serves as the director of music for a church in Atlanta and has traveled the world as part of his music ministry.

This advocate for AIDS/HIV awareness and prevention recently spoke at the Voice Your Invisible Wounds Conference

held in the Norris Conference Center at Houston City Centre on September 25. He urged conference-goers to talk to their children about being careful and informed about HIV and preventative drugs such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP).

Johnny T. Lester Jr. is originally from Nashville, but has made a name for himself in Atlanta as a brand manager for Dr. Sherry, the celebrity psychologist from WETV's *Braxton Family Values*, Bravo TV's *Real Housewives of Atlanta*, and *Essence* magazine. As a "marketing concierge," he has been a fashion consultant for Ricky

Mixing professionalism with personal warmth, the duo has created a completely real and accessible product that connects them to their audience.



David L. Massey Jr. (l) and Johnny T. Lester Jr. first met in Atlanta in 2013. A serodiscordant couple, they now use their online presence to educate and spread awareness of issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

Love Without Limits

Smiley, Tyler Lepley, Kevin Hart, Rafael Amaya, Bria Murphy, Brooklyn Tankard, and Evette Holyfield. Lester also works with the Edge Empowerment Foundation as a mental-health advocate to help reduce the stigma of mental illness in underserved communities, and he has previously worked with the Black Women's Health Imperative to raise awareness and education about HIV/AIDS. Lester tells OUT-

SMART that he and Massey have been invited to be a part of the planning committee for an HIV conference in Atlanta next year.

These two men met in 2013 in Atlanta through a mutual connection when Lester was working on a potential reality TV project. After talking for hours on the phone each day for several days, they decided to meet for their first date—though to hear them relate the story, only one of them considered it a date. As the two were chatting after dinner, Massey disclosed that he was HIV positive. People who are positive need to provide information that inspires trust when beginning a relationship

with someone, Massey tells OUTSMART. But apparently he gave Lester more information than he knew what to do with, causing Lester to speak with his doctor about what it all meant. After educating himself with the facts, Lester made good on his offer to help Massey move to a different part of town. Lester helped Massey pack up his house and even ended up unpacking things at the other end. (Massey does admit to wondering, "Where has this man been all my life?") Their relationship has been going strong ever since.

The couple has an online presence with their website davidandjohnny.org, as well as on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram under the handle @DavidandJohnny. The duo is also getting ready to celebrate the one-year anniversary of their YouTube channel called David Johnny. They started their channel as a way to give people insight into issues that come up in their relationship, dispense advice, and have conversations with their audience. Over the course of the year, they have begun focusing their advocacy on social issues such as HIV-positive youth. These men are both funny and informative while maintaining a relaxed →

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STATUS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

continued from previous page

attitude about what they are doing. They say that their message is universal and not limited by orientation, age, race, status, or gender. "Love is all-encompassing, all-inclusive," Massey says. "And if you have things that have to be managed, that's just part of the process." They aim their message at parents, youth, women, men, people who are married, and people who are still single, and they cover topics such as dating, communication, family, personal grooming, finance, and more.

Mixing professionalism with personal warmth, the duo has created a completely real and accessible product that connects them to their audience. After visiting their website, watching their videos, and seeing them speak about their lives and relationship, you get the feeling that they are your close friends, inviting you into a place where you can learn about and discuss topics of daily living. And while they admit that they are far from perfect, they always seem to have good advice about relationships.

If you'd like to know more, you can find David and Johnny on their website (davidandjohnny.org), YouTube, and all over social media.

Bradley Donalson is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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World AIDS Day 2015

Houston events.

By Marene Gustin

In this era of drugs and treatment, it may be hard for younger LGBT folks to remember when HIV/AIDS was a death sentence and the disease was a worldwide pandemic.

But it's still a serious threat around the world, which is why it's important to honor World AIDS Day this December 1. The first global-health day was held in 1988, but the day is just as important in 2015 as it was then. If you want to know why it is more relevant than ever and what you can do to help, check out worldaidsday.org.

In Houston, there are several events you can attend while wearing your red ribbon.

World AIDS Day Luncheon

AIDS Foundation Houston hosts the annual luncheon, held this year at the Post Oak Hilton. There is a champagne reception on **December 1** at 11 a.m., and the luncheon starts at noon.



Pam Grier

The keynote speaker will be Pam Grier (one of the stars of *The L Word*), who has been a spokeswoman for Dining Out for Life for the last five years. See aidshep.org for tickets.

Legacy Community Health

Legacy offers several observances for World AIDS Day this year, including the Red Ribbon Light Display at Legacy Montrose from November 28 through December 1. You can see this beautiful exhibit at the Montrose Legacy location. The community health center also offers free HIV testing on the following days:

- **November 31**
11 a.m.–6 p.m. at Legacy Montrose

• December 1

11 a.m.–6 p.m. at Legacy Montrose and 5 p.m.–9 p.m. at Eagle Houston

• December 2

11 a.m.–6 p.m. at Legacy Montrose and 4 p.m.–8 p.m. at Walgreens, 3317 Montrose Blvd.

On **December 1**, they co-host the World AIDS Day Candlelight Observance with songs performed by the kids from TUTS' *Rent* along the walk. The event starts at 6 p.m. and runs until 7 p.m. at Legacy Montrose, co-sponsored by The Montrose Center. You can find out more at legacycommunityhealth.org.

The Montrose Center

After the walk, co-sponsor The Montrose Center will show a screening of the film *How to Survive a Plague* in room 106 at the center starting at 7:30 p.m. This Oscar-nominated documentary chronicles the early days of the disease in America.

For more information on World AIDS Day, log on to worldaidsday.org.

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By Alan Nyitray, PhD
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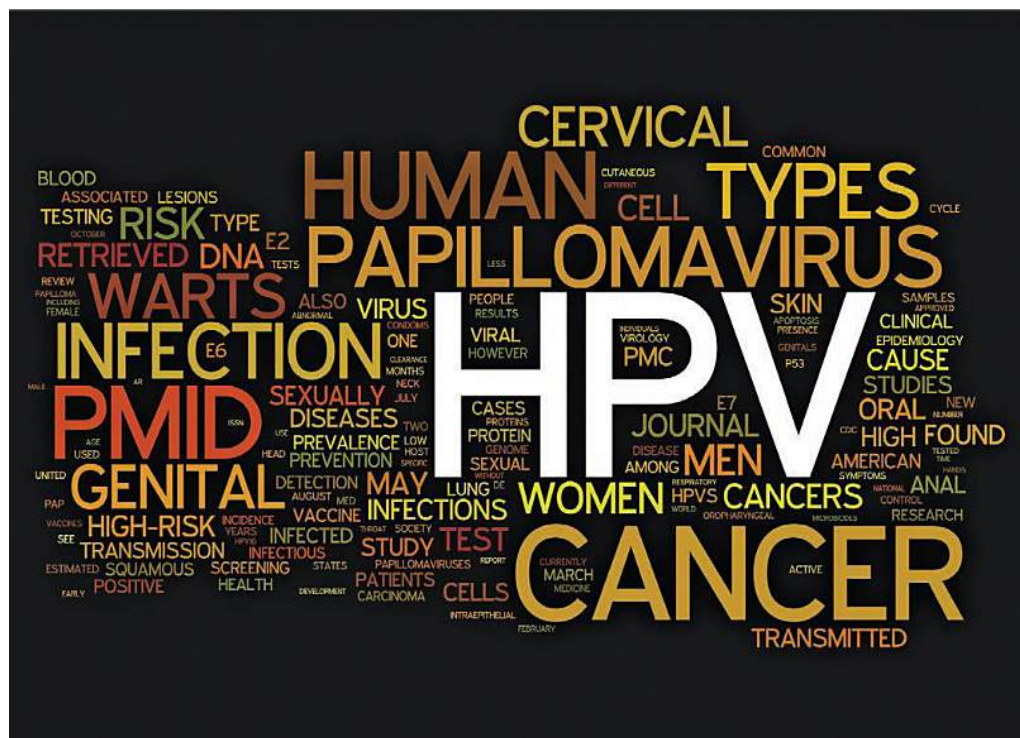
It's possible that you've been seeing more news items about HPV recently. That's because doctors and scientists are learning more about how HPV affects men. Hopefully you've read about the new HPV vaccines and how they could be really important for the prevention of HPV.

But many gay men don't know much about HPV or its role in causing anal cancer, and that may complicate efforts to prevent HPV disease in our communities.

The good news is that every day we are discovering more about HPV, cancer, and gay men. And you can be a part of these discoveries! The University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston, with the help of the medical practice of Dr. Gordon Crofoot, is currently conducting a study to teach gay men how to take their health into their own hands (quite literally). So here's a little background about HPV and how you can get involved in this exciting research.

HPV—a Remarkably Common Disease

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is the most common sexually transmitted disease. It's known now that almost all people—both gay



Get Screened

While it's important for all gay men to get regular HPV screenings, it is especially crucial for men with HIV. Some healthcare providers feel that all men who have receptive anal sex should consider regular screening for anal cancer.

and heterosexual—will get HPV at some point in their lives. It's just part of being a sexually active human. But most of us will never know we had HPV because we won't have any symptoms, and our bodies usually clear the virus

within a few months (or maybe as long as a year or two). In this way, it's very different from HIV.

While most of us will never know we had HPV, a small percentage of men will get one or more warts on the genitals, in the anus, or on the surrounding skin. While some men may be embarrassed by this, the warts can be treated if they don't go away by themselves, and there's no long-term physical danger from them. They *are* infectious, however, and if another guy's penis, scrotum,

etc., touches these warts, it's very easy for him to develop an HPV infection and possibly a wart. Unfortunately, HPV can be transmitted even when warts aren't present—it just takes close physical contact with skin that is HPV-infected. (By the way, did you ever get a wart on your hand when you were a kid? Or did you ever get a wart on the sole of your foot after walking barefoot in a gym locker room? Those are caused by a different type of HPV.)

HPV and Cancer

HPV doesn't just cause warts. Certain types of HPV can also cause cancer, and the best estimates indicate that about 1 in 1,000 gay men may get anal cancer this year. HPV causes cervical cancer in women, and several hundred thousand women worldwide die of cervical →

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HPV, CANCER, AND GAY MEN

continued from previous page

cancer every year. In the United States and other countries that are rich enough to have widespread screening, there are far fewer deaths from cervical cancer. But still, several thousand U.S. women die every year from the disease. Most of these women would not have died if they had had regular Pap tests that screen for cervical cancer. Lesbians and bisexual women can get cervical cancer, too, and it's just as important for them to get regular screening as it is for other women.

Gay men are at especially high risk for cancers caused by HPV. In fact, in the United States, gay men are more likely to get HPV-caused cancer than women are to get cervical cancer. It's stunning, but one of your gay male friends is more likely to get anal cancer than your sister or mother is to get cervical cancer.

Anal cancer usually starts with an HPV infection in the anal canal that is not cleared by our immune system. The infection may start in us after receptive anal intercourse with a guy who has HPV on his penis—although you don't have to have receptive anal sex to get HPV in your anus. (See heterosexual men, below.) A guy once said to me, "So anal sex causes anal cancer?" The answer is that just as a penis is responsible for transmitting HPV to a woman's cervix, it can also transmit HPV to the anal canal.

For the record, women also get anal cancer; in fact, more women in the U.S. will get anal cancer this year than will men, and you may remember that Farah Fawcett had anal cancer. But gay men are at much higher risk for anal cancer than are women. In fact, at any given point in time, maybe 50 percent or more of us have anal HPV. But remember, most of these infections will clear up on their own, so only a small percentage of gay men with anal-canal HPV infection will be at risk for cancer down the road. (Interestingly, research shows that about 10 to 15 percent of heterosexual men have HPV in their anus. How it got there is still unclear, although it's probably not because they had receptive anal sex.)

So what can we do to avoid anal cancer? Quite a bit, in fact. HPV cannot penetrate a latex condom, so those may reduce the risk of anal-canal HPV infection (and given their ability to prevent HIV infection, they make a lot of sense). Several studies also show that men who have fewer sexual partners are less likely to have anal-canal HPV. The Gardasil HPV vaccine also effectively prevents infection with the types of HPV that are most likely to cause both warts and anal cancer. The vaccine is approved for use in men younger than 27. Older guys can probably still get the vaccine, although it may be less effective. It is expensive—several hundred dollars—and it may not be effective if you already have the type of HPV that is prevented by the vaccine. (Remember, HPV is very, very

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common.) If you're lucky enough to have a healthcare provider, talk to him or her about the vaccine to see if it could help you. Also, if you have health insurance, it probably covers the vaccine's cost if you're younger than 27.

University of Texas School of Public Health Research

So what's the best thing to do for those of us older than 27? First, get a regular digital anal-rectal exam (DARE) from your healthcare provider. These can find anal cancer early, when it's easy to treat. And this is where the University of Texas comes in. Our study is looking at whether we can teach gay men to screen themselves or their partners for anal cancer and other anal diseases. Right now, we are looking for gay couples to come into our Friday clinic at Dr. Crofoot's office. There, we teach participants how to do an anal exam, ask them to take a couple of surveys, and then see how the results of their own exams stack up against a trained professional's. All it takes is about two hours of your time on a Friday afternoon, and in return you get a free HPV exam, a free anal Pap test, and monetary compensation.

And there's another benefit: helping increase knowledge about gay men's health. You see, even though anal cancer is an increasingly common disease among gay and bisexual men, there are no guidelines for anal cancer screening in the U.S. On top of that, most medical schools don't train doctors to do anal Pap tests that can identify abnormal, possibly cancerous cells. There's not even an FDA-approved test for anal HPV.

By participating in this study, we can begin to take the screening process into our own hands. Self and partner-assisted anal exams aren't meant to replace doctors and nurses, but just like feeling for a lump in your testicles, the goal is to find the problem early when it can still be easily treated. As with screening for cervical cancer, screening for anal cancer can prevent most cases of the disease. In fact, some healthcare providers feel that all men who have receptive anal sex should talk to their doctor and seriously consider regular screening for anal cancer. Screening can identify changes

in the tissue of the anal canal that could lead to cancer if not treated.

HPV and HIV

Gay men are much more likely to get HIV infection than we are to get anal cancer. Best estimates are that about 5 in 1,000 gay men in the U.S. will get HIV this year—and men with HIV who have a suppressed immune system are at greater risk for anal cancer. (This is also the case with people who have a suppressed immune system due to drugs given during an organ transplant.) While it's important for all gay men to get regular HPV screenings, it is especially crucial for men with HIV, so that changes in their anal canal can be caught before they proceed to anal cancer.

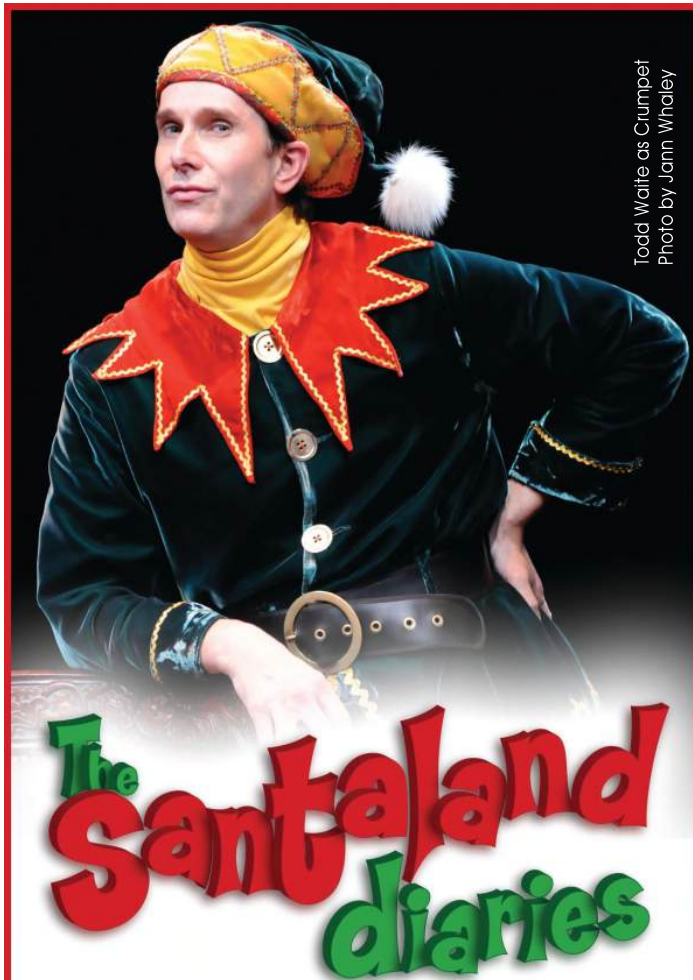
HPV causes other cancers, too, including cancer of the penis and of the throat. But there is even less known about these conditions than there is about anal cancer.

For more than 25 years, gay and bisexual men have been dealing with the threat of HIV. But we also know that HIV isn't the only threat to our health. Other issues (like the threats of violence, discrimination in the workplace, and drug and alcohol dependence) are just part of the reality of being a gay man in the United States. And for the most part, we've been successful in navigating our way through this minefield. We get through it by learning how to take active steps to avoid things, or relying on one of our brothers to help us navigate the system. And sometimes, we've just been lucky.

It's no different with the cancers caused by HPV.

Interested in participating in our study? Give us a call at 832.977.2350 or shoot us an email at SAEStudy@uth.tmc.edu.

Questions? Dr. Alan Nyitray can be reached at alan.g.nyitray@uth.tmc.edu. Dr. Nyitray is an assistant professor and epidemiologist at the University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston. Dr. Joseph Hicks is a veterinarian (it's a long story) and the study coordinator for the Self and Partner-Assisted Anal Exam study at the University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston. He can be reached at joseph.t.hicks@uth.tmc.edu.



Todd Waite as Crumpet
Photo by Jann Whaley

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Home for the Holidays

For the LGBT community, the holidays can trigger feelings of loneliness at family gatherings.

By Januari Leo

The holidays are a time that generally evokes warm feelings: the smell of pine needles and sugar cookies, sitting around the fire exchanging gifts with family and friends, and reminiscing about past escapades. For the LGBT community, though, the holidays usually involve family gatherings where they are the only gay or transgender person in the house, which can lead to feelings of being different and alone.

"I remember seeing a book on a bookshelf titled *The Sin of Homosexuality* in our church bookstore when I was 11," says Jaime Cryer. "I snuck back in to read it in the dark, trying to figure out how to get rid of what was wrong with me."

Cryer came out in 2012, after two marriages and four kids. "Five years ago, I would have never thought I'd be here; I would have laughed in your face," he says.

But he reached a point in his life when he had to make a decision to either live or die. "I was miserable, and I wanted to end my life," he says. "I

even had a plan. The day I planned to do it, I was pacing the floor and crying, and my phone rang. It was my favorite aunt, calling to let me know that I had been on her mind. When she asked me what was wrong, I told her I couldn't tell. After she finally got it out of me, she said that she didn't care."

After he told his aunt, Cryer was faced with the difficult task of talking to his sister, his twin brother, and finally his wife. While his sister and aunt have remained supportive, his

"There can be a lot of shame associated with going back to a place where you can't be yourself."

mother has struggled, and his father doesn't want to be confronted. "I used to talk to my brother a few times a week. Now we can go months [without speaking]," Cryer says.

Raised in a large, fundamentalist Christian family where holiday celebrations are a big deal, Cryer feels the tension when he goes home and doesn't generally feel welcome.

Therapist Tony Aucoin, LCSW, says that this is not unusual. "When returning home for the holidays, people who are LGBT often wonder how much of themselves they need to hide. There can be a lot of shame associated with going back to a place where you can't be yourself."

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), factors such as verbal and physical harassment, negative experiences related to coming out when there is little family acceptance, substance use, and isolation all contribute to higher rates of suicide attempts among gay men and youth. Multiple studies

have shown that depression and anxiety affect gay men at a higher rate than the general population. Lesbian and bisexual women were 2 to 2.5 times more likely than heterosexual women to experience suicidal ideation in the past 12 months.

Mental-health issues can be compounded during the holidays, when expectations about family gatherings are particularly high. According to Aucoin, "There is always an influx of calls to my office immediately after the holidays. Even when families are accepting, there can still be a loaded response. Just because you come out doesn't mean the baggage goes away."

Last year, when Cryer went home for the first time since coming out, he experienced first-hand how difficult the transition could be. "It felt awkward; I could tell things weren't right with my mom," he says. "My dad wouldn't even come. Everyone knew why he wasn't there, but no one would say anything." His father also made it clear that Cryer's boyfriend, Jonathan, was not invited. "I was faced with either having to go alone, or dividing the family," he explains. →



Thanksgiving Family Dinner

When families get together for the holidays, things rarely go as planned. While carving the Thanksgiving turkey, Robert Downey Jr.'s character in Jodie Foster's dramedy *Home for the Holidays* accidentally lets the bird fall into his sister's lap. But for LGBT folks traveling home for the holidays, family time with unaccepting relatives can prove more awkward than a renegade bird. As therapist Tony Aucoin says, "The freedom of knowing that this isn't going to last forever is helpful."



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HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

continued from previous page

Because his partner is not welcome, Cryer finally decided not to attend family holidays. "I missed my twin brother's daughter's high school graduation," he says. "I said if I can't be myself, I don't want to go. I just don't care anymore."

Aucoin notes that seeing a therapist before the holidays to develop a self-care plan can be helpful in staving off holiday-related mental-health issues. "First, remember that you always have a choice of whether or not to go, even if it doesn't feel like it," he says. "Second, it's a good idea to have an exit plan. The freedom of knowing that this isn't going to last forever is helpful." Other suggestions for a smoother visit include:

- Before your visit, make arrangements to call a good friend who can share your concerns and pump you up. After the visit, ask your friend to help you process what took place.
 - Stay at a hotel rather than in the family home.
 - Set limits on the amount of time you are willing to spend visiting.
 - Shorten the trip—quality time can be more important than simply hanging around.
 - Set your own expectations—trying to manage others' issues can cause anxiety.
 - Find a family member who you really enjoy spending time with, and use that person to help blow off steam.
 - Spend time with your "family of choice."
- Have a second Christmas or Thanksgiving observance with your friends, where everyone brings leftovers from their family holidays to share and unwind.

Another issue to be aware of during the holidays is overuse of drugs and/or alcohol. According to SAMHSA, LGBT individuals use alcohol and illicit drugs at a higher rate than the general population. Aucoin warns against relying on substances in emotionally charged situations. "Often, the whole family is doing it, so it is socially acceptable," he says. "But when we use drugs and alcohol to manage an emotional state, we're opening up a box of worms."

Substance use can make you feel better, which is both a good and bad thing. Aucoin says to ask yourself, "Am I having a drink to celebrate with my family, or to manage anxiety and depression?"

While Cryer has found a great level of acceptance from Jonathan's family, he still feels a general sense of sadness around the holidays because he is not included in his family's holiday gatherings. "I feel ostracized, because holidays were always a big deal," he says. "I actually dread the holidays, because it is so different from how it was. It's hard when you see pictures of everyone together. It stings."

Januari Leo is the director of public affairs for Legacy Community Health. You can follow her on Twitter a-t @januarileo.

America's Boyfriend

Or Santa Claus?

By Donalevan Maines

His fans call him “America’s Boyfriend,” but this holiday season, Frank Gonzalez wants to play Santa Claus in Mexico. The former Mr. Texas Unlimited, who parlayed that title to organize a school-supplies drive for children living with HIV and/or affected by HIV, is collecting toys and clothes from Houstonians to take to a Mexican orphanage.

“This will happen on December 12, which is the Our Lady of Guadalupe [celebration in Mexico],” explains Gonzalez. “It is a very important pre-Christmas festival, and we will have clowns and music and a posada.”

He calls the program Buddies Without Borders. It will benefit children at the Casa Hogar Oasis de los Niños orphanage in Sabinas Hidalgo, Nuevo Leon. “The orphanage receives zero help from the Mexican government,” explains Gonzalez. “Their monthly donations for the children from residents are \$150, and that has to pay for food, school supplies, utility bills, and much more. It is so sad because they usually make themselves a toy that they all have to share, so it breaks within days.”

Gonzalez, who is 32 and single, was born in Monterrey, Mexico, before moving to Bellaire at age 7. As a child, he accompanied his father, a doctor of general medicine, on humanitarian aid trips to Venezuela. “We met people with little to no income, who were ill,” he says.

In addition, he often crossed paths with the reigning Miss Venezuela, who would be visiting volunteer clinics as part of her duties as a beauty queen and goodwill ambassador. “I was just amazed,” says Gonzalez, who now lives in Pearland. “[These pageant winners] were six-foot-tall, beautiful ‘Glamazons’ who would

“It is so sad because they usually make themselves a toy that they all have to share, so it breaks within days.”



Bringing Christmas Joy

On December 12, former Mr. Texas Unlimited Frank Gonzalez will deliver toys and clothing to the Casa Hogar Oasis de los Niños orphanage in Mexico through his newly established Buddies Without Borders program.

walk into a room, and suddenly it would feel like a palace. These were girls who might have come from the slums, but when they became Miss Venezuela, they were adorned with so much beauty. I was fascinated by how much power and influence they had, to bring smiles to the faces of the patients.”

Gonzalez hopes to make a merry Christmas for the 30 or so children at the Mexican orphanage. But his mission, crossing into Mexico loaded with presents, might not be as easy as it sounds.

In July, Gonzalez posted his plan on Facebook in a video appeal to launch the toy drive. Friends and fans immediately wanted to get involved, but Gonzalez knew there would be obstacles.

First, he knew he would have to personally deliver the toys to the orphanage so the government wouldn’t misdirect them. He managed to get an official letter from his cousin—the newly elected mayor of Sabinas Hidalgo—that should allow him to carry the toys across the border at Laredo. “The orphan-

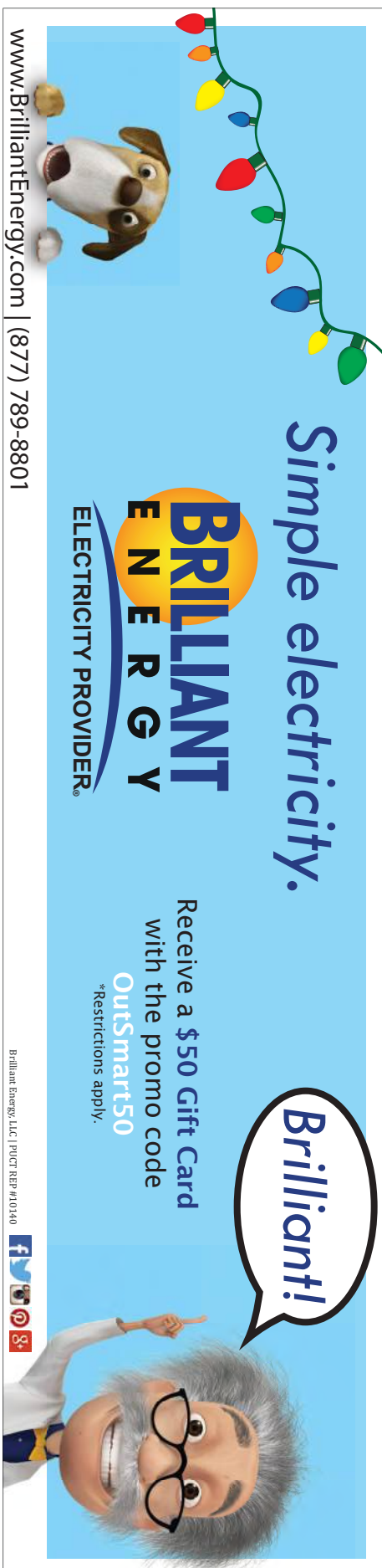


age is a three-hour drive into Mexico, so I still have to arrange for some kind of security and figure out how we are going to transport the merchandise,” he explains.

In 1999, his mother, a nurse, collected more than 200 toys for children in her hometown of Sardina, Mexico, but when she arrived with them, along with a huge donation of sweet treats from a bakery, Gonzalez says, “she was greeted by DIF, the National System for Integral Family Development. Once the media arrived, El DIF took credit for all of the toy donations.” Gonzalez wants to make sure that kids at the orphanage know this year’s gifts come from Houstonians.

For several years, Gonzalez has worked as a community health worker for St. Hope Foundation, visiting homeless shelters, food pantries, drug recovery centers, and halfway houses to test people for sexually transmitted diseases. “We offer free HIV and syphilis testing,” he says. “Persons who test positive are then referred for treatment at our clinic, or any other clinic in the community.”

Gonzalez enjoys his work in the medical field, but longs to return to a dream job in →



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AMERICA'S BOYFRIEND

continued from previous page

the media. "I am fascinated by cameras and lights," he says.

Once, while volunteering at an ABC Channel 13 telethon for the Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the late newscaster Alan Hemberger asked Gonzalez if he would translate into Spanish what Hemberger was going to say to viewers after the break. "Sure, I would love to be on TV," Gonzalez recalls saying to Hemberger.

Gonzalez was so good that Hemberger said, "Wow! We are going to have to do this again!"

"We kept doing it throughout the telethon, and I was invited back two more years after that," says Gonzalez.

While Hemberger also appeared as "Alan Arthur" on *Entertainment Tonight*, Gonzalez says he recently declined an offer to work as a reporter on a TMZ-style program on Spanish-language television, called *The Office Chisme*. ("Chisme" is a Spanish word for "gossip.") "That is not my cup of tea," he explains.

However, two media gigs he did enjoy were reporting fashion and entertainment news on *Dia Delivery*, a magazine-style show, and hosting the program *Love with Pasión* (or "passion").

Giving relationship advice to callers, Gonzalez says, "is where I obtained the nickname of 'America's Boyfriend.' The network is called Mi Casa Broadcasting Network, but when the station moved to Los Angeles, I stayed here in Houston. I am still waiting for another TV offer that is just right."

To contact Gonzalez about contributing to the clothes and toy drive, email buddieswithoutborders@yahoo.com. The orphanage, Casa Hogar Oasis de los Niños, also has a Facebook page.

Donalevan Maines also writes about Theatre LaB Houston in this issue of OutSmart.



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Trans Cinema Takes Houston

Gender Reel film and art festival makes its Bayou City debut.

By Megan Smith

Transgender, intersex, and genderqueer experiences on film? Yep, Gender Reel has it all. The nationwide traveling film and art festival dedicated to showcasing gender-nonconforming, gender-variant, queer, and transgender identities is making its first-ever stop in Houston on November 20–22.

Founded by trans activist Joe Ippolito, Gender Reel held its first festival in Philadelphia in 2011 with the goal of increasing visibility for experiences that fall under the trans umbrella. Since then, the festival has expanded exponentially, spreading to cities such as Boston, Minneapolis, and Omaha. “As someone who does work with film festivals, I am incredibly surprised at how quickly this has grown,” says Koomah, an organizer of Gender Reel Houston.

Koomah—who has regularly interacted with Ippolito at the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference—has been in talks for a few years about increasing the festival’s Southern presence and bringing it to Houston. With the help of fellow organizers Jay Mays and Stephanie Saint Sanchez, and with funding from the Idea Fund and the Houston Arts Alliance, the Houston festival is now a reality. “This whole film festival is totally community-funded through the arts community and the City of Houston,” Koomah says, noting that the funding has also allowed for all festival events to be free and open to the public.

Each of the festival’s organizers—who have brought both trans and non-trans perspectives to the table—has worked hard to curate a diverse program schedule. The lineup is pulled from a broad range of submissions, and features everything from professionally shot films to amateur pieces filmed on iPhones. Don’t expect the festival to simply look like an episode of *I Am Cait* either. “I think so often you have organizations

“I think so often you have organizations or people on TV that present a very one-sided view of what being trans looks like.”

or people on TV that present a very one-sided view of what being trans looks like,” Koomah says. “One of the things about having a film festival that highlights transgender people and issues is that it gives a voice to the people who so often don’t get to share their experiences. And through sharing those experiences, they can hopefully help people better understand what being trans is like from their own [perspective].”

Gender Reel Houston kicks off with the festival’s general film showcase on Friday, November 20, at 6:30 p.m. at Rice Media Center.

The evening will include a variety of short films and a screening of Sam Feder’s *Kate Bornstein Is a Queer & Pleasant Danger*, which highlights the

life of transgender theorist, author, and 2015 Houston Transgender Unity Banquet keynote speaker Kate Bornstein.

Saturday’s Southern showcase brings a local flare to the festival. The program—which begins at 9 p.m. at Frenetic Theater following the Houston Trans Day of Remembrance—highlights visual artists, filmmakers, and performers from the South. In addition to Hous-

ton artists, several participants will be crossing state lines to take part in the showcase. “It’s really going to be a wide range of things,” Koomah says, explaining that the night will include spoken-word poetry, performance art, burlesque, gender performance, drag, monologues, paintings, sculptures, photography, and more.

Gender Reel Houston is especially excited to include live performances in the festival, Koomah says, and to be able to compensate the artists for their work. “For artists, that’s always a big deal. They’ll have the opportunity to sell their art and keep 100 percent of the sales, which is really unheard of. And for trans people, that’s huge. Trans artists don’t have a lot of visibility, and transgender people have one of the highest unemployment rates. So anything that brings money to transgender people—specifically transgender artists and performers—and gets them exposure is so impactful for the community.”

Sunday marks the festival’s family-friendly event, happening from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Montrose Center. All of that day’s featured content will be rated “G” and “PG” and includes animation, pieces aimed at trans and gender-variant youth, and more. The family-friendly event will be pay-what-you-can, with all →



Grab Your Popcorn

Gender Reel premieres in Houston for the first time on November 20–22. Pictured are festival organizers (l–r) Stephanie Saint Sanchez, Koomah, and Jay Mays.



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TRANS CINEMA TAKES HOUSTON

continued from previous page

proceeds benefiting the Montrose Center's HATCH Youth program. The festival is proud to give back to the same program that first got Koomah, a former HATCH kid, involved in art. "We're using our presence to give back to the community," Koomah says.

"We're really trying to reach a bunch of different demographics with this [festival]," Koomah adds. "Obviously there is a focus on the trans, gender-diverse, and intersex communities, but we're also trying to reach people in the arts community, straight friends and allies, and the LGB community as well."

With this year's Gender Reel Houston poised for success, Koomah and fellow organizers are already looking ahead to the festival's future. "We got funding this year, but aren't eligible for the same funding next year," Koomah explains. "So anyone who wants to support this, let us know!"

For more information, a full festival schedule, or to contact Gender Reel Houston organizers, visit genderreelfest.com/?page_id=3456 or [facebook.com/genderreelhouston](https://www.facebook.com/genderreelhouston). Although submissions for Gender Reel Houston are now closed, artists interested in having their work considered can still submit to the national festival at genderreelfest.com.



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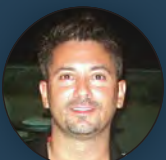


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Reimagining Home

Tiny homes—they're worth exploring.

By Karen Derr

As evidenced by the popularity of television shows with names like *You Live in What?* and *Tiny House Nation*, alternative housing is a topic with wide appeal these days. Convert an old grocery store or a washateria to be your home, and programmers hungry for fresh content will beat a path to your door.

Here in Houston, shipping-container homes and unusual conversions spur our imaginations at home tours and showcases. There is even a local Tiny House Meetup Group hoping to get local government entities on board with tiny homes. And make no mistake: this movement is about efficiency of both space and money. An article in the *Houston Chronicle* earlier this year drew criticism from readers when the newspaper included in the article photos of small Heights bungalows (less than 1,000 square feet), which were currently on the market in the \$300,000 and \$400,000s.

Although most Houston homeowners still opt for “stick and brick” construction with two bedrooms or more for their primary residence, it’s certainly interesting to explore the possibilities offered by alternative choices. After all, for most of us, our home mortgage or rent is our largest monthly expense. The appeal of paying less, or even paying cash for a smaller home, is undeniably appealing. What if your home cost about the same as your car? Less to maintain, less to cool, and less to furnish. Some tiny homes are built on trailer beds, both to avoid city ordinances and to provide for mo-

Some tiny homes are built on trailers beds, both to avoid city ordinances and provide for mobility. The tiny-home movement seems to be as much about freedom as it is about dwellings.

bility. It’s no wonder this is such an intriguing topic. The tiny-home movement seems to be as much about freedom as it is about dwellings.

In Texas there are several tiny-home builders, some offering do-it-yourself workshops. Tiny Texas Homes in Luling builds from salvaged materials mostly from century-old buildings, with an emphasis on vintage and whimsical structures. Kanga Room Systems out of Waco prefabricates cabins with a modern flare. A tour of projects around Austin done by Kanga drives home the reality that most tiny homes today are used as second homes, guesthouses, and grandparent quarters. Kanga offers several plans in the range of \$30,000 to \$50,000, but that doesn’t include land to put your tiny home on or the cost of hooking it up to city services. Kanga plans to expand in the Houston market, but so far has



Backyard Beauty

Houston designer Shane Cook used shipping containers to create a backyard apartment and office for one Heights family. The owners even commissioned a mural by a local artist—a graffiti-style tribute to their two sons on the side of the avant-garde structure.

installed only a few cabins and also a yoga studio here. While the small-home movement focuses mostly on homes below 400 square feet, there is interest in tiny homes as small as 120 square feet.

160 square feet is a particularly significant size for a home, because that happens to be the size of a standard 8-by-20-foot shipping container. Used shipping containers generally are available in 8 x 20 and 8 x 40 sizes with 8.5- or 9.5-foot ceilings. They can be found for sale in the Houston area from \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on size and condition. Shipping-container enthusiasts are often involved in the tiny-home movement; however, multiple containers can be connected to build more conventional-sized homes.

One of the first shipping-container houses in Houston to garner acclaim was the Cordell House by Numen Development, LLC. Built just east of the Heights in 2008, while not tiny, it drew crowds to view this cool home that was →



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REIMAGINING HOMES

continued from previous page

anything but traditional. Numen Development's website (numendevlopment.com) offers several designs smaller than 500 square feet.

Houston designer Shane Cook more recently used shipping containers to create a backyard apartment and office for one Heights family. The project won the 2014 Paper City Design Award for Green Project/Use of Sustainable Products. Cook stacked two containers to create balconies above and open parking below. Owners Jennifer and Jeff Copeland even commissioned a mural by a local artist—a graffiti-style tribute to their two sons on the side of the avant-garde structure. "We absolutely love our space. My office is perfect, and out-of-town guests really are impressed as well [with the apartment]. Having storage on the bottom is also really helpful," says Jennifer Copeland.

Designer Shane Cook says, "For both tiny-house and shipping-container projects, the way in which the exterior is insulated is critical. Site orientation is important to maximize the amount of natural lighting in order for the spaces to appear larger and as welcoming as possible. Some people don't realize that once a window or door opening is cut into the sides, or the original doors are removed from the end of a container, the entire structure is compromised and will need some additional reinforcement at any modified areas."

Instead of building a shipping-container structure on site, J. Evans Custom Homes will build out the container and ship it to you for installation. Located in Lorain, Ohio, J. Evans Custom Homes recently participated in a housing expo for flood-prone areas in Texas. Co-founder Nicole Kendrick says, "We operate in a facility that gives us the ability to pre-manufacture our container designs year-round and ship to anywhere in the country by semi or rail, right from our facility." Kendrick uses a total square footage of 450 or less to designate a home as tiny, not including sleeping lofts, which are common in tiny-home design. She says her company also builds in Murphy-style beds that fold away to make the most of limited square footage.

Regardless of whether your style is industrial, vintage, or modern, finding a place in the city to put your tiny home will be your first challenge. The cost of a full-size lot in a walkable neighborhood or close to public transportation can easily put you over your budget for financial freedom. However, neighborhoods east of downtown are booming, and with the area's mix of aging industrial and older residential homes, some interesting developments are in the works.

One such east-side neighborhood is Japhet Creek Community. Just a few blocks from the Last Organic Outpost Community Farm, the

continued on page 85

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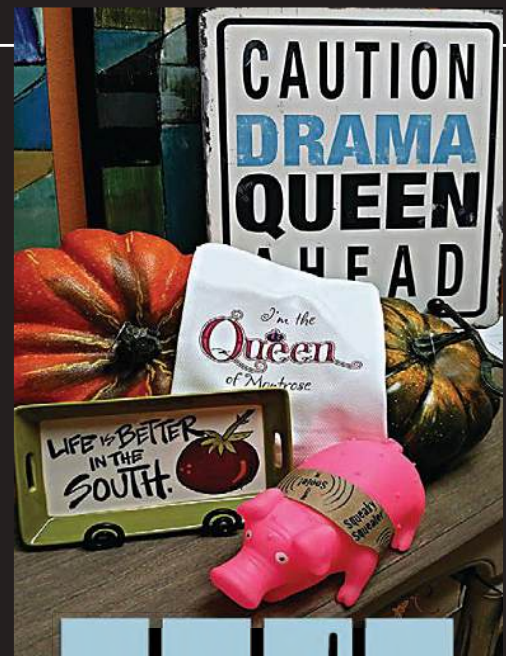
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The Gay Gore

Lesley Gore, the singer of major hits “It’s My Party” and “You Don’t Own Me,” gets a bio.

By Blase DiStefano

Unless you’re of a certain age, you’ve probably never heard of Lesley Gore. However, you may have heard her song “It’s My Party” (“and I’ll cry if I want to/Cry if I want to, cry if I want to/You would cry too if it happened to you”). It was a huge hit in the early ’60s, and the singer followed soon after with “You Don’t Own Me,” one of the first feminist anthems. The lyrics say it all: “You don’t own me/I’m not just one of your many toys/You don’t own me/Don’t say I can’t go with other boys/And don’t tell me what to do/Don’t tell me what to say/And please, when I go out with you/Don’t put me on display ‘cause/You don’t own me/Don’t try to change me in any way/You don’t own me/Don’t tie me down ‘cause I’d never stay.”

That the singer was gay makes it all the more appealing.

Trevor Tolliver, one of Lesley Gore’s biggest fans and the author of the new book *You Don’t Own Me*, answers a few questions about the singer’s songs and her life.

Blase DiStefano: How did “It’s My Party” come about, and what major songs were on the charts at the same time?

Trevor Tolliver: Lesley Gore’s demo recordings had made their way to Quincy Jones at Mercury Records, and he liked the style, purity, and talent in the 16-year-old’s voice. After listening to a pile of potential songs to record for the label, “It’s My Party” managed to stay at the top of the list, and it was recorded in late

“Since other songs at the time cast girls in subservient, weak roles, ‘You Don’t Own Me’ was a colossal hit that seemed to speak to young female fans who desperately wanted and needed to hear a stronger message.”



JESSICA BURSTEIN/CORBIS; INSET: MEGHAN WEISMAN

Don’t Put Her on Display

Lesley Gore (l) poses with Lois Sasson, her partner of 30 years, at Elaine’s restaurant in New York in 2010. INSET: Trevor Tolliver, author of *You Don’t Own Me*.

March 1963. (By the way, the story of a girl throwing a tantrum at her birthday party was inspired by the true story of the bratty daughter of one of the songwriters.)

Jones found out that super-producer Phil Spector had just recorded “Party” with The Crystals, who were a hot girl group at the time. Not to be bested, Quincy Jones and engineer Phil Ramone stayed up all night pressing copies of Gore’s version and sent it out to the major radio stations. In just a matter of weeks, “It’s My Party” was a national and worldwide hit and a cultural phenomenon, which faced worthy competition on the charts from Little Peggy March (“I Will Follow Him”), The Chiffons (“He’s So Fine”), and The Crystals (“Da Doo Ron Ron”).

“You Don’t Own Me” seemed to be the first song by a female singer to finally state the obvious. How was it that Gore recorded it, and what was the response to the song?

One afternoon while Gore was relaxing by the pool at a Catskills resort where she was performing, two Philadelphia songwriters, David White and John Madara, approached her and played an acoustic version of their new song,

“You Don’t Own Me.” She loved the force and bravado behind the lyrics, and took the song to Quincy, who agreed to produce the unusual track.

Since other songs at the time cast girls in subservient, weak roles, “You Don’t Own Me” was a colossal hit that seemed to speak to young female fans who desperately wanted and needed to hear a stronger message. The song soared to #2, sandwiched between the first two singles from The Beatles.

As hugely popular and respected as the song was, Gore was disappointed to be forced back into more tepid musical territory, reinforcing her widely accepted image as a victimized girl with perpetual dating crises and chronically abusive boyfriends.

When did Gore realize she was gay, and who was the first person (or persons) she told?

Gore says she adored both boys and girls, but it wasn’t until her acceptance to Sarah Lawrence College when she felt she could explore that part of herself she’d kept hidden from the glare of the spotlight.

Gore wasn’t allowed to decide when the time was right for her to come out on her own terms. In the early 1970s, she was forced out of the closet when an anonymous letter was delivered to her parents, tattling that she’d →



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THE GAY GORE

continued from previous page

been spotted emerging from a gay and lesbian bar. By now she was in her early 20s and much more certain and confident, so she didn't deny the accusation. She led an openly gay life from that point on.

Her parents struggled initially, but I'm sure their concerns were smoothed over with help from the calm and diplomatic presence of Lesley's younger brother Michael, with whom she always enjoyed a close and loving friendship. He stayed by her side through the process and gave her the support she needed to be able to come to terms with her true personal and sexual identity.

At what point in her career did she meet Lois Sasson? Tell me a little about that relationship.

Gore and Sasson met as early as 1969, and although they enjoyed a brief relationship then, a restless Gore ended up leaving New York for California to focus on herself, her career, and her latest comeback.

After writing, recording, and releasing two extraordinary (but ultimately failed) albums in the 1970s, Gore returned to her roots on the East Coast to reunite with Sasson and work on the motion-picture soundtrack for *Fame* with her brother, Michael. The two remained inseparable for over 30 years, and that relationship was a source of strength, comfort, excitement, and peace for Gore.

As a devastating postscript, the two were planning to legally marry in the fall of this year, but Gore passed suddenly in February from an aggressive form of lung cancer.

Speaking of relationships, how did you meet Gore, and how long did you know her?

I had seen Gore perform twice over the years, and both times I had the pleasure of meeting her afterward. In 2013, I approached her with a draft of my book, and although she declined to participate because she was at work on her own biographical stage musical, she didn't discourage my project, and even remained in contact with me throughout the remainder of 2014.

Those of us who had the honor of knowing her even briefly were touched by her generosity and her kindness. Anyone who was able to meet her was delighted to learn that she was exactly what they would have hoped her to be in person.

I wanted my book to celebrate her amazing talent and indomitable spirit, and I hope it prolongs the conversation about Lesley Gore and the amazing body of work she left behind.

You Don't Own Me by Trevor Tolliver is published by Backbeat Books (backbeatbooks.com).

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Hey Buddy, Can You Spare a Tuba?

Michael Roberts starts his inaugural season as artistic director of the Houston Pride Band.

By Rich Arenschioldt

“I looked at my phone one evening and I had a message notification from—of all things—a *dating app*,” Michael Roberts sheepishly admits. “Something I found a bit strange, and even more so when the other party asked: ‘Aren’t you a band director?’ From an earlier conversation, he had remembered that I am a professional musician and a conductor. He informed me that the Houston Pride Band was looking for a new director, and suggested I apply.” After a process that included an application, interview, and some trial rehearsals, Roberts got the job. (No word on what happened to Roberts’ mysterious online dating prospect.)

Michael Roberts grew up in Arkansas, went to college in the Texas Panhandle, and received a music-education degree studying oboe and saxophone. “I was lucky enough to start working immediately after college as an assistant in a large music program.”

Some years later, Roberts reconnected with Dr. Jack Stamp, a musical mentor he had known since high school. “He

had originally suggested that I obtain an undergraduate degree, teach music for a few years, and then pursue additional training,” Roberts says. “I eventually applied to study with him and returned to academia, obtaining a master’s degree in conducting.”

On the advice of several colleges, Roberts then came back to Texas, joining a school district where music education was not merely an elective, but a part of the curriculum that was highly valued by students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

“The only thing more cliché than conducting [a medley from *The Wizard of Oz*] was that I wore a pair of ruby slippers while doing it!”



Michael Roberts directs the Houston Pride Band in a concert at Resurrection MCC. “Band members are *always* doing something to benefit others,” Roberts says.

Seeking additional opportunity and responsibility, Roberts then moved to Houston, where he has worked for the past seven years. “Living in the Texas Panhandle for so long, I knew that eventually I needed to be in a major city—a place with an established community. I wanted to be able to enjoy my work *and* my life. My current school’s program is amazing and very well supported—it’s a wonderful job, and I love living in a cultural center.”

The Houston Pride Band was formed in 1978, ostensibly to march annually in the city’s Gay Pride Parade. The band eventually became a nonprofit organization and now performs several concerts a year as a full

50-member ensemble under the direction of Roberts and assistant artistic director Deborah Hirsch.

“As I researched the band, I realized what an extraordinary group it is,” Rob-

erts says. “I was impressed by how much they care about music—and even more by the numerous small-group activities they undertake in support of Houston’s LGBT community. Band members are *always* doing something to benefit others.”

These smaller activities are part of the band’s “Spotlight Series” that provides a musical presence at numerous community

activities. “In addition to our main-stage concerts, we provide music for celebratory events, memorial services, banquets—anywhere we’re needed. These performances are optional, and our musicians are happy to assist when they can. Since we are comprised of volunteers, I never want players to feel overburdened by the work we do.”

Roberts jumped into his new job during a very heady time. In short order, he had to manage a season finale, a marriage-equality celebration, and an historic Pride Parade. Immediately following his appointment, Roberts conducted two pieces at the season’s final concert. “Of course, it was a medley from *The Wizard of Oz*,” Roberts says. “The only thing more cliché than conducting that particular score was that I wore a pair of ruby slippers while doing it! Even though I was ‘the new guy,’ I had an absolute blast with the musicians and audience.

“Shortly thereafter,” he continues, “the annual Pride Parade, coming on the heels of the historic Supreme Court marriage-equality decision, was a huge event for the band. Our sister organizations in Dallas and San Antonio joined us for the celebration, giving us 80 players in the parade. For me, it was a hoot to be a drum major—again—at age 36!”

In addition to the parade, Roberts creates programs for the group’s concert season, conferring with his assistant, Hirsch, and →

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HEY BUDDY, CAN YOU SPARE A TUBA?

continued from previous page

others from the group. "This year was easy," he says. "Obviously, we had to do a marriage/wedding-themed program. Our holiday program is comprised of entertaining works, and our spring concert (just before Pride) is always something with a strong LGBT theme."

The band tries to vary its programming when planning their mainstage concerts. In recent years, they've worked to incorporate narration, video, and different theatrical offerings. "In this forum we can utilize many things to entertain audiences," Roberts says. "Right now we are collaborating with a film composer, commissioning an original silent-film score. This is brand new—something we have never done. As a result, our March 2016 concert, featuring a Charlie Chaplin classic, will be very exciting."

"Membership in the band is on an up-swing," he says. "We have a full complement of players, and ideally I would like to continue to increase the size of the group. This will enable us to broaden our repertoire and also expand opportunities for resources. Many of our musicians want to perform with us but do not own instruments—especially the larger, more expensive ones." Roberts expressed an interest in obtaining a full set of concert tubas (apparently they are hard to come by) in case any OUTSMART readers have one to spare.

"The music we play is very solid, and we are constantly improving our musical product. It would be wonderful if the group could perform at a professional music convention (such as the Texas Music Educators Association annual convention) as an LGBT group. That would be an excellent way to showcase our musicians and advocate for our mission, one that expresses unity through music."

2017 will be equally busy for Roberts and the group. "Houston will be hosting the National Lesbian and Gay Band Association annual conference," Roberts says. "That organization is comprised of Pride bands from around the country that will gather in Houston to meet and play together. Typically, several hundred people will perform at and attend these events. It's a huge undertaking for us, and as one of the founding bands in the association, it's important that we make a good impression."

"The Houston Pride Band members play great music, and our audiences always have lots of fun," he continues. "Concert attendees thoroughly enjoy themselves and everyone seems genuinely happy to be involved. This is *definitely* something that I wanted to be a part of, and I am thrilled to be chosen to work with the organization."

The band is open to musicians of varying skill levels, and rehearses on Wednesday evenings, 7:30–9:30 p.m., at Bethel UCC, 1107 Shepherd Drive, near Washington Avenue. You can contact them through their website at houstonprideband.org.

Rich Arenschioldt is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Unzipped

The new season at Theater LaB Houston.

By Donalevan Maines

Warren unzips his zipper. Brown just stares. Warren zips it back up, pauses, then zips it down again with great flair.

Brown: What are you showing me, Mr. Warren?

—from Tom Jacobsen's play
The Twentieth-Century Way

The premise of Tom Jacobsen's play *The Twentieth-Century Way* is that, with zippers becoming popular around 1914, it became easier for gay men to unfasten their pants, giving quicker "access" to the family jewels.

"They're calling it 'the 20th century way,'" says Warren, explaining to the play's other character, Brown, how the zipper, along with better personal hygiene, gave rise to more oral-sex encounters in public changing rooms.

The flurry of furtive couplings also established a rationale for some policemen to escape the pesky task of keeping people safe from violent crime in favor of entrapping defenseless gay men seeking momentary thrills in "public pissoirs."

"SPECIAL VICE OFFICER" is engraved on the badge Warren hands Brown when he deputizes him in the cause. "I'm a cop!" beams Brown.

The Twentieth-Century Way will be presented November 18–22 as part of Theater LaB Houston's 23rd season of scandalizing local audiences. But instead of operating out of a space in First Ward that producer Gerald LaBita's parents once ran as a mom-and-pop grocery store, and following a few recent productions in several other venues around town, TLH is helping christen MATCH (Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston) at 3400 Main.

I didn't know the history of how the Long Beach Police Department led the practice of entrapping members of Southern California's gay community.



ED KRIEGER/BOSTON COURT

The Twentieth-Century Way is a production by The Theatre @ Boston Court in Pasadena, California. According to its website, "The Theatre @ Boston Court produces passionate, artist-driven theater that challenges both artist and audience. The Theatre @ Boston Court urges its artists to fearlessly and passionately pursue their unique voice and vision. Play selection encompasses a wide variety of genres (classics, musicals, and world premieres, with a special emphasis on nurturing playwrights and new play development) which are inherently theatrical, textually rich, and visually arresting."

Charles McNulty, a critic at *The Los Angeles Times*, advises, "If I were an American playwright wanting an assured, smartly challenging staging of my latest play, I'd put Boston Court at the top of my wish list."

Such was the case in 2010 when Jacobsen took his unproduced script of *The Twentieth-Century Way* to Boston Court's co-artistic director, Michael Michetti. "It was very exciting to me because I felt like it was a good fit for our theater," says Michetti. "Until I read Tom's play, I didn't know the history" of how the Long Beach (California) Police Department led the practice of entrapping members of Southern California's secret gay community.

Jacobsen was inspired to write *The Twentieth-Century Way* after reading a brief account in Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons' book *Gay L.A.* about how actors were recruited to lure gay men into exposing themselves in public places so they could be arrested for "social vagrancy." The police department promised them \$15 per arrest, or roughly \$350 in today's dollars.

"That's a fortune!" says Brown.

"Tom started digging and unearthed tons of primary resources, such as newspaper articles and court transcripts from specific events," says Michetti.

The result was a script in which actors Will Bradley and Robert Mammana portrayed two actors meeting for an audition, then morphing into a number of characters who rendered the storyline, explains Michetti, who directed the premiere.

In May, Boston Court's co-production with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York City played off-Broadway, where LaBita saw it. "I was blown away," says LaBita. "I thought it was a terrific piece of theater, just spectacular."

Houston audiences will see Boston Court's presentation in MATCH's intimate 75-seat black-box space with the show's original Equity cast and director.

"Will and Robert play all of the other characters—or is it Brown and Warren playing these parts?" teases Michetti. "The show →

Scandalous

Robert Mammana (l) and Will Bradley, shown here in a 2010 production of *The Twentieth-Century Way*, reprise their roles in Theater LaB Houston's production, November 18–22.

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never really makes this distinction clear. That turns out to be one of the most exciting aspects of the show, which is structured like a thriller with a sense of uncertainty and danger.”

Due to its nudity and mature subject matter, TLH recommends the production for adult audiences, says LaBita. “Neither Robert nor Will is LGBT, but both are very pro-LGBT rights, and obviously the play is gay-themed,” says Michetti.

TLH will launch its move to MATCH with the November 4–8 presentation of Eric Gutman in his one-man show *From Broadway to Obscurity*. In it, Gutman sings show tunes such as “Walk Like a Man” from *Jersey Boys*, which the Michigan-born actor/musician performed more than 1,100 times in six different roles, including three members of the Four Seasons. Gutman also relates his heartwarming decision to return to suburbia to raise his children, leaving behind the bright lights of Broadway.

Press material calls *From Broadway to Obscurity* “a one-man musical about getting to the top of your game, and the struggle to find your place when the game is over—making hard choices that are also the right ones.”

Next comes *Eleanor’s Story: An American Girl in Hitler’s Germany* in which Ingrid Garner will perform her adaptation of the autobiography of her grandmother Eleanor Ramrath Garner’s turbulent years as an American girl trapped in Nazi Germany. The hour-long show will be presented November 11–15.

In February 2016, TLH will return to producing its own shows, with the regional premiere of *52 Pickup* by Canadian playwrights TJ Dawe and Rita Bozi. In it, 52 titles of scenes about a relationship are noted on an ordinary deck of playing cards; at the top of the show, the actors throw the cards into the air, then proceed to perform the scenes in the order in which they arbitrarily pick up the cards throughout the show.

The season will conclude in May with the world premiere of *Winifred*, which Alva Hascall wrote with Houston actress Tek Wilson in mind as a woman who helped gays and Jews escape Nazi Germany. The Maine playwright will direct, with Lisa Westkaemper serving as dramaturg and production manager for the show about a British orphan girl who was given in marriage to composer Richard Wagner’s gay son. Playing opposite Wilson will be a young actor who will portray various roles, including Winifred’s stage manager, her son Wieland, the prosecutor at her de-Nazification trial, her French maid, and others.

For season tickets or admission to individual performances, visit thelabhou.org for details. For additional information, call LaBita at 713.868.7516.

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Queerbaiting a Jonas Brother

A defense of Nick.

By Bradley Donalson



Is He Baiting Queers?

Nick Jonas shows off his wares in the first episode of *Scream Queens*, a TV series created by openly gay Ryan Murphy, who also helms *American Horror Story*.

There has been quite a bit of talk recently in the gay community about Nick Jonas. With the debut of Ryan Murphy's *Scream Queens*, Jonas has played two gay roles, appeared on the cover of *Flaunt* mostly naked, and has been spotted in multiple gay clubs—stripping. This has led to many people accusing the former-boy-bander-turned-hot-tie of queerbaiting his audience.

Queerbaiting has been defined as the subtle hinting by entertainment creators that a media personality is queer, only to follow up with some banal or sinister “no homo” denunciation that implies being gay is something shameful or imagined.

Jonas isn't doing that. At no point has the chiseled singer/actor ever claimed to be anything other than completely hetero. He's playing gay characters, but so have others. Jack Falahee plays a gay man on Peter Nowalk's *How to Get Away with Murder*. He's even appeared naked on the show, yet people don't accuse him of queerbaiting in the same way they've accused Jonas. This may have to do with the level of stardom, but it might also have to do with Jonas being openly straight while

We want to accuse him of queerbaiting because he isn't gay, yet he's obviously making money off the fact that gay fans find him attractive.

Falahee refuses to discuss his sexuality—which is his right, no matter how curious some of us are. There's nothing sinister or manipulative about Jonas' gay characters. They're gay, full stop. He isn't playing them straight while hinting at the possibility that they might have an attraction to another man in the show. This

isn't *Supernatural* with Dean and Castiel. So the question becomes: why do we want to accuse Jonas?

I think the answer might be something that is both good and bad. We want to accuse him of queerbaiting because he isn't gay, yet he's obviously making money off the fact that gay fans find him attractive. While this might bring up a broader discussion about the lack of openly gay actors, it doesn't explain why people indict Jonas. He's never opposed LGBT equality, and he's been supportive of the queer community. Is he playing up his looks in order to sell more records and get people to watch his shows? Of course he is! And quite honestly, he'd be a fool to do anything else.

According to Witeck Communications, the buying power of the LGBT adult population in

2014 was \$884 billion. Even when you factor in that the LGBT community's tastes are as varied as any other, that's still not a number to scoff at. Jonas is trading on his sex appeal now because he's in prime condition. The 23-year-old has successfully shed the innocence that clings to Disney's child stars, and he's stepping into a role as a sexual adult. He's done so with more grace than former Disney star Britney Spears, and more thoroughly than former Disney star Selena Gomez. And now he seems to be exploiting the old adage in marketing: SEX SELLS! Should we condemn him because he understands that? Should we accuse him of queerbaiting, even though he has never given us the slightest hint that he might be gay? Don't we want him and other straight people (famous or not) to see the gay community as a welcoming place for its allies?

In short, why are people so upset that a straight celebrity is treating the gay community like any other group of fans? Isn't that what we want? Just let the boy take his clothes off, and enjoy the show.

Bradley Donalson is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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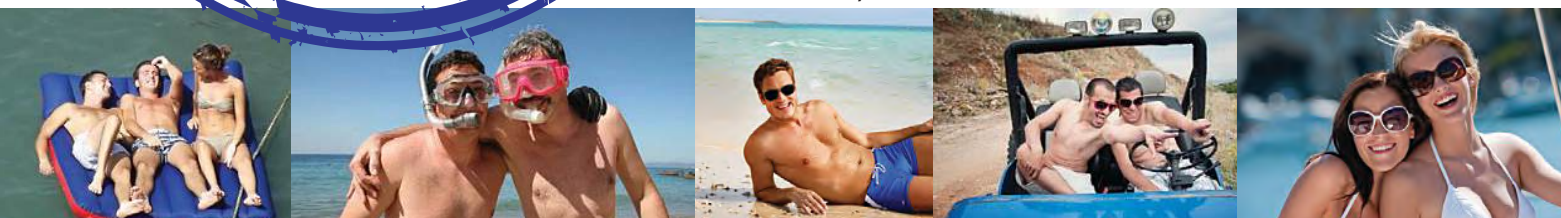
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Georgia on My Mind

Visiting the charming Savannah.

By Brian Waddle

Photo by Brian Waddle

Do you have a cousin you love to visit, but then you sort of get into trouble when you hang out together? Like you have a ton of fun until the wee hours of the morning, but then your clothes reek the next day because you just had to have that *one* cigarette? And there's crusty food clinging to the front of your shirt. And you stepped in something that really stinks. You're Miley Cyrus.

Now imagine another cousin who you have the same amount of fun with, but without all the fuss, smells, and hangover remedies. You could proudly invite this cousin to a family dinner or a night out with your best friends. You're Nicole Kidman.

Now you understand the difference between New Orleans and Savannah.

While New Orleans visitors can experience true Southern hospitality, Savannah has the same charming atmosphere but without the *vomitis maximus* (or nipples, or penises) of Bourbon Street. However, Savannah *does* offer the same open-container law that party animals enjoy in the Crescent City. "Roadies" and "travelers" (or whatever you want to call them) just ask for a "to-go" at the bar and take their drinks right out the door with them. Keep it classy, Savannah.

There's a joke that in Atlanta, the first thing locals ask is what business you're in, and in Charleston they ask your mother's maiden name. But in Savannah, they ask what you want to drink. And when people enjoy their cocktails, a good time is had by all. Perhaps more importantly, crafting those cocktails and beers is a flourishing industry in Savannah.

Not that you need drinks to have fun there. If you are an architecture aficionado or history buff, a foodie or connoisseur of sophisticated style, you'll find plenty to do in Savannah. And as a bonus, a 20-minute drive from the historic district gets you to the white sandy beaches

History is around every corner and each building has a unique story.

of Tybee Island, looking out over the Atlantic Ocean. Unlike our fair Texas city that was born less than 200 years ago, Savannah was established in 1733 and served as the capital of the province of Georgia under the British Empire. Yes, the city is 40 years older than our nation.

So as you can imagine, history is around every corner and each building has a unique story. With a feel similar to the French Quarter or the Strand in Galveston, Savannah's historic district is laid out in 22 squares stretching over half a mile, each with a park at the center. You can Google to find photos and get a sense of the place, but the important thing to remember is that the city retains its original 1733 plan laid out by General James Oglethorpe. Quite the contrast to Space City, U.S.A.!

Around Savannah's squares are exquisite residences, elegant houses of worship (Savannah is home to one of the oldest Jewish temples in the nation), the courthouse, and other buildings—all beautifully preserved. Architectural walking tours are readily available if you want to learn all about Gen. Oglethorpe's plan for the city or the differences between Federal and Georgian architecture. Around the edges of the squares are remnants of former industries: cotton warehouses turned antique stores, a resplendent stained-glass Victorian pharmacy

that is now home to the Gryphon Tea Room, and exquisite buildings that are used by the Savannah College of Architecture and Design, whose campus is peppered throughout the district with buildings from all eras and styles. Our hotel, "The Brice," a Kimpton Hotel, was once a cotton warehouse, then converted and expanded during the Civil War into a military hospital. It now has spectacular rooms, a resort pool, a secret garden courtyard, and Pacci, a beautiful, bright Italian restaurant featuring locally sourced produce and seafood.

Every building has an interesting story that involves more than just its design and style. Hauntings and ghost stories are prevalent across the city. A place with as much history as Savannah has a lot of stories to tell, and the cemeteries after dark are the places to listen for them. Midnight tours are abundant, so you too can have your own paranormal adventure.

But that is not the only thing there is to do in Savannah after dark. What would a fabulous city be without its gay bar? (Fort Worth?) "Club One" is the one-and-only gay bar in Savannah, and it is also the only place to see The Lady Chablis, the drag diva made famous by *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. During our night there we caught Violet Chachki, the eventual winner of last season's *RuPaul's Drag Race*—check their website for the schedule of performers. →



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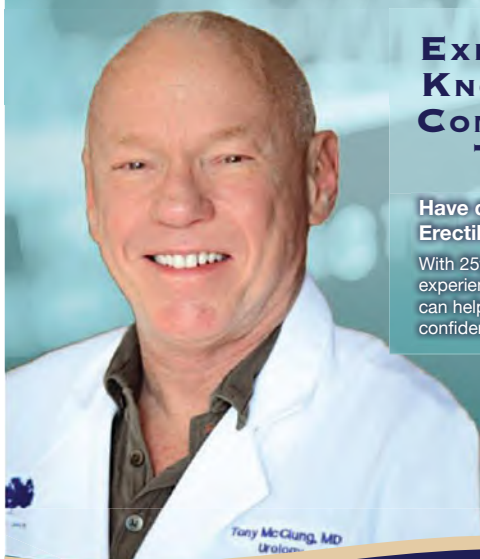
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GEORGIA ON MY MIND

continued from page 61

But you don't go to Savannah for the drag shows, so choose one night for Club One and spend other evenings soaking up the city's scene.

While you may know one of the most famous restaurants in Savannah—Paula Deen's The Lady and Sons—remember that fried chicken and butter do not define the cuisine in this Southern city. Quite the contrary, Savannah offers an ever-increasing range of options to entice almost any foodie. The Public Kitchen and Bar is a fantastic American bistro with craft cocktails and a small but refined menu. My husband was enamored with their dill-pickle martini—complete with cornichons on a skewer rather than olives. The Art Deco Greyhound bus station from the 1930s has been restored and renovated into The Grey, with a beautiful mixologist bar maintained in the station's original diner. The large waiting area is now filled with tables and booths offering upscale, downhome fare like Sizzling Smokey Pig and Catfish Tangine. And for brunch, don't miss the Fried Green Tomato Benedict at B. Matthews. Perhaps it's for the tourists, but the locals also enjoy this restaurant. If you are craving mouthwatering food, it is easy to find in Savannah.

For a more laid-back neighborhood vibe, head to Abe's on Lincoln (located on Lincoln Lane—clever, aren't they?). Lots of beers on tap, including an amazing summer grapefruit farmhouse ale from South Carolina. Abe's is great for late-night bites in a cozy and relaxed 19th-century American ambiance. Or, if you prefer to ride the really-way-back machine to Colonial times, there are also several very nice British pubs for fish and chips, or bangers and mash with a Guinness.

So as you are making your list of all the destinations you can fly to in just two hours, be sure to include Savannah, Georgia. The East Coast seems like it should be a lot farther, but it's actually a quick trip. You can breakfast in Houston and arrive in Savannah in time for lunch—which also means that even on your final morning there, you'll have time for a little shopping on Broughton Street or a Savannah River cruise on the *Georgia Queen*. That's another thing Savannah and New Orleans, two of our Southern cousins, have in common: old-fashioned riverboats—although the Savannah River is much less treacherous than the Mississippi River in New Orleans. It's just more genteel. Refined. Proper. No swinging from hotel balconies here. In Savannah, the only thing hanging from the oaks is Spanish moss, whispering in the breeze.

Brian Waddle holds a U.S. passport and uses it as often as possible to travel near and far, working to make every day a photo op.



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OutSmart Wedding Guide



 **Soul Mates**

Partners David Olivier (l) and Randal Fry were surprised at how easily and effortlessly their romance bloomed. The couple's fairy-tale wedding is planned for December 2016.

Randal and David

"I want the fairy tale."

—Vivian (Julia Roberts) in *Pretty Woman* (1990)

By Donalevan Maines

Photo by Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak

Randal Fry and David Olivier are taking a year to plan their fairy-tale wedding.

When the newly engaged couple tells you they've booked St. Andrew's Episcopal Church for December nuptials, they mean December 2016. The timing isn't out of character for Olivier, who was 50 years old before he experienced true romance last year. That's when he came out of his shell and got to know Fry, a

60-year-old former "religious fanatic" who hadn't had a partner either.

"I would be happy to get married next month," says Fry, "but David wants a fabulous wedding. He wants fabulousity."

Growing up in New Orleans, says Olivier, "I never went to some backyard wedding, and I don't want to have a very simple ceremony with a justice of the peace. Our marriage is going to be just as

continued on page 68

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RANDAL AND DAVID

continued from page 64

good as any straight people's, so I think we should have a wedding in a church with candles and tuxedos and a reception with food and a cake—the kind of wedding like I grew up going to. We are not big on dancing, but we would like a three-piece string orchestra for background music."

"We are going to comfortably slide into marriage," says Fry.

Two-by-two, with the patience of Job, the meticulous pair of retired air traffic controllers plans to enjoy every minute of deciding what will go into their big day. "We got rings to wear as engagement rings until we get married," says Fry. "We've been wearing them for a couple of weeks now, and it's amazing how much we get treated as a couple instead of as just two guys together."

Fry grew up as a member of the Cameron Road Church of Christ in Austin. "I was a nerdy religious fanatic who saw everything in black and white," he explains. "Church people liked me because I did everything they wanted me to do, but to everyone else, I was just a jerk who was very vocal about explaining to them how they were going to hell for not being a member of my church."

Meanwhile, Fry worried that he wasn't going to make it to heaven, either. "I was constantly afraid of committing a sin and not knowing it was a sin, so I was always praying to God to forgive me for anything that was sinful that I wasn't aware of, just in case a car hit me before I repented," he explains.

At age 15, Fry confessed to his congregation that he was gay, "but the common wisdom was that it was a phase that I would grow out of," he says. "For my part, I kept begging God to take it away."

At Lubbock Christian College (now Lubbock Christian University), Fry earned a bachelor's degree in biblical languages, which he followed up with a master's degree in biblical Greek at Abilene Christian University.

In between schools, he worked as a youth minister and got engaged twice to females who knew he was gay, but he called off both weddings.

In contrast, Olivier never dated, period. "I wasn't born to be active socially," he says. "I was in a closet by myself. I wasn't leading a double life."

At the all-boys' Brother Martin High School he attended in New Orleans, says Olivier, "You probably wouldn't have known me. I was shy; I wasn't athletic. I had a few friends, but we never got together outside of school."

continued on page 70



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After graduating, Olivier entertained the idea of becoming a flight attendant, but eventually set his sights on becoming an air traffic controller. He was hired for a spot in Houston, and when he bought a home in Humble, his parents followed from Louisiana. Olivier's younger brother and his family moved close by, too. "We did a lot of things together as a family," says Olivier. "AIDS was coming out and I thought it better to stay away from the gay scene."

He and Fry worked in the same department at Houston Intercontinental Airport, but only passed each other in the hall occasionally, without speaking.

For a while, Fry says, he turned to random partners to fulfill his need of physical closeness. "If I had a few hours free, I was at the bathhouses, holding my body against someone who wanted to be with me."

Fry says he found a healthier way to meet gay men when he started the Homosexual Christian Support group that met often in his home in the Heights. "Its purpose was to provide a safe place for us to encounter God

and be responsive to God," says Fry. "The group lasted for about 10 years. We ran the spectrum."

Fry retired from his job as an air traffic controller about 10 years ago, moving to New Zealand, where he hoped to become ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church. He suc-

"We got rings to wear as engagement rings until we get married," says Fry. "We've been wearing them for a couple of weeks now, and it's amazing how much we get treated as a couple instead of as just two guys together."

ceeded in becoming ordained as a deacon, but was denied ordination as a priest because he's gay, says Fry.

Olivier retired last year and began wondering how he could meet someone to share his golden years. "I never had sex with anyone until I met Randal," he explains. "I didn't know that much and I couldn't imagine meeting anyone who just wanted to hold hands for six

months. Even the thought of going out to dinner with someone, I knew I would be so nervous I wouldn't have been able to hold a glass."

Olivier and Fry got to know each other on a hike arranged by the Houston Outdoors Group, and began dating thereafter. "I knew pretty quickly that we meshed. Randal is such a sweet

guy, and considerate," says Olivier.

"From the very start, we were very honest with one another—sometimes painfully honest. He was very accommodating."

How easily and effortlessly their romance bloomed surprised Fry as much as it did Olivier. "After a few months of dating," says Fry, "I knew that I was more than just an

experiment, and this was the real thing. I can have a partner—amazing! I want to live with him until we are both very, very old."

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OutSMART magazine.

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Elton John

(*Billboard*, 10/24/15)

When it first appeared in the 1980s, AIDS was seen as a "gay disease." Tens of thousands of gay men were dying and it seemed like no one cared. People who contracted HIV/AIDS were shunned by their own families, turned away from medical providers and treated like they weren't even human. Dozens and dozens of my close friends and many colleagues in the music industry became HIV positive. They suffered and died, and it was the most horrible feeling, losing loved ones and knowing there was nothing I could do to help.

But I knew I had to help. I needed to do something. . . .

If we continue to harness passion and commitment, . . . then I believe with all my heart that in my lifetime I will have seen the very first day, and also the very last day, of the AIDS epidemic.

To learn more about the Elton John AIDS Foundation or how to help, go to ejaf.org.



Lady Gaga

(*Billboard*, 10/24/15, Camille Doderó)

Camille Doderó: Why did you create [the Born This Way Foundation]?

Lady Gaga: This foundation was born from the years I spent watching my fans grow up. They would tell me their stories—and many of them were very dark. As I began to care for them and to see myself in them, I felt I had to do something that would remind kids they're not alone. . . .

I've suffered through depression and anxiety my entire life, I still suffer with it every single day. I just want these kids to know that that depth that they feel as human beings is normal. We were born that way. This modern thing, where everyone is feeling shallow and less connected? *That's not human.*

To learn more about the Born This Way Foundation, go to bornthiswayfoundation.org.



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Selena Gomez

(Between the Lines News, 10/14/15, Chris Azzopardi)

Questioning?

Selena Gomez (seen here at the 2015 MTV Video Music Awards): what's her perspective on her sexuality?

Chris Azzopardi: As someone raised Catholic, accepting the LGBT community was never an issue for you?

Selena Gomez: Not at all. Look, there's a huge difference in how I was brought up. The word "religion" is a very complex thing—it's something you have to follow, and that's not what faith is. Anybody who has a higher power, anybody who has anything they believe in—if you don't know how to love other people, I don't believe in it. It doesn't work that way. . . .

Have you ever questioned your sexuality?

Oh, I think everybody does, no matter who they are. I do, yeah, of course. Absolutely. I think it's healthy to gain a perspective on who you are deep down—question yourself and challenge yourself. It's important to do that.

Bi?

John Lennon and Yoko Ono (seen here on the first day of their Bed-in for Peace in the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel in March of 1969): did they think they were bisexual?

Mykki Blanco

(rapper/artist)

(Plus, Nov/Dec/15, Daniel Reynolds)

Everyone always knew I was gay. My father told me he knew I was gay when I was three years old. How shitty and how deceived would [my fans] feel if, 20 years from now, they found out I was HIV-positive but I was too afraid of the stigma to come out about it? What kind of fraud would I have been to all the people that supported me? All the people that are trans and positive? Who are gay and positive? Who supported me and bought my music and come to my shows? I couldn't be honest with myself enough, to love myself enough, [so my] self-love could then be encouragement or inspiration to them? No, no, no. Honestly, truthfully, I think I have too much integrity for that.



John Lennon & Yoko Ono

(The Daily Beast, 10/13/15, Tim Teeman)

I ask [Yoko Ono] if she has ever had sex with a woman, or been attracted to them. "Well, that's another thing. John [Lennon] and I had a big talk about it, saying, basically, all of us must be bisexual. And we were sort of in a situation of thinking that we're not [bisexual] because of society. So we are hiding the other side of ourselves, which is less acceptable. But I don't have a strong sexual desire towards another woman."

Have you ever? "Not really, not sexually."

One online satire imagined an affair between Ono and Hillary Clinton. "It's great," Ono laughs. "I mean, both John and I thought it was good that people think we were bisexual, or homosexual." She laughs again.

Did Lennon have sex with other men? "I think he had a desire to, but I think he was too inhibited," says Ono. . . .

So did Lennon ever have sex with men? "No, I don't think so," says Ono.





'Tangerine'

Two trans women of color refuse to let anything come between their friendship.

I Am the Queen



I Am the Queen is a documentary about three young women who prepare for a transgender beauty pageant in a predominantly

Puerto Rican community. They share their unique stories of transitioning and the ways they have found the support they needed from their immediate and extended families. They are guided by Ginger Valdez, an experienced mentor and veteran HIV activist who volunteers to coordinate the pageant. Cinema Libre Studio (cinemalibrestudio.com).

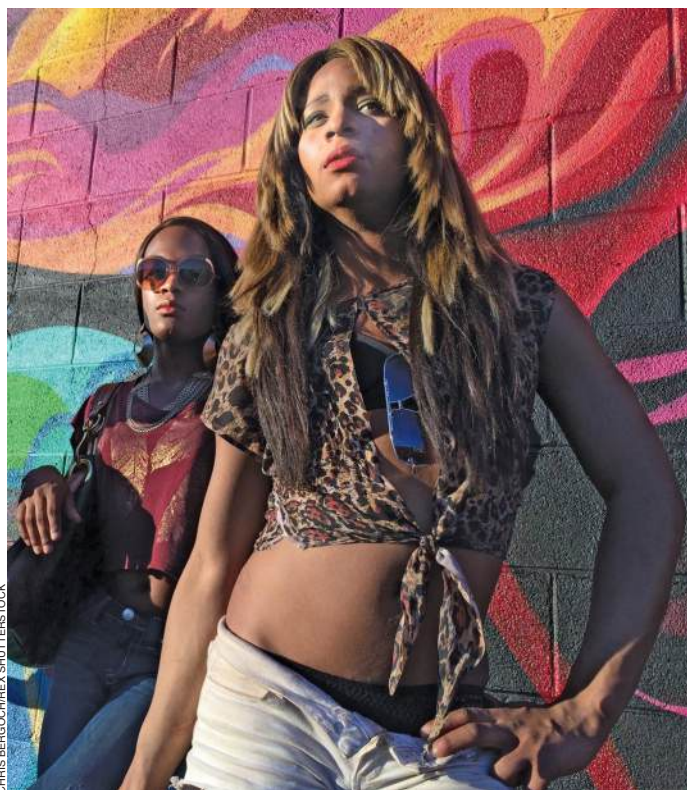
—Suzie Lynde

Alto



Frankie is as headstrong about her rock band, The Altos, as she is about her Italian-American heritage. Engaged to a good Italian man,

everything in her life is in order until she discovers a corpse in the trunk of her rental car. Heather, her sister, convinces Frankie to attend the funeral where they meet Nicolette, the daughter of the new Brooklyn mafia don, which triggers a cascade of events that take Frankie toward an unexpected romance. Cinema Libre Studio (cinemalibrestudio.com). —Suzie Lynde



CHRIS BERGCHUREX SHUTTERSTOCK

Transgender Sex Workers

Sin-Dee (Kitana Kiki Rodriguez, l) and Alexandra (Mya Taylor) in Sean Baker's film *Tangerine*.

After spending the past 28 days in jail, trans sex worker Sin-Dee Rella (Kitana Kiki Rodriguez) is released on Christmas Eve and meets up with her best friend, Alexandra (Houston trans actress Mya Taylor), at Donut Time. Chatting as they split a donut, Alexandra unintentionally discloses that Sin-Dee's pimp boyfriend, Chester (James Ransome), has been cheating on her while she was locked up.

Sin-Dee immediately embarks on a search across Los Angeles to find the "white fish" that Chester has been sleeping with. Alexandra agrees to accompany Sin-Dee, but only on the condition that Sin-Dee promises there will be no drama. However, that promise is quickly broken when Sin-Dee causes a scene in a restaurant as she assertively asks one of Chester's guys for the whereabouts of

Chester and this girl. Alexandra promptly abandons the mission to make some money as a sex worker before her singing show at Hamburger Mary's that night. Running across the city and knocking down doors, Sin-Dee will stop at nothing to get to the bottom of this scandalous rumor.

Tangerine follows Sin-Dee and Alexandra throughout the rest of Christmas Eve until a confrontational climax brings the audience back to Donut Time, where the film opened.

Director Sean Baker offers a beautifully intimate look into the world of these transgender sex workers—an image that is seldom portrayed in film. Most impressive, though, is what's revealed in the credits—the film, which features exceptional cinematography, was shot entirely on an Apple iPhone 5s. Baker said in an interview with Variety Studio that the decision to shoot

on an iPhone originally stemmed from budgetary restraints, but the iPhone quickly proved its worth as a clandestine and mobile means of filming.

What is particularly striking about the film is the dynamics of the friendship between these two trans women of color. Sin-Dee and Alexandra's relationship is tested multiple times throughout the course of the film, and each time the women show up for each other. Whether these girls need makeup advice or just a hand to hold, it is evident that Sin-Dee and Alexandra care deeply for one another and refuse to let anything get in the way of their friendship. Packed with humor, drama, and a great soundtrack, *Tangerine* will keep audiences on the edge of their seats, laughing their way to the heartwarming ending.

Tangerine is available November 10 from Magnolia Home Entertainment (magpictures.com). ■



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Leona Lewis *I Am*



I Am is often as confessional as it is catchy. It's the sound of an artist embracing what defines her and sharing it with

the entire world. And it's a rather lively celebration of life. It also marks her collaboration with Oscar-nominee and Grammy-winner Diane Warren. Previously, Warren had only penned music specifically for two artists—Cher and Whitney Houston. Now, Lewis is certainly in good company. In the end, Lewis knows who she is on *I Am*. She's got thunder, and she's just started stirring up a storm. Def Jam Recordings (defjam.com).

—Suzie Lynde

Jess Glynne *I Cry When I Laugh*



This album features the worldwide hit "Hold My Hand," which debuted at #1 on the U.K. Singles Chart

upon release and held the top spot for three consecutive weeks. The video directed by Emil Nava boasts over 30 million individual views. Already a top-20 hit on *Billboard's* Dance/Electronic Songs chart, "Hold My Hand" is now blowing up in the U.S. where it has already surpassed more than one million streams per week. Atlantic Records (atlanticrecords.com).

—Suzie Lynde

Gay singer/songwriter (and educator and writer) **Brady Earnhart** doesn't disappoint on his long-awaited fourth album ***Last Time I Promise*** (City Salvage). There are few out musicians who are as consistently strong and inspiring as Earnhart. This is particularly true since Earnhart was recording *Last Time I Promise* while recovering from a debilitating health issue. Back to good health and better than ever, Earnhart gives us some of his most accessible work here, including the electric "Do You Believe" (complete with "dog-bark ringtone") and the country comfort of "Handsome and Kind." Intimate moments, including "Delray," "You Made Light," "Song for Bob," and "Doctor's Son," are also standouts. Instrumentals such as the piano-only centerpiece "Crim Dell" and "Valley Road," as well as the clever lyric play of "Baby Bear's Porridge," are welcome additions to Earnhart's astonishing canon.

Never one to mince words, queer electro goddess **Peaches** (who performs at Numbers on November 4) is at her most sexually explicit on ***Rub*** (I U She Me). Bracketed by collaborations with Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon on "Close Up" and fellow Canadian diva Feist on "I Mean Something," the nine songs in between unflinchingly cover a range of suggestive subjects: "Rub" features "circle-jerk girls who spray," and "Dick in the Air" has Peaches advocating "switching positions/no inhibitions." "Pickles" will give you the "urge/ to move like surge" and Peaches "keeps it nasty" on "Vaginoplasty," while "Light in Places" is sure to be club bound.

As described by lead vocalist Kneepad Nikki (aka Mike Hymson),

the self-titled debut disc by **Totally F--king Gay** on Third Input Records is intended to be "an old-school John Waters movie in sonic form." The 10 "homoerotic hymns" on the disc are delivered in Nikki's spoken/sung style, which is slightly reminiscent of Fred Schneider of the B52s. It gets a little monotonous, but standouts such as "Husband and Husband," "Let's Buy a Man Purse at the Mall," and "Marathon Gay Sex for Manly Men," make it worthwhile.

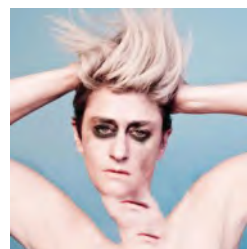
Queer all-female quartet **Antigone Rising** rises again with the five-song EP ***Whiskey & Wine: Vol. II*** (antigonerising.com). Continuing the Dixie diva style of more recent albums and EPs, the heavenly harmonies of "I See You,"

the banjo (and Allman Brothers reference) on "Weed and Wine," and the country pop of "Last Time" are proof that Antigone Rising has earned a place in the modern Nashville scene.

On his 10th solo album to date, the aptly named ***Solo*** (Palmetto), gay pianist and composer **Fred Hersch** performs two original numbers and covers five classic tunes from the contemporary songbook. Hersch begins with a Brazilian flair by performing a medley of Antonio Jobim's "Olha Maria/O Grande Amor." Also notable are his interpretations of Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" and Juan Tizol's "Caravan." Hersch's own "Whirl," for ballerina Suzanne Farrell (which he previously recorded with his trio on an album of the same name) is also outstanding.

Self-taught out musician **Gemayel** presents her brand of "Lebanese gypsy rock" on her scorching new eponymous disc. A majority of the songs rock hard and loud, including "Lust for Pain" (what else would you expect from a song with that title?). You can hear some Ani DiFranco influence in the spoken/sung conveyance of "Sometimes." "Speak Up" and "Salvation" are two of the more approachable songs on the album, while Gemayel's reading of Mazzy Star's "Fade into You" is truly inspired.

Emerging from the same early-'80s college rock scene as out musician Bob Mould's Hüsker Dü, gay singer/songwriter **Tommy Keene** continues to make infectious and edgy jangle pop on ***Laugh in the Dark*** (Second Motion). The 10 brand-new songs have all the familiar characteristics of Keene's best work, including →





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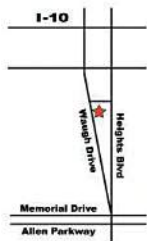
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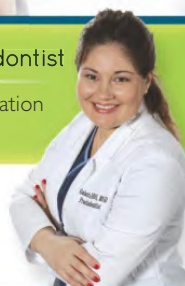
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continued from page 76

rocking guitars and solid song-craft. Opener "Out of My Mind" rocks with a contemporary vengeance while psychedelic closer "All Gone Away" recalls another time. In between, Keene illuminates his pop side on "All the Lights Are Alive" and "I Want It to Be Over Now," but takes a gentler approach on "Go Back Home."

Greg Holden isn't gay—not by any stretch of the imagination. However, that didn't prevent the hot and tatted UK singer/songwriter from writing one of the best gay songs of the year. "Boys in the Street," a first-person tune about a gay son's complex relationship with his homophobic father, is a top-notch tearjerker and an all-too-familiar tale for many young gay men. But there is redemption to be found in the song, and Holden delivers it like a pro. The remainder of **Chase the Sun** (WB), Holden's third full-length album, includes the rousing Mumford & Sons-style sing-alongs "Give It Away" and "Free Again," the cloudy piano/vocal "Go Chase the Sun," the acoustic beauty of "I Won't Forget," and the country duet "The Next Life," featuring lesbian singer/songwriter Garrison Starr. When all is said and done, "Boys in the Street" qualifies Holden as one of our greatest new allies. Plus he has gay hair!

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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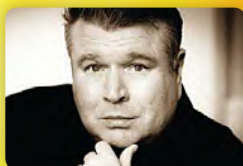
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'All I Know and Love'

Families are formed in many ways—by birth, by choice, and even by tragedy.

Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement Andrew Wackerfuss

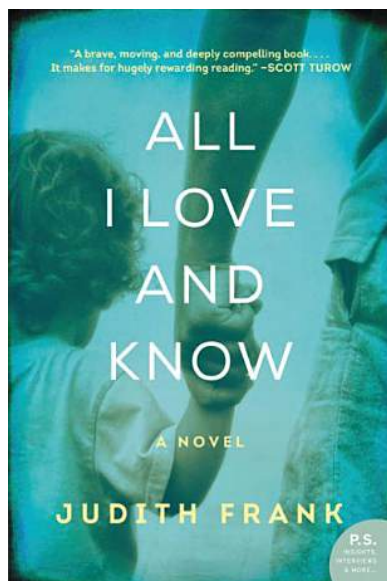


This book is one of the most readable histories of anything I've seen in a long, long time. Extensively researched using on-site sources, Wackerfuss has taken published and unpublished materials to build an historical narrative that shows us how the conflict between homosexuality and masculinity informed early fascist politics. Read this volume as a cautionary tale, since the same power struggles (grounded in the same issues) are playing out in modern fascist movements. A fascinating, well-researched and well-written book, this one is a keeper. Harrington Park Press (harringtonparkpress.com). —*Angel Curtis*

The Provocateur's Payback Paco Muñoz-Botas



Every once in a while we get a gay thriller that has almost everything. Here, Curro is driving his fabulous sports car home when he saves a fabulous man, who then meets a fabulous woman in a fabulous opera house . . . well, you get how fabulous it all is. International intrigue ensues, the action is steamy, and we're glad to be along for the ride. The quality of the writing starts slow but rapidly picks up as the story progresses. This is an editorial failing that should not be held against Muñoz-Botas—he has given us a delicious way to spend an afternoon. Riverdale Avenue Books (riverdaleavebooks.com). —*Angel Curtis*



All I Love and Know
by Judith Frank
2015, William Morrow
Paperbacks, Reprint Edition
(harpercollins.com)
448 pages • \$15.99

Daniel Rosen and Matthew Greene have settled into the life of a thirty-something couple living in a comfortable New England suburb, where many parents of the children attending the local school are lesbian couples and a few are gay men. Their lives are similar to those of straight couples in similar circumstances: Daniel's mother, Lydia, even after four years, continues to wish her Jewish son had never taken up with his new *goyfriend*. She has fond and approving memories of his previous relationship with a man who was not quite so tall, not quite so handsome, not quite so . . . *goy*. It had been difficult enough to accept Daniel's "gayness" that was in sharp contrast to his twin brother, Joel—an important journalist in Israel, more manly, more ebullient, and with his Jewish wife, Ilana, a provider of two grandchildren.

All these judgments and worries are made small by an unimaginable disaster: Joel and Ilana are

victims of a suicide bombing, making orphans of their eight-year-old daughter, Gal, and one-year-old son, Noam. Two sets of grandparents, each having just lost a child, soon have another shock when the wills are read and they learn that Joel and Ilana have designated Joel's gay twin, Daniel, to be the children's guardian. This was not such a great surprise for Daniel or Matthew. Joel and Ilana had discussed it with Daniel before executing their wills, and Daniel had discussed it with Matthew. At the time, there was no apprehension on Matthew's part; he loved Daniel. But that was before the romantic notion became tragic fact. The grandparents—who had been preparing for a cautiously friendly conversation about which of them would be best suited to care for the children—are confronted with a new, unanticipated reality. Joel's parents struggle to make

peace with the fact; Ilana's parents hire a lawyer.

Author Judith Frank does a creditable job of presenting the difficulties faced by a couple learning to parent while pushing against the walls of their childless lives to make room for two grieving children. Each, in his own way, meets the challenges. Daniel negotiates the legal snares of a will that is subject to the laws of two countries while balancing parental duties, a career, and visits from a social worker whose job it is to judge his right to maintain custody. And all of this is shadowed by the fear of society's prejudicial preference for families headed by a married straight couple.

While Matthew is sidelined during these struggles that are Daniel's alone, he and the children create strong bonds as he makes lunches, ferries them to school and childcare, and becomes Gal's go-to parent for sharing her insecurities about a new school, the shift from Hebrew to English, and missing her old school pals in Israel. Not surprisingly, Matthew and Daniel slowly lose touch with one another, until their relationship seems held together only by a thin memory thread of the love that once bound them. And everything in Matthew's life is in Daniel's name—the children, the house . . . and Daniel.

Frank's narrative is historically anchored in the events and attitudes of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It opens with a Palestinian suicide bomber delivering his death load in an Israeli coffee shop, and it culminates in a →

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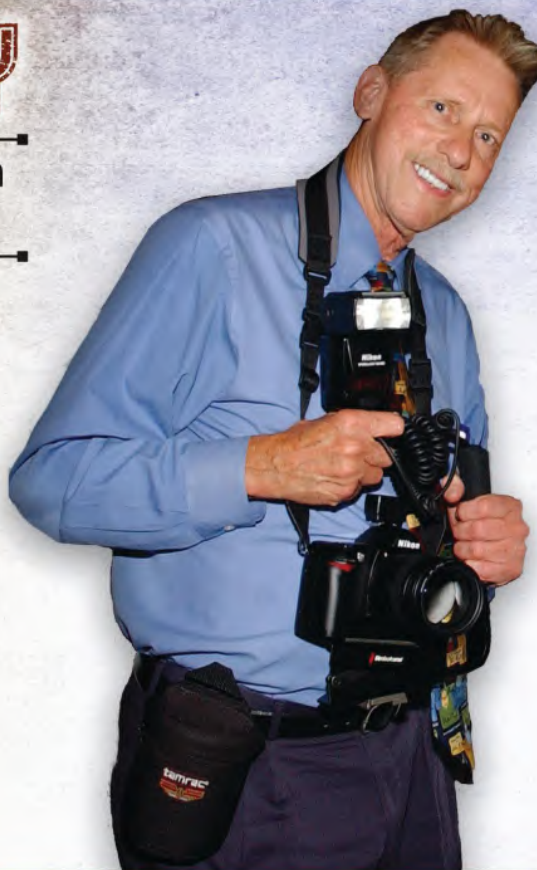
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READOUT

continued from page 80

civil-rights-triumph celebration as Massachusetts begins issuing its first marriage licenses to gay citizens. In between, we hear the hectic story of Israel, a new country established on the heels of World War II to create a home for Europe's Jewish refugees. As many of Israel's young people set their sights on building a strong Jewish homeland, forgetful or ignorant of the Palestinian sacrifices that made way for the sudden post-war influx of foreigners, the early settlers who were survivors of Hitler's death camps feel shamed and forgotten. Or so believes Frank's character Malka, the Israeli grandmother of the orphaned children. Malka is herself a survivor of the Nazi death camps and suffers periodic disabling PTSD attacks. The young, she claims, are loath to associate themselves with the age-old Jewish identity with victimhood. They have new Jewish heroes: the young Israeli soldiers who forfeit their lives in the continuing Palestinian-Israeli conflict—a sibling rivalry reminiscent of the long conflict in Ireland. "We are everything they don't want to be," Malka says. "Victims. Weaklings."

It's not the picture of Israel that has been often presented in America, nor likely the picture imagined by the original post-war settlers. It is a view of a typically ambitious government, an ancient pattern: the Israelis clearing out Palestinians the way the British cleared out the native populations of Australia and Tierra del Fuego, the way European immigrants and their descendants cleared out Native Americans, as if toppling trees to make way for farms. And all the while, a new generation of settlers live pleasant lives separated by only a few miles from the living hell of those they have displaced.

An essay by author Judith Frank, added as additional material at the back of this new paperback edition of her book, reveals that much in *All I Love and Know* comes from a place deep within her personal experience. Five years after her father's depression-induced suicide, her mother plucked the family from their Chicago roots and moved with her son and twin daughters to Israel. Frank's own experience of mourning the death of a parent—followed by suffering culture shock and language blindness in a foreign country—are evident in her character Gal. It was not until graduate school in the U.S., though, that Frank met her first gay person and finally named that elusive *something* about herself that was so different from her twin: she was a lesbian. Like her character Daniel, she has a straight twin who lives in Israel and is married to an Israeli.

Though Frank's sister remained in Israel, both her brother and mother eventually returned to the U.S. Back in Chicago, her mother became friends with a young activist rabbi who had taken up the cause of justice for Palestinians. In Israel, so involved in her career as a social worker and expert in early childhood development, Frank's mother simply had not noticed the condi-

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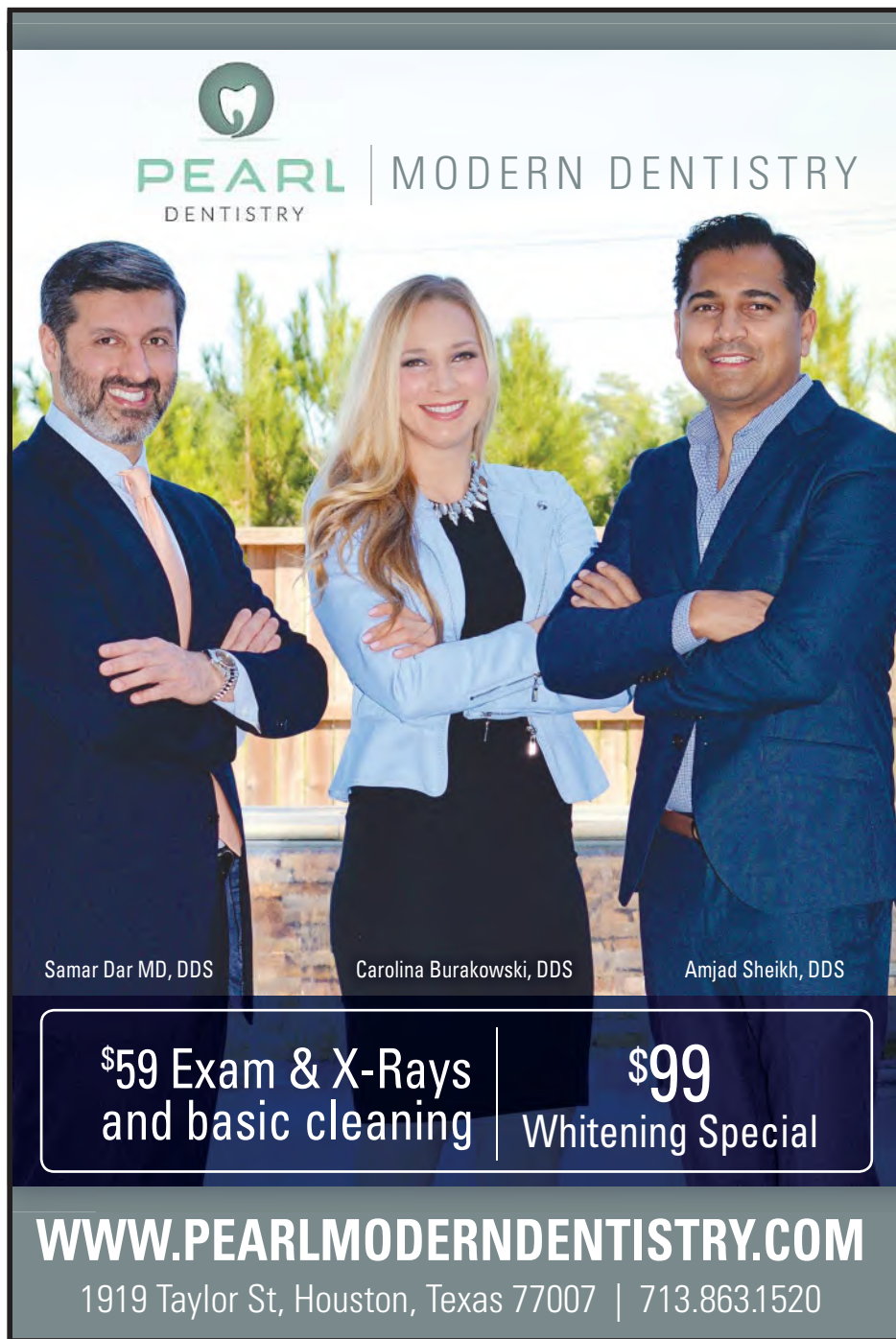
tion of the Palestinians and knew little about the history of their plight. In 2010, though restricted to a wheelchair, she traveled with a group of American Jews to meet with Palestinian activists, staying in the homes of refugee families in Palestinian refugee camps. Frank describes her mother's changed view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a late-life "sea change" in attitude.

Frank is committed to authoring literature for the gay community. She resisted when her publisher first suggested that she seek a wider readership. But, she says, her partner kept pushing her to write for a straight audience: "Aunt Anne in Kansas City"—"straight, well educated and open minded"—not the usual reader of gay books. We owe a debt of literary gratitude to Judith Frank's partner, and her agent and publisher, for their parts in placing this beautiful story in the hands of a readership that extends beyond her core LGBT audience. If the story had been written by a straight author, perhaps I could say that a major theme of the novel is that gay and straight people all endure the same relationship and parenting challenges. While that is true, it's more a fact than a theme—the way Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm is a girl or Tom Sawyer is a boy. These are facts of gender. And in the case of Frank's characters and the situations in which she places them, it's not about the gender . . . it's about the journey.

Some reviewers have accused Frank of tackling too much: coming out, AIDS fear, gay marriage and parenthood, children dealing with their parents' deaths, the unique relationship of twins when one is gay and the other straight, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the continuing problems of Holocaust survivors and the people who live with them. Any one of these diverse threads would easily serve as the focus in a meaty piece of fiction, yet interwoven, they are indicative of the way people live. We each have unique circumstances (both physically and socially rooted) that become a part of who we are and how we live: one thing is the focus today, and something else becomes more important tomorrow. It is not for nothing that we often describe truth as being stranger than fiction. Rather than choosing a simplified single focus, Frank has courageously crafted lives of true-life complexity for her characters.

All I Love and Know is a timeless story of families shattered by sudden death and the heavy toll that grief can wreak on a loving relationship. Judith Frank is a fine writer who gives us much to know and love . . . unless you'd rather hate, in which case there's material aplenty for those with that inclination: a Jewish lesbian who supports both gay marriage and justice for Palestinian civilians. Now *that's* placing yourself next to a pile of rocks surrounded by people who are itching to start throwing them.

Janice Stensrude has been a contributor to OUTSMART and its predecessor publications (Uptown Express and Health & Spirit) for the past 27 years.



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BUSINESS NEWS



Highly Anticipated River Oaks District Opens to Fanfare

River Oaks District, Houston's highly anticipated open-air shopping, dining, and entertainment haven, opened in October. Developed by the award-winning firm Oliver McMillan, River Oaks District features world-class brands with iconic storefronts, upscale restaurants, luxury entertainment, and lush, tree-lined walkable streets.

The destination's grand opening celebration included remarks from Oliver McMillan CEO Dene Oliver, Houston City Council member David Robinson, and an invitation from Lynn Wyatt for all to visit Houston's new premier shopping place. Following the event, guests were invited to stroll the 14-acre district and to visit the boutiques that are currently open—Brunello Cucinelli, Canali, Cartier, Chopard, Dior, Etro, Giuseppe Zanotti, INTERMIX, Moncler, Robert Cavalli, Stella McCartney, Tom Ford, and Vince.

Oliver McMillan has since announced additional boutiques and restaurants that will soon open their doors in the district, including Anne Fontaine, Dolce & Gabbana, L'Occitane, Hopdoddy Burger Bar, Les Copains, and more.

"We've placed an emphasis on bringing together a collection of brands and restaurants that not only complement River Oaks District, but the city as well," said Colin Moussa, director of marketing for River Oaks District. "We look forward to sharing this special place with guests now that we're open." More info: riveroaksdistrict.com.

Eye Elegance Celebrates Grand Opening of Second Location

On October 14, Eye Elegance welcomed VIP guests to the grand opening of their new second location at 1703 Post Oak Blvd. The nearly 100 guests who attended the fine-eyewear provider's event enjoyed wine from Estrada Creek Vineyards, delicious hors d'oeuvres from Masraff's, and sweets from Nothing Bundt Cake. The Galleria Houston West Chamber of Commerce then christened the store with an official ribbon cutting. This Galleria/Uptown Park store carries a wide range of high-end designer frames and sunglasses, including brands like Cartier, Tag Heuer, and Oliver Peoples. More info: eyeelegance.com. ■

REIMAGINING HOMES

continued from page 44

Japhet Creek Community is a privately owned subdivision with Japhet Creek running through it. It is made up of a late-1800s farm home where the community's owners, Jim Ohmart and Eileen Hatcher, live. The couple rents several small wooden bungalows to like-minded tenants interested in living in a more sustainable community. They share a working beehive, hens and a chicken coop for eggs, garden, and a community classroom building where they often share potluck dinners. Japhet Creek, now a city park, is key to the community's sense of place. Due to neighbors' and friends' efforts, the creek has been cleaned up, returned to its natural beauty and attracting wildlife. Ohmart thinks the vacant lots in Japhet Creek Community would be great for a tiny-home community. Shared outdoor places and the community room would be useful for tiny-home dwellers, as would the RV Ohmart already makes available to his small-bungalow

renters for their guests. His plans also include an area for a shared washer and dryer.

Ohmart has a couple of contacts who are already working with the City of Houston to establish workable tiny-home guidelines. He says, "We haven't gotten far enough on the tiny-house idea, but need to decide whether to just offer lots to build on or to actually develop a larger tract with utilities, etc., for multiple tiny houses." The subdivision has about three acres available.

Houstonians curious about building a tiny home can attend a two-day do-it-yourself workshop on November 7 and 8, presented by Tumbleweed Tiny House Company. The company presents workshops all over the nation and sells plans and trailers for tiny homes. The company's slogan, "Dream Big, Go Tiny," says it all.

Karen Derr is a Houston-based Realtor and the founder of Karen Derr Realty, which sells town and country properties. She writes and speaks about home and small-business topics.

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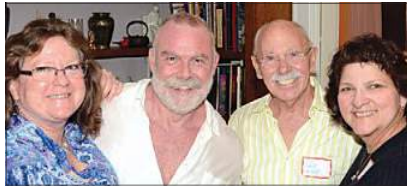
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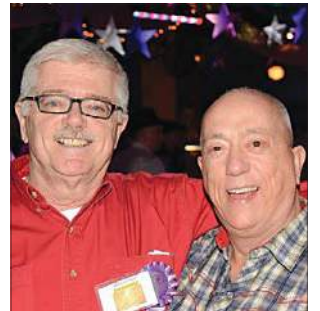
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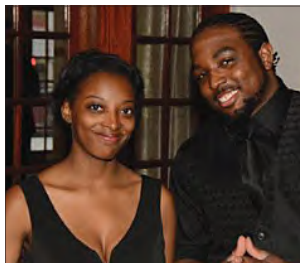
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OUT THERE

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The Montrose Center's Out for Good: A Dinner & Celebration of National Coming Out Day at the The Rice Crystal Ballroom
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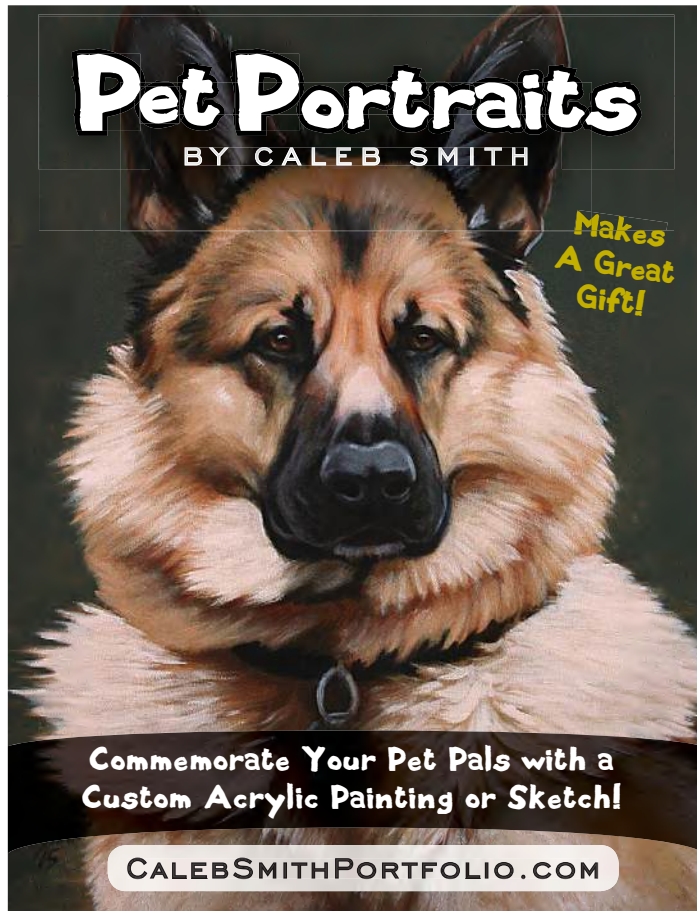
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BLUR

This multi-level dance club features a patio upstairs lounge and balconies that overlook Pacific St. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wed., 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed.-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour 8-10pm; free cover before 11pm. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.com.

CLUB 2020

Located downtown, this urban club features Clubbers Friday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713.227.9667 • club2020houston.com.

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attractive patio. Tues. and Sun. drag shows feature frequent special guests. 202 Tuam St. • fbarhouston.com • 713.522.3227.

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. But George's occasional benefit drag show makes it a wonderful, campy alternative. Sports Saturdays start at 3pm with dart and pool tournaments; Steak Night is Sun., 3-7pm. 617 Fairview • 713.528.8102.

GUAVA LAMP

This trendy and friendly video and cruise bar gets busy during happy hour and stays busy 'til closing. Karaoke on Wed. and Sun., sometimes offering prizes, always packs the place. 570 Waugh Dr. • 713.524.3359 • guavalamphouston.com.

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables, male dancers, and award-winning cocktails. 808 Pacific St. • jr'sbarandgrill.com • 713.521.2519.

METEOR

The men of Manwatch and Muscles in Action rinse down in the "Meteor Shower" stall in this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose, accompanied by DJ Athena on Friday and award-winning DJ Eddie E on Saturday. Open Thurs.-Sat. 2306 Genesee St. • meteorhouston.com • 713.521.0123.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

Jerry Atwood, Clay Howell, Neil Massey, Steve Wheaton, and Roger Woest take turns at the keys at this comfortable neighborhood piano bar. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713.520.8446.

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Studly male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot, offering Montrose's lowest vodka drinks with Trash Disco Sundays. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 805 Pacific St. • theminehouston.com • 713.529.7488.

NEON BOOTS DANCEHALL & SALOON

Houston's only LGBT country dancehall is located in the historic Esquire Ballroom and opens Wednesday-Sunday. The new outside patio and stage are open. Wednesday features Steak Night and Bingo. Free dance classes on Thursdays and Karaoke. Saturday night the dance floor fills with the best C&W... check their website for all specials, events and times. 11410 Hempstead Hwy • neonbootsclub.com • 713.677.0828.

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CHRISTIN DIEZ

Behind the Bar

WHO: Tom McCumber

WHERE: Pearl Bar & Side Bar
4216 Washington • 832.740.4933
pearlhouston.com

WHAT'S UP: Pearl Bar features DJs almost every night of the week, with Steak Night and bingo on Tuesdays, Latin Night on Fridays, and now a drag show the 3rd Wednesday of every month. With its high-beamed ceilings, fully restored natural brick walls, and polished stone appointments, Pearl is industry-meets-rustic. The remodeled expansive rear patio bar offers comfortable seating, games, and flat-screen TVs.

PEARL BAR

This LGBT-friendly lounge is open under "familiar" management in the Washington corridor. Daily highlights range from open mic night to steak night to appearances by DJ Kittie and DJ Ben Phoenix from KRBE. Drink specials and more. 4216 Washington • pearlhouston.com.

THE RIPCORD

This well-kept, multi-roomed leather bar for men and their friends boasts a busy patio, especially on the weekends. The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club, providing BDSM essentials. 715 Fairview Ave. • 713.521.2792 • theripcord.com.

RUDYARD'S

The eclectic British pub is known for its craft beers as well as for the burgers. Most weekends you'll find up-and-coming local bands rocking the house. 2010 Waugh Dr. • rudyardspub.com • 713.521.0521.

SOUTH BEACH

This mega-dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards, with DJ Eddie E spinning on Fri., and DJ Joe Ross playing pop & dance music videos on Sat. No cover before 11pm. 810 Pacific St. • sobehouston.com • 713.529.SOB.

TC'S SHOWBAR

With the longest daily happy hours in Montrose (8am-10pm), it's no wonder this neighborhood watering hole is so popular. Owner Tim Pugh says TC's has built quite a reputation as the perfect spot to celebrate special occasions. Other big draws are the drag shows Wednesday-Sunday and karaoke Monday & Wednesday. 817 Fairview • 713.526.2625 • tcshowbar.com.

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town, both inside & outside at its patio bar. The raised stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas • 713.571.7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com.

VIVIANA'S

This club, in a new location, appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 4624 Dacoma • 713.681.4104.

Beaumont

ORLEANS STREET PUB AND PATIO

The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7pm-2am. 650 Orleans • 409.835.4243.

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only LGBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979.823.6174 • halobcs.com.

Galveston

23RD ST. STATION

A new face on the Island bar scene is here. The bar features a neighborhood-bar feel with octane. Drink specials daily and the weekend is filled with pulsing music, hot dancers, drag shows, and a Sunday Tea Dance. 1706 23rd St. • 409.621.1808.

KRAVE GALVESTON

Galveston's hottest, most modern nightclub and video bar (formerly 3rd Coast Downtown) is heating up the island's nightlife. Thursday-Saturday is a big draw for College Night, Tuesday is Trivia/Karaoke Night with Timothy Branstetter, Sunday & Wednesday is Karaoke Night with David P. and the weekend drag shows hosted by Kara Dion are fabulous! 4216 Postoffice St. • 409/765-6911.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the Island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409.765.9092.

SPLASH BAR GALVESTON

Galveston's only gay bar on the beach is making a huge splash on the island. The club's Happy Hour and entertainment line-up sizzles with Hot Fridays and Saturdays featuring its "Splash Divas" drag shows, amateur strip contests, and the area's hottest DJs spinning your favorite tunes. Sunday's Tea Dance features Happy Hour noon-8pm, and count on lively entertainment every weekday. 3102 Seawall Blvd. • 409.974.4176 • splashbargalveston.com.

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, this popular northside spot also offers DJs Thursday-Saturday. 247041 I-45N Suite 103 • 281.298.9035 • ranchhill.com.

THE ROOM BAR AND LOUNGE

One of only two LGBT hangouts in North Houston/Spring, this bar and video lounge has an extremely laidback atmosphere where everyone is welcome and everyone is friendly to each other. The Room Bar and Lounge offers something for everyone, including daily drink specials, karaoke, free pool, drag shows, and live DJs several nights a week. 4915 FM 2920 • roombarspring.com • 281.907.6866. ■

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Clearer...

and more ready.

We start our month clearer and more ready to act than we have in the last three months, although we will slow down some at the end of the month. And for those planning ahead, our next Mercury retrograde is active in the month of January 2016. • Thanksgiving will be a more laid-back time for all of us. We will all be more sensitive than usual, so choose your company carefully or build in some exit strategies. • Days to get up and enjoy the day are the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 10th, 13th, and 17th. Days to call in for a mental-health day are the 18th, 20th, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, and 29th.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). Your energy levels remain strong this month, allowing you to start new projects, confront issues that need addressing, and take a more serious tone with your overall life. Relationships are requiring more of your attention and need some renewing. Keep working on establishing a better routine at work and with your co-workers. By the end of the month, you are in a lighter and more carefree mood—a good time to travel or expand your horizons.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Relationships are highlighted this month. This will be happening in a couple of areas. First, you are working hard to improve your relationships with your co-workers and clients. You have been rather short-tempered. With romantic or business partners, this is a time of renewal and a great time to put yourself out there if you are single. By mid month, you are a bit more serious and taking a harder look at finances.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). Home and family have had your interest for the last month. This is a great time to entertain in your home, redecorate or remodel, or to consider a relocation! Family problems are more easily resolved during this time. This is a good time for you to improve your own health and exercise habits. Relationships are getting much more important. You are setting new goals and plans for your relationships, hoping to make them feel more safe and secure. This becomes even stronger toward the end of the month.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Your daily life continues to be busy with new activities and adventures. There is plenty to do, so don't overload yourself. Family interests are especially important this month as you try to improve that part of your life. This can also be a good time for cleaning up or doing some repairs on your home. By mid month, you are beginning to focus on your health and exercise regimen. There are some relationship bumps from the 18th through the 21st. Pay attention!

LEO (July 23–August 22). This month you are paying a lot more attention to your financial status. You have been spending more than you intended, and are trying to find a way to be more conservative. You are also quick to react this month, especially if you are feeling challenged. And you may find you are saying what you believe before you have a chance to think it through. Home and family become your focus toward the end of the month.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). "Busy" is the word for the Virgoans during November. You may have had just too much to do, and you didn't mind trying to push that. You are feeling more upbeat, and that will continue through August of 2016. Watch your impulse spending this month. You can always justify it, but is it a real need? You are able to quickly get to the core of any issues this month. Relationships continue to improve. If you are single, this is a really good time to be drawing people to you! By the end of the month, you are focusing on your home and making your nest a more comfortable place. Some real work may be required.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). You are working on getting your life organized this month. As November begins, you are focused on yourself and improving your health and exercise routines. You will not want to waste your time or money on activities where your talents and resources aren't appreciated. By mid month, you are much more direct and assertive. You will want to deal with life as it happens. You may not feel as "balanced" as you like to feel. You will regain some control by the end of the month and feel like you are back on track.



SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). This is your personal yearly cycle when the sun returns to the same point in the sky where it was when you were born. The time prior to your birthday is good for inner reflections

and reconsiderations of the choices you have made over the past year. As your birthday arrives, you are setting the stage for the goals you will set for yourself over the next year. The first part of the month is more external, and the latter half of the month is more internal. Take some time for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Your career and future goals are really important to you this month. One part of you is setting new priorities. This may eliminate some of your current activities. This is a good time for a promotion or job change to improve your current economic conditions. You are also in a very social time, but you may feel that some of those events are tiresome and not worth your time. You are certainly not as flexible as you normally are. Be sure to find some time for yourself, because you will need it.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). The energies are a bit more laid-back as you start the month. This is a better time for getting away from your routines, especially in the first third of the month. You will be ready to get back into your familiar groove after the 14th. You will not only have more energy, but more courage to do the things you want to do. Your temper will be shorter and you may not sleep as well. You are in the spotlight and people are watching. Exercise can really help to burn off some of your extra energy.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). This is a busy and diverse month for you. You are more career-focused this month and are ready to make some long-term plans or decisions to help move yourself forward. This is also a great month for you to take a leadership role in any business or community organization. You can make a difference. And running in the background, you are paying more attention to your money and your future financial conditions. You will want to act on some of these feelings.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). Relationships and social activities are improving, and you are not as hidden as you have been for the last couple of years. You are very selective about the people you invite into your life because you are setting better boundaries. You are certainly reassessing your long-term career goals. For some, this is a time of new directions, and for others, this is a time of closure and possible retirement. You will feel much clearer about what the right choice is after November 26.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2015 forecast at OUTSMARTMAGAZINE.COM. More astro-insight at lillyroddy.com.

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OUT IN HOUSTON



On Sept. 30, **A.J. Mistretta** held a book signing for *100 Things to Do in Houston Before You Die*, at River Oaks Bookstore. Pictured are **Laura Garcia, Harlan Johnson, Mistretta, Michael Jones, David Lanagan, Kendall Kessel, and Lindsay Lanagan Zeis.**



Jessica Frinsco, Margarita Perez, Ray Hill, Marion Coleman, and Ann Robison at the Montrose Center's Out for Good: A Dinner & Celebration of National Coming Out Day event at the Rice Crystal Ballroom on October 8.



Jenni Tranweaver, Judge Steve Kirkland, and C. Patrick McIlvain at the Houston Walk for Mental Health Awareness 2015 at Stude Park on October 10.



On October 18, the Miss Utopia 2015 pageant was held at the Hilton Houston Southwest. Pictured are **Carlos Davis, LaChary Fox, Venus Knight, Elle Taylor, and Kelly Kline.**



Mayor Annise Parker and First Lady **Kathy Hubbard** hosted an educational event on the Montrose Center's new senior housing complex on Oct. 19. Pictured are (back row) **Gary Wood, Daryl Shorter, Michael Kauth, Aaron Masterson,** (front row) **Parker, Ann Robison, and Gretchen Myers.**



On October 15, the Alley Theatre held its ActOUT performance of *One Man, Two Guvnors*. Pictured are **Tina Berry, Mike Bell, Damon Price, Yamal Arias, and Shelley Finley.**



HRC Houston held its "Bowling for Heroes" event at Palace Lanes on October 18. Pictured are **Ian Eastveld, Ryan Levy, Gail Levy, and Jerry Levy.**



On October 22, "Are You PrEPared for PrEP," a community forum to explore the drug's optimal use, was held at the United Way Center. Pictured are **Gerry Cantu, Nelson Vergel, Damon L. Jacobs, Kay R. Taylor, Christopher Cannon, Dr. Douglas S. Krakower, and William J. Campbell.**



On October 17, John Palmer Art hosted its 2015 Evening of Escapism to honor the graduates of the Escapist Mentorship Program. Pictured are **Ryan Lindsay, Scott Tarbox, Luke Poteete, Stephanie Gonzalez, and artist John Palmer.**



On October 9, the University of Houston Democrats hosted a benefit for Montrose Grace Place featuring former congressman **Barney Frank** at Hughes Hangar. Pictured are **Senator John Whitmire, Frank, Brandon Wilke, Mayor Annise Parker, and Lane Lewis.**



The Diana Foundation held its 2015 Country Dinner Weekend on October 2-4. Pictured are **Tanner Williams, Dan Maxwell, Nathan Wright, Steven Bretthauer, Tony Carroll, Michael Broderick, Bruce Smith, KM Cooper, Steve Grand, and Craig McLemore.**

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