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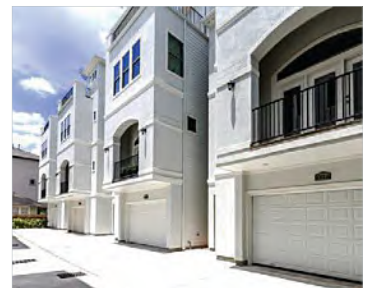
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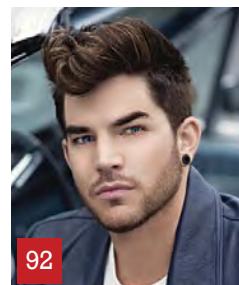
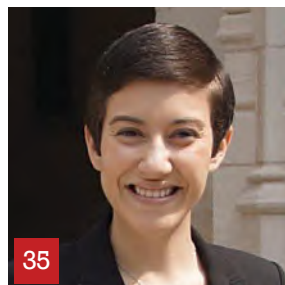
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SALISE SHUTTLESWORTH WITH FRIENDS FOR LIFE MASCOT ROCKY BALBOA. (SEE PAGE 29.)

Photo: Carolyn Levy
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Yvonne Marquez (l) and her girlfriend,
Gloria Delgadillo, furnished their cozy
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Houston Gets Its First Official Anti-LGBT Hate Group

Hotze's right-wing group makes the Southern Poverty Law Center's list.

By John Wright

Hate Speech
Dr. Steven Hotze (center), president of Conservative Republicans of Texas (CRT), speaks in opposition to marriage equality in front of the Supreme Court in 2015. The Southern Poverty Law Center deemed CRT a hate group on February 17.



The designation of Dr. Steve Hotze's Conservative Republicans of Texas (CRT) as an anti-LGBT hate group could be a game-changer in the battle for LGBT rights in Houston and across Texas.

The Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), one of the nation's most respected civil rights groups, added CRT to its list of 48 anti-LGBT hate groups nationwide on February 17.

Hotze, a wealthy Republican donor and longtime anti-LGBT activist, was a major financial supporter of the successful campaign to repeal the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO).

SPLC reported that its designation of CRT as a hate group was based in part on the anti-HERO campaign's heavy reliance on advertisements suggesting the ordinance would allow men to enter women's restrooms and prey

on children, even though no such incident has been reported in any of the more than 200 U.S. cities with similar laws.

"What we look at in the anti-LGBT groups is primarily the use of lies, of falsehoods, that have the effect of demonizing gay people," said SPLC senior fellow Mark Potok, who authors the group's annual "Intelligence Report" on extremist organizations. "So it's not merely that they opposed the HERO ordinance; it's the way in which they did it—the description of gay people as pedophiles, and so on."

Dan Quinn, a spokesman for the Texas Freedom Network who's written about Hotze repeatedly over the years, said SPLC's hate-group designation adds legitimacy to LGBT advocates' contention that the anti-HERO campaign was rooted in deception and fear-mongering. "The fact that this organization has identified Hotze and his organization as a

hate group is pretty substantial," Quinn said. "It's also important to note that Hotze has all these ties with other major politicians in the state. That says a lot about the state of politics in Texas right now."

Quinn said CRT's hate-group status could be beneficial to LGBT advocates if and when HERO appears on the ballot again—but only if people know about it. "That means supporters of equality and antidiscrimination measures have to be willing to point that out, in a very public way," he said.

In recent weeks, Hotze has appeared at campaign events across the state alongside former Harris County GOP chair Jared Woodfill, who served as a spokesman for the anti-HERO campaign and is now running for chair of the Republican Party of Texas. "This is kind of a network they've created here, of people who think very much along the same lines, →

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Location: Discovery Green park, Downtown. Photo Credit: Spenser Harrison

which should be disturbing,” Quinn said. “If you’re a Republican in this state, I would be a little appalled that these folks have that kind of influence over the primaries and over the platform.”

Hotze, who recently said HERO was linked to a “Satanic movement,” didn’t immediately respond to a message seeking comment. According to CRT’s website, the organization is dedicated to advancing “Constitutional liberties based upon Biblical principles.”

At an anti-LGBT rally last summer, Hotze wielded a sword on stage, compared LGBT people to Nazis, and pledged to drive “homofascists” from Houston to San Francisco. After the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in favor of nationwide marriage equality, Hotze said justices that sided with the majority opinion “hate God” and “want to let sodomites queer our country,” and that the decision would lead to kindergarten teachers encouraging their students to try anal sex.

CRT becomes SPLC’s fourth anti-LGBT hate group in Texas and its first in Houston, joining Tom Brown Ministries of El Paso, Probe Ministries of Plano, and Stedfast Baptist Church of Fort Worth. Three of the four were added to SPLC’s list in the last two years, and

the number of anti-LGBT hate groups nationwide has nearly doubled since 2011, when there were only 27. “These groups have had a series of losses that have them in a white-hot fury,” SPLC’s Potok said. “People who resent LGBT people and the gains they’ve made are organizing, but it’s very much a rear-guard action. These groups are really vile and nasty, but

These groups are really vile and nasty, but they’re losing the battle, and ultimately they’re going to lose the war.”

they’re losing the battle, and ultimately they’re going to lose the war.”

In the face of mounting losses in the U.S., Potok said more anti-LGBT groups are turning their attention overseas, leading efforts to make homosexuality illegal in some countries. Anti-LGBT hate groups are also increasingly targeting transgender people, which contributed to an increase in anti-trans violence last year, including at least 23 murders. “Transgender people, and in particular transgender women of color, are the single most victimized group of people in the United States,” Potok said. “These are people whom it is apparently

still all right to hate.”

The surge in anti-LGBT organizations contributed to a 14 percent increase in the total number of hate groups in 2015, from 784 in 2014 to 892. It was the first overall increase in five years, and SPLC said that thanks to politicians like Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump—who graces the cover of this year’s “Intelligence Report”—the nation is more polarized and angry than it’s been since the political turmoil of 1968.

In spite of the dramatic increase in anti-LGBT activity, the overall spike in hate groups was fueled mostly by new Ku Klux Klan chapters and black separatist groups, as well as anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim organizations, SPLC said.

“While the number of extremist groups grew in 2015 after several years of declines, the real story was the deadly violence committed by extremists in city after city,” Potok said. “After seeing the bloodshed that defined 2015, our politicians should have worked to defuse this anger and bring us together as a nation. Unfortunately, the carnage did little to dissuade some political figures from spouting incendiary rhetoric about minorities. In fact, they frequently exploited the anger and polarization across the country for political gain.” ■

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart



On January 26, Marathon Oil presented a check to AIDS Foundation Houston during the AIDS Walk 2016 Kickoff at El Big Bad.



A memorial service for Lucy Ann Watson, former president of the Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI), was held on February 20.



Pride Houston revealed its 2016 logo and grand marshal nominees on January 28 at Pearl Bar.



Nicholas Whiddon of Woodforest Bank presented a check to OutReach United during the organization’s “OutReach Goes Vegas” night at Jaguar Central Houston. Pictured are Whiddon, Justin Fuselier, Desmond Bertrand, Justin Pitts, and Tony White.



The ACT OUT performance of *All The Way* was held on February 11 at the Alley Theatre. Pictured are Shelley Finley, Shannon Lacy, Glynda McGinnis, Andrew Coles, and Brandon Weinbrenner.



On January 29, Yupon Place hosted the Fine Arts Network Art Pop Up featuring Justin Hinojosa, Kevin Meinhardt, and friends.



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Please see Brief Summary of Patient Information with
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Brief Summary of Patient Information about GENVOYA

GENVOYA (jen-VOY-uh) (elvitegravir, cobicistat, emtricitabine, and tenofovir alafenamide) tablets

Important: Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA.

There may be new information about GENVOYA. This information is only a summary and does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is the most important information I should know about GENVOYA?

GENVOYA can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Build-up of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis).** Lactic acidosis may happen in some people who take GENVOYA. Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Lactic acidosis can be hard to identify early, because the symptoms could seem like symptoms of other health problems. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of lactic acidosis:**

- feel very weak or tired
- have unusual (not normal) muscle pain
- have trouble breathing
- have stomach pain with nausea or vomiting
- feel cold, especially in your arms and legs
- feel dizzy or lightheaded
- have a fast or irregular heartbeat

- **Severe liver problems.** Severe liver problems may happen in people who take GENVOYA. In some cases, these liver problems can lead to death. Your liver may become large and you may develop fat in your liver.

Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms of liver problems:

- your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice)
- dark “tea-colored” urine
- light-colored bowel movements (stools)
- loss of appetite for several days or longer
- nausea
- stomach pain

- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking GENVOYA for a long time.**
- **Worsening of Hepatitis B infection.** GENVOYA is not for use to treat chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV). If you have HBV infection and take GENVOYA, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking GENVOYA. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.
 - Do not run out of GENVOYA. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your GENVOYA is all gone.
 - Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider.
 - If you stop taking GENVOYA, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your HBV infection. Tell your healthcare provider about any new or unusual symptoms you may have after you stop taking GENVOYA.

What is GENVOYA?

GENVOYA is a prescription medicine that is used without other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older:

- who have not received HIV-1 medicines in the past **or**
- to replace their current HIV-1 medicines in people who have been on the same HIV-1 medicines for at least 6 months, have an amount of HIV-1 in their blood (“viral load”) that is less than 50 copies/mL, and have never failed past HIV-1 treatment

HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

GENVOYA contains the prescription medicines elvitegravir (VITEKTA®), cobicistat (TYBOST®), emtricitabine (EMTRIVA®) and tenofovir alafenamide.

It is not known if GENVOYA is safe and effective in children under 12 years of age.

When used to treat HIV-1 infection, GENVOYA may:

- Reduce the amount of HIV-1 in your blood. This is called “viral load”.
- Increase the number of CD4+ (T) cells in your blood that help fight off other infections.

Reducing the amount of HIV-1 and increasing the CD4+ (T) cells in your blood may help improve your immune system. This may reduce your risk of death or getting infections that can happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

GENVOYA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV-1 infection to others:

- Do not share or re-use needles or other injection equipment.
- Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades.
- Do not have any kind of sex without protection. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have any questions about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to other people.

Who should not take GENVOYA?

Do not take GENVOYA if you also take a medicine that contains:

- alfuzosin hydrochloride (Uroxatral®)
- carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Epitol®, Equetro®, Tegretol®, Tegretol-XR®, Teril®)
- cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid Quicksolv®)
- ergot-containing medicines, including: dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), and methylergonovine maleate (Ergotrate®, Methergine®)
- lovastatin (Advicor®, Altoprev®, Mevacor®)
- midazolam, when taken by mouth
- phenobarbital (Luminal®)
- phenytoin (Dilantin®, Phenytek®)
- pimozide (Orap®)
- rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®), when used for treating lung problems
- simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®)
- triazolam (Halcion®)
- the herb St. John’s wort or a product that contains St. John’s wort

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking GENVOYA?

Before taking GENVOYA, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have liver problems including hepatitis B infection
- have kidney or bone problems
- have any other medical conditions
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if GENVOYA can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking GENVOYA.

Pregnancy registry: there is a pregnancy registry for women who take HIV-1 medicines during pregnancy. The purpose of this registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can take part in this registry.

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you take GENVOYA.
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - At least one of the medicines in GENVOYA can pass to your baby in your breast milk. It is not known if the other medicines in GENVOYA can pass into your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how GENVOYA works. Some medicines may interact with GENVOYA. **Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.**

- You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with GENVOYA.
- Do not start a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take GENVOYA with other medicines.

How should I take GENVOYA?

- Take GENVOYA exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to take it. GENVOYA is taken by itself (not with other HIV-1 medicines) to treat HIV-1 infection.
- GENVOYA is usually taken 1 time each day.
- Take GENVOYA with food.
- If you need to take a medicine for indigestion (antacid) that contains aluminum and magnesium hydroxide or calcium carbonate during treatment with GENVOYA, take it at least 2 hours before or after you take GENVOYA.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking GENVOYA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking GENVOYA.
- Do not miss a dose of GENVOYA.
- If you take too much GENVOYA, call your healthcare provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.
- When your GENVOYA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to GENVOYA and become harder to treat.

What are the possible side effects of GENVOYA?

GENVOYA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **See “What is the most important information I should know about GENVOYA?”**
- **Changes in body fat can happen in people who take HIV-1 medicine.** These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck (“buffalo hump”), breast, and around the middle of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The exact cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known.
- **Changes in your immune system** (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome) can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having any new symptoms after starting your HIV-1 medicine.
- **New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before you start and while you are taking GENVOYA. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking GENVOYA if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems** can happen in some people who take GENVOYA. Bone problems may include bone pain, softening or thinning (which may lead to fractures). Your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

- These are not all the possible side effects of GENVOYA. For more information, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

General information about the safe and effective use of GENVOYA.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use GENVOYA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give GENVOYA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This Brief Summary summarizes the most important information about GENVOYA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about GENVOYA that is written for health professionals.

For more information, call **1-800-445-3235** or go to **www.GENVOYA.com**.

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Calendar of Events

Compiled by Marene Gustin



Canon

An amazing photo exhibit you'll want to see.



McClain Gallery presents the U.S. debut of *Canon*, a striking exhibition composed of two series of photographs by collaborative artists Juan Jose Barboza-Gubo and Andrew Mroczek (pictured at left). The exhibit by the Peruvian and American artists is part of the Fotofest 2016 Biennial of photography and mixed media arts; the theme this year is Changing Circumstances: Looking at the Future of the Planet. The artists' hope is that the astonishing exhibit will

increase dialog and promote awareness for the LGBT community.

The now-Boston-based artists spent much of last year photographing the plight of Peru's mercurial transgender community as part of their ambitious project called *Virgenes de la Puerta* (*Virgins of the Door*). The powerful nudes juxtaposed with icons of Peruvian culture, including many religious symbols, are startling and beautiful. There will be an artists reception at the gallery on March 18, 6–8 p.m. —**Marene Gustin**

Iconic Figures

The work of Juan Jose Barboza-Gubo and Andrew Mroczek is both a celebration of the Peruvian LGBTQ community and a reaction to the ongoing violence they face. The above photos from the *Virgenes de la Puerta* series (l-r): Paola, Nazia, and Maricielo.

Canon
March 18–May 14
McClain Gallery
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📻 Radio ★ Performing Arts 📺 Art & Photography 🔄 Ongoing + Other Things 📅 Save The Date

1

The Sleeping Beauty ★ thru 5th
A must-see ballet for all.
houstonballet.org

Trojan Women ★ thru 5th
The antiwar classic set in modern Africa. **obsidiantheater.org**

2

End of the Rainbow ★ thru April 10
Stages favorite Carolyn Johnson stars as Judy Garland in a savagely funny and deeply moving portrait of the American star. **stagetheatre.com** (See page 77.)

3

Loreena McKennitt ★ The composer and singer comes to Houston.
ticketmaster.com

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ★ The Edward Albee classic. **starknakedtheatre.com** (See page 19.)

4

Cameron Carpenter ★ The out maverick organist blends brilliant technique with the heart of a rock star. **spahouston.org**

5

Picture It! ★ A Charlie Chaplin flick with the Houston Pride Band.
houstonprideband.org
Constructing the Dance 📺 thru 31st
The paintings and prints of Kevin Cromwell. **archwaygallery.com**

6

AIDS Walk Houston + Join the Red Umbrella Stroll. **aidshep.org**
The Capitol Steps ★ Tired of politics? Go see this. **thegrand.com**
Premieres ★ A yearly concert of modern music. **modernmusic.org**



8

Disney's Mary Poppins + thru 20th
A magical, musical, chim-chim-chiroo-sical. **tuts.com**

9

An Evening on Lesbian Pregnancy +
All aspects of lesbian baby-making presented by Path2Parenthood at the Montrose Center. Email for more info: corey@path2parenthood.org

10

The Baby ★ *thru 19th* A family, an election, and a past collide in the present. nextiterationtheater.com
A Midsummer Night's Dream ★ & 11th, 12th Presented by actors from London. arts.rice.edu (See page 19.)



12

8th Annual Halloween Car Show +
Rescheduled from October, it's now an Easter-ween car show. nmfh.org
What Shall We Do Next? + *thru 19th* Group exhibition examines technology and advertising. diverseworks.org

13

The Rob Landes Trio ★ A musical celebration of Broadway. thegrand.com

14

The Health Museum's Discovery Camp + *thru 18th* For little campers ages 5 to 13. thehealthmuseum.org

15

Wolfmother ★ Celebrating their new album *Victorious*. wolfmother.com



17

The Sweet Potato Queen ★ *thru 27th*
A new southern-themed musical from TUTS Underground. tutsunderground.com

18

Bringin' in the Green + Come party and support the Montrose Center. montrosecenter.org (See page 19.)

19

6th Annual Haute Wheels + & 20
It's a food-truck fiesta! hautewheelshouston.com
Guillermo Klein ★ See the Argentine composer and pianist. dacamera.com

20

Dust Bowl Motel ★ *last day* A drama with live music and video. crightontheatre.org
1946 ★ *thru April 17* The lives of a Texas family after World War II. mainstreettheater.com

21

Mixed and Mastered: Turntable Kitsch 🖼️ *thru May 8*
Art from everyday objects, plus three other exhibits from resident artists. crafthouston.org

22

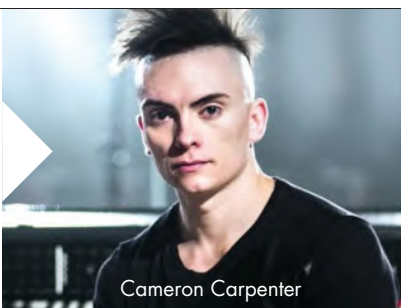
Cabaret ★ *thru 27th*
Willkommen, bienvenue, welcome! broadwayatthehobbycenter.com

23

Change of Engagement: The Photography of Serge Timacheff 🖼️
thru 31st Amazing photos of fencers. prtl.uhcl.edu

24

William N. Copley: The World According to CPLY 🖼️ *thru July 24*
The exhibition includes 118 works by Copley. menil.org



Cameron Carpenter

26

Todd Snyder ★ Music from one of his albums. crightontheatre.org
Box 13 ArtSpace 🖼️ *thru April 30* Three exhibits in conjunction with the FotoFest 2016 Biennial. Opening reception today. box13artspace.com

27

Happy Easter!

28

The Precarious 🖼️ *thru May 1* An exhibit honoring the art of the collage at The Menil. menil.org
Eye on Houston 🖼️ The 21st annual exhibit of high-school documentary photography. mfah.org

29

Honoring Olivewood 🖼️ *last day*
A photographic exhibit of the city's oldest African-American cemetery. nmfh.org

30

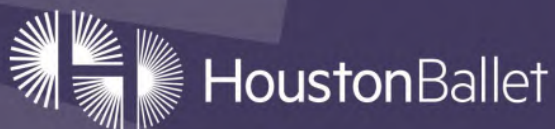
Sculpted in Steel 🖼️ *last day*
Art deco automobiles and motorcycles, 1929–1940. mfah.org

31

Confronting Inequality: Alternative Economies, Resilient Communities + *thru April 3* A four-day symposium exploring economic inequality and ways communities sustain local economies. rothkochapel.org



Terry Tempest Williams



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Calendar of Events

continued from page 17

End of the Rainbow

March 2–April 10

2–April 10

Judy Garland's final months, spent in London in 1969, were much like her life—filled with booze and drugs and the wrong men. But there was also much music as she performed at The Talk of the Town. Peter Quilter's 2005 musical drama about this period is filled with Judy's most memorable songs, and Stage's very own Carolyn Johnson is Judy. You'll be stunned as she belts out "Come Rain or Come Shine." If you're a Judy fan, you'll want to see this story of a star who burned too bright. **OUTSMART** Night performance on March 9. (See page 77)

stagetheatre.com

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

March 3–26

3–26

One of Houston's favorite acting couples—Philip Lehl and Kim Tobin-Lehl—portray the bitter George and Martha in Edward Albee's 1962 classic this month at Stark Naked Theatre Co. The role of Martha won Dame Elizabeth Taylor one of her Oscars in the 1966 film version, and the stage version has never been far from the footlights. The 2012 revival won a Tony Award for actor Tracy Letts and rave reviews from the *New York Times*. Jennifer Dean directs the Houston production.

starknakedtheatre.com

A Midsummer Night's Dream

March 10, 11, & 22

10, 11, & 22

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" And you'll be a fool if you don't get tickets to this Shakespeare classic comedy presented by actors from The London Stage, a troupe founded by Patrick Stewart. The touring theater troupe based in London and the University of Notre Dame in the U.S. will be in residency at Rice University starting March 10. Now in its 37th year, the company tours universities to give students and faculty a chance to see firsthand a classic English production. Fairies, love, and ass-headed Bottom abound.

arts.rice.edu

Bringin' in the Green

March 5

18

Come party and support the Montrose Center at this annual Saint Paddy's Day fundraiser. This is the 27th party, and it promises to be great fun. At the home of Brian Flores and Nathan Foyil, there will be ample street parking, hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and a silent auction. Come early (5 p.m.), and stay until closing at 8 p.m. Just be sure to wear green, so you don't get pinched! But do bring the pocketbook, because some of their auction items sound awesome. Tickets are \$35, or \$30 for seniors, at montrosecenter.givezooks.com. ■

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Uh...

a Nobel Peace Prize given to Donald Trump?

Honey, I am stumped, baffled, perplexed, confused, and some other stuff that doesn't even have a name yet.

I just learned that Donald Trump has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Yeah, the same Donald Trump who has insulted every race other than his own—namely Old White Nincompoops. Yeah, the same Donald Trump who instructs followers at his rallies to commit stunning acts of hillbilly violence against audience members who disagree with him. “Hit him with a tire iron, Bobby Joe” seems to be how one should respond to constructive criticism at a Trump rally.

Holy crapamole, y'all. The Peace Prize?!

My friend Verdellia over at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc., says *she's* never been nominated, and she's a lot more peaceful than Donald Trump. (Well, except for that time she shot her second husband, Clyve T. “Bygawd” Frontage.)

In her defense, Clyve had it comin'. I mean, there's only so much dirty-T-shirt-on-the-couch belching and scratching that a woman can endure. And it wasn't like she didn't warn him 40 11 dozen times. So when he got drunk at her nephew's wedding and passed out looking like he spent the night in the dishwasher, ending up serving as a large and unfragrant centerpiece for the majority of the reception, she got the shotgun.

There wasn't a grand jury in Houston that dared to indict her. The women on the jury understood her circumstances, and the men understood that a lot of women in Houston have shotguns. For the most part, that's all some men need to understand.

So anyway, I looked up how one gets nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

By all accounts, a nomination and a prize are not the same thing. Here's what it says on the Internet: “The Nobel committee invites thousands of people every year to nominate Peace Prize recipients. Hundreds of candidates nor-

By all accounts, a nomination and a prize are not the same thing.

mally reach the desk of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.”

Okay, that makes me feel a little better. Hell, I don't suspect any of my friends know the address of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which explains nicely why I have been inadvertently overlooked for this award since 1956. Honey, I was born with glitter in my veins, and there really ought to be an award for that.

All that aside, I cannot imagine what possessed someone to nominate Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize. I mean, maybe he'd have a chance at winning Fannie LaBoomBoom's Las Vegas Revue and Bowling Tournament Man of the Year. I could understand that. Employee of the Month at the Flint, Michigan, Water Plant—sure. Hell, I'd even nominate him for the prestigious Pitworthy Hank of Hog Prize from Shorty's Barbeque.

But here's what baffles me. The article I found on the Internet goes on to say, “. . . and previous nominees have included Russian President Vladimir Putin, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, and U2 singer Bono.”

Okay, so I *get* the irony. I mean, it's kinda funny to compare Donald Trump to Putin and Stalin. But Bono? What the dickens did Bono ever do to get compared to Putin, Stalin, and Donald Trump? I never thought Bono was eating out of the same feedbag as those fellas. Best I know, Bono is a nice person.

I bet Bono is mad as the dickens, darlin'.

Hell, Verdellia is mad, and she doesn't even know who Bono is. (Truth be told, she barely knows who Putin and Stalin are.) Okay, the real truth is that Verdellia has been in a real bad mood since 1977, when Elvis died without having married her even once.

In other news, I just learned at deadline that Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia has died at a West Texas ranch. Since I am a polite, well-reared Texas woman, I will simply say that I hope God greets him with all the respect, dignity, and kindness that Scalia denied to others.

In one famous court decision, Scalia wrote that the Texas ban on homosexual sex “undeniably seeks to further the belief of its citizens that certain forms of sexual behavior are ‘immoral and unacceptable,’” like laws against “fornication, bigamy, adultery, adult incest, bestiality, and obscenity.”

That man was so mean that he'd make a hornet look cuddly.

Scalia was so full of *caca del toro* that I think we need to honor his memory by naming a disease after him. Something like The Scalia Memorial Virus—you don't get sick, but you do get totally pissed off.

Vaya *con* your stinkin' attitude, Scalia.

Friends, I hope March brings each and every one of you giggles on the wind.

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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Turning 65

Should you take Medicare or hang on to employer-sponsored health insurance coverage?



If you'll be turning 65 soon, you're likely aware that you will be eligible for health insurance benefits through Medicare. But if you (or your partner or spouse) are still working for an employer that provides you with health insurance coverage, should you go ahead and sign up for Medicare or hang on to the health insurance you've already got? The good news is that you may actually be able to do both.

Because most people don't pay a premium for Medicare Part A, there's really no reason not to move forward with enrolling in this portion of Medicare coverage—even if you're still gainfully employed and covered through an employer-sponsored benefit plan. Part A of Medicare covers hospitalization—which includes inpatient care in a hospital, as well as in some skilled-nursing and hospice facilities.

Medicare Part B is a different story, though. Part B of Medicare covers services like lab tests and doctor visits, as well as certain medical supplies such as wheelchairs and walkers that are considered necessary for treating a condition or a disease.

With this part of Medicare, most people are liable for a 10 percent penalty on their premium for each year that they delay their enrollment after they become eligible. However, the penalty won't apply to those who remain enrolled in a health-insurance plan through their current employer.

Therefore, if you stay in your employer-sponsored benefit plan (or your partner or spouse's plan), you won't need to worry about the Medicare Part B penalty if you wait to enroll in this portion of Medicare until a later time—as long as you apply for Part B prior to the employer's plan

ending, and you don't go more than 63 days without any health insurance coverage at all.

It is important to note that in some cases, an employer-sponsored health-insurance plan may require you to enroll in Medicare Part B as soon as you are eligible—so it is a good idea to inquire with your employee-benefits or human-resources department in order to be certain.

Also, if you work for a company that has 20 or fewer employees and you do enroll in Medicare Part B, then this would be considered your primary insurance coverage. In this case, Medicare Part B would pay first for healthcare services that you receive, and your employer-sponsored health insurance plan would pay for any unpaid balance after that.

How and When to Apply for Medicare Once You Retire

Once you have retired—and if you have not already enrolled in Medicare Part A and/or Part B—then you will need to do so during a Special Enrollment Period. This period will start after your employment ends or the group health insurance plan based on your current employment ends—whichever occurs first. Typically, an individual will not be liable for a late-enrollment penalty if they sign up for Medicare during a Special Enrollment Period.

If you haven't already done so, you may also want to enroll in Medicare Part D coverage for prescription drugs. These plans are not offered through Medicare directly, but rather via insurance carriers and private companies that are approved by Medicare.

In most instances, you will be liable for a late-enrollment penalty if you don't enroll in a Medicare Part D plan when you initially become eligible, and you have been without creditable prescription drug coverage for more than 63 continuous days. Creditable prescription drug coverage means coverage (usually from an employer or union plan) that would be expected to pay out, on average, at least as much as Medicare's standard prescription drug coverage.

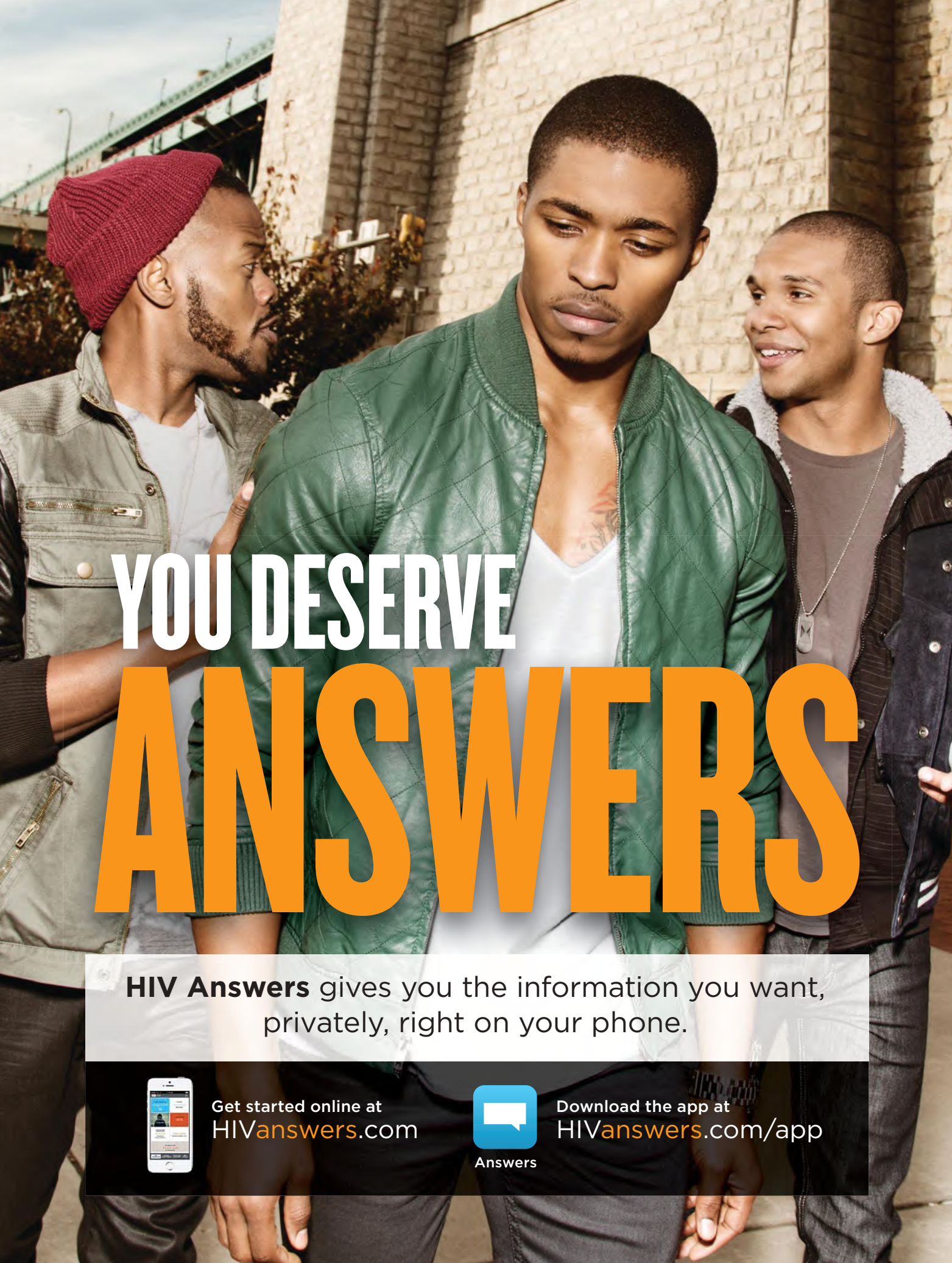
In order to apply for a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, you can enroll through one of the various insurers that offers this coverage in your demographic area. More information about these plans can be found on Medicare's website at medicare.gov.

Going with the Alternative—Medicare Advantage

Rather than enrolling in Medicare Parts A and B—which are referred to as Original Medicare—some people choose to instead receive their Medicare benefits through an alternative Medicare Advantage plan.

Medicare Advantage plans, also known as Medicare Part C, are also offered through private insurance carriers that are approved by Medicare. These plans are required to offer all of the same benefits that are provided by Medicare A and B, and they also provide additional coverage such as dental and vision.

There are a wide variety of Medicare Advantage plans to choose from. Some of these operate in an HMO (Health Maintenance Organization) or PPO (Preferred Provider →



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MONEYSMART

continued from page 22

Organization) format, meaning that participants are required to obtain a referral before seeing a specialist, and are charged less for seeing providers who are listed within a network.

There are also other, more specialized types of Medicare Advantage plans as well, including Special Needs Plans, Coordinated Care Plans, Medicare Medical Savings Account Plans, Cost Plans, and even Religious and Fraternal Benefit Society Plans.

In order to be eligible for Medicare Advantage, you need to be entitled to Medicare Part A and also be enrolled in Medicare Part B. You must also be sure that you live within the service area of the Medicare Advantage plan that you wish to enroll in.

It's important to note, though, that Medicare Advantage is not the same thing as Medicare Supplement insurance, or "Medigap." Medicare Supplement is a type of coverage that can be purchased by those who are enrolled in Original Medicare (Parts A and B) as a way to help in paying for some of Medicare's out-of-pocket charges like deductibles and co-payments. In fact, if you own a Medicare Advantage plan, you are not eligible to purchase Medicare Supplement insurance.

The Bottom Line on Medicare Enrollment

Regardless of when you opt to enroll in Medicare, or which Medicare alternative you decide to go with, it's important to remember that this is a health insurance program that you will likely have for many years—so be sure to research all of your options before choosing the one that works best for you.

You will also want to ensure that you coordinate your coverage as best you can with any other insurance that you may have, and that you avoid any potential penalties, as these can permanently increase the cost of your Medicare premiums going forward.

In addition, if you are married, you may want to check your Medicare eligibility—even if you don't personally have enough work credits on your own. Another nice advantage of same-sex marriage is the fact that Medicare benefits can now be made available to non-working spouses. So it could be well worth checking into where you or your spouse stands—especially if you don't have any other viable or affordable alternatives available.

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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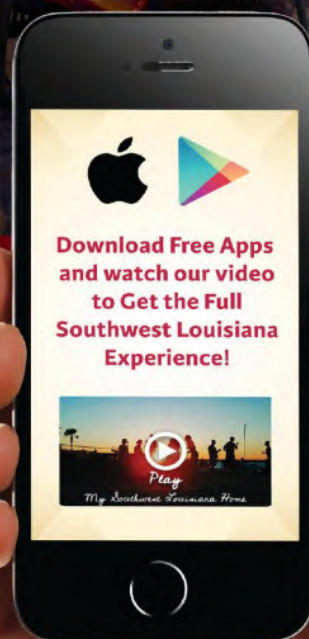
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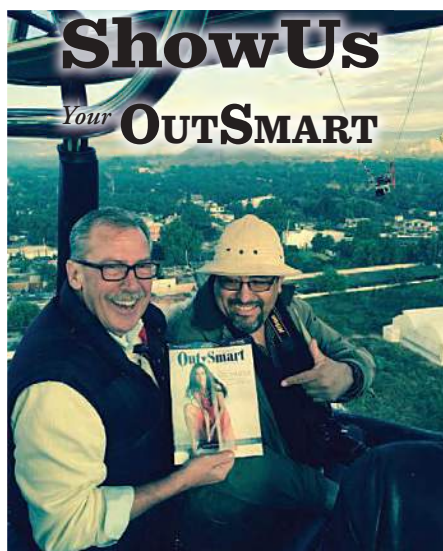


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FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Check out these fabulous events co-sponsored by OUTSMART and our marketing partners.

March 5: Houston Pride Band presents **Picture It**, a world-premiere silent film score to Charlie Chaplin's *The Champion*, benefitting the Band. INFO: houstonprideband.org

March 6: AIDS Walk Houston 2016 benefitting AIDS Foundation Houston, as well as other local HIV/AIDS charities. INFO: aidswalkhouston.org

March 9: OUTSMART Night at **End of the Rainbow** presented by Stages Theatre. INFO: stages theatre.com/shows

March 10: Out@TUTS Night presents **Mary Poppins**, the Broadway 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 at Artista Restaurant. INFO: tuts.com/out

March 19: The Diana Foundation presents the **63rd Annual Diana Awards**, benefitting local charities. INFO: thedianafoundation.org

March 18: Bringin' in the Green presented by The Montrose Center, benefitting the Center. INFO: montrosecenter.org



March 27: Bunnies on the Bayou 37. Benefitting multiple charities. INFO: bunniesonthebayou.org

SAVE THE DATE

April 7: Out@TUTS Night presents **Oliver**, the Broadway 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 at Artista Restaurant. INFO: tuts.com/out

April 16: Oodles of Noodles "All You Can Eat Pasta" benefitting Bering Support Network. INFO: beringsupportnetwork.org

April 17: Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund Houston Champagne Brunch, benefitting future LGBT leaders. INFO: victoryfund.org/houston

April 21: Pride Houston 2016 Kickoff Party and grand marshal announcement. INFO: pridehouston.org

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REGIONAL PREMIERE

END OF THE RAINBOW

by Peter Quilter

Stages favorite Carolyn Johnson stars as Judy Garland in a savagely funny and deeply moving portrait of the beloved star. Showcasing Garland's indomitable talent and wit, this musical drama captures the majesty of her fearless performances against the backdrop of her troubled life offstage.

DIRECTED BY Kenn McLaughlin

STARRING Carolyn Johnson as Judy Garland

March 2 - April 10, 2016

OutSmart Night - March 9

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Recommended for mature audiences. The equivalent movie rating would be 'R'.



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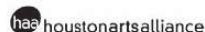
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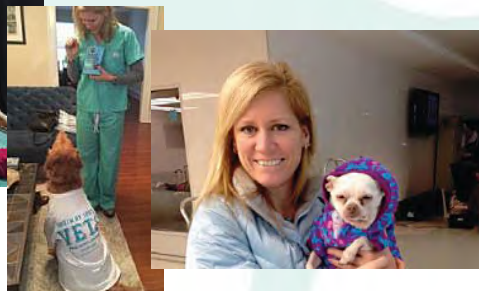


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A Shepherd for Houston's Animals

Friends for Life director Salise Shuttlesworth gives the city's displaced animals a second chance at forever homes.

By Barrett White



J. PATRIC SCHNEIDER/HOUSTON CHRONICLE

③ **A Feline Fighter**
Rocky Balboa (l) is the ears, eyes, and whiskers of Friends for Life, a no-kill animal shelter in the Heights. This former feral overcame mange, major dental surgery, and diabetes. He is FIV-positive, a senior, and an example of a cat who would not make it out of a traditional shelter program alive. As the shelter's mascot, Rocky joins director Salise Shuttlesworth (r) on guided facility tours.

Salise Shuttlesworth knows that every pet life matters. And that's not a belief she holds lightly.

Shuttlesworth, who hails from Sugar Land, is an animal activist, out lesbian, and proud pet parent to six cats, two dogs, and three ferrets. She's also the founding face behind Friends for Life, a no-kill animal adoption and rescue shelter in the Heights that specializes in the adoptions of dogs, cats, and the occasional ferret. Friends for Life is the only LEED-certified no-kill shelter in Houston, and one of roughly 200 in the nation.

"In 1989, a man named Edward Duvin coined the term 'no kill' in an article called 'In the Name of Mercy,'" Shuttlesworth explains. "He was not an animal activist at all, but a

social-justice newspaper publisher, author, activist, organizer, and the chair of an ethics institute. He's been a treasured mentor of mine since the beginning."

For today's animal lovers, the no-kill movement might seem like a fairly straightforward idea—a shelter where every animal is adopted by a loving family, and not a single one meets their end by euthanasia. Makes humane sense, right? Sadly, in the not-too-distant past, it didn't even seem possible that a no-kill shelter could last in Houston—a city where the sheer number of homeless pets has been called an "epidemic." Past attempts to create a no-kill shelter have been dismissed as fervent activism.

"I had a love for animals before I ever knew the word *activism*," Shuttlesworth says. "But

I don't know that I'm much of an activist. My strength is more in doing things that seem pragmatic. If we believe we owe life to a dog who is too terrified to come out of his cage, we'd better get a plan around how to rehabilitate him—and a business plan to scale and sustain [our goals]. But let's go with 'activist.' It sounds cooler than 'planning wonk.'"

After attending the University of Texas at Austin and earning a law degree, Shuttlesworth returned to the Bayou City, where it didn't take long to notice that Houston, we have a problem. Houston's longstanding shelters used tricky language to deem certain animals as "unadoptable," thereby allowing shelters to justify euthanizing problem animals. →



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A SHEPHERD FOR HOUSTON'S ANIMALS

continued from previous page

"The 'unadoptable' groups include animals like pit bulls, seniors, cats with FIV, dogs who are evaluated as behavior challenges, nursing kittens and puppies, pregnant mothers, animals missing hair, with a cold, or with myriad other treatable conditions like heartworms or kennel cough," Shuttlesworth says. "One shelter in Houston proudly states, 'We adopt out 100 percent of our adoptable animals.' It sounds great until you think carefully about the language, and who doesn't get on that lifeboat."

Combining her love for animals and business know-how, Shuttlesworth decided to challenge the notion that a no-kill shelter couldn't survive in Houston. Along with the help of two close friends, she founded what would come to be known as Friends for Life. "We just traveled, read, built a team, and planned," she says. "We were determined to start the shelter with a plan—not with animals." After two years of planning, Shuttlesworth and her friends-turned-activist-partners took in their first adoptable animal.

"Salise was able to create Friends for Life and get it off the ground in a time of no-kill naysayers," adds Marilyn Oliver, the organization's operations manager. "She changed the landscape of Houston animal sheltering."

Friends for Life initially started holding adoptions at the PetSmart on Shepherd at West Alabama, operating solely out of that store for four years. In 2008, the organization was able to open a brick-and-mortar shelter of their own on West 19th Street. But at less than 3,000 square feet, the operation quickly overwhelmed the space. "The business grew wildly, and we outgrew that space within a year," Shuttlesworth says.

In 2012, with a generous donation from Don Sanders, Friends for Life opened their new, larger Heights location at 107 E. 22nd Street. But even then, Shuttlesworth knew that their new location would need to expand, since there is always work to be done. Today, her team of activists offers a plethora of services in Houston, including Fix Houston, part of the "Healthy Pets, Healthy Streets" initiative that teams with Houston's municipal BARC shelter to offer free neuter, spay, and vaccination services in low-income parts of town. (Friends for Life offers these services to families with cats, while BARC specializes in

dogs.) Through Fix Houston, Friends for Life has fixed over 1,500 cats, stabilized 489 feral cat colonies, and prevented more than 30,000 births, keeping stray cats off the streets to an impressive degree.

Although Friends for Life helps those furry friends already on the street, they also do their best to prevent pet homelessness from happening in the first place. The organization has donated over two tons of food to their food bank to help pet owners who need assistance in caring for their pet. Additionally, the Friends for Life crew has clocked in hundreds of hours of free behavioral consults and provided micro-grants for veterinary services. They even sent a crew out to help a family build a fence that allowed them to keep their dog.

"I think of one gentleman who pushed his cats in a shopping cart over a mile to get in line by 5 a.m. to have them spayed and vaccinated," Shuttlesworth says as she recalls one of her most rewarding moments thus far. "People bring flashlights and lawn chairs to line up with their animals pre-dawn at surgery events.

Some have walked long distances with their animals to get the services."

Friends for Life employees and volunteers find their greatest rewards in the smallest of moments: a death-row dog finding comfort in his first soft bed in a real home; a senior or diabetic animal finding a new forever-family, or the fact that, to date, Friends for Life has adopted out over 8,000 furry family members, an estimated 75 percent of whom would have been deemed "unadoptable" at other shelters. Since 2008, the Friends for Life adoption rates have accelerated by a stunning 580 percent.

"I remember Pepperoni, the blind cat who not only was adopted, but who learned

tricks for a video!" Shuttlesworth laughs. "I also loved that our behaviorist referred to *Pepps* as a 'beautiful and courageous person.'"

The future of Houston's animal-rescue services looks to be just as remarkable. Friends for Life has commissioned the renowned architecture and design firm Gensler to construct a medical clinic adjacent to their Heights facility. This new Friends for Life shelter clinic will also provide an affordably-priced veterinary medical care option to the public, and offer surgical support to the Fix Houston spay-and-neuter program.

For more information on Friends for Life, visit friends4life.org.

Barrett White is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



Little Love

A rarity in animal shelters, Friends for Life hosts dozens of bottle-fed puppies in its program.

Houston's Top 5 Dog Parks

Let your four-legged friend frolic on these canine-friendly grounds.

By Joanna O'Leary

While many doggie owners in northern states still have limited options for pet-friendly outdoor activities (thanks to this winter's deluge of snowstorms), we here in Houston are in prime season for al fresco romps with our pooches. Fortunately, H-town boasts multiple places for you and your dog companions to play with others. Here, then, is OutSmart's Top-Five List of best Houston dog parks:

5 Danny Jackson Family Dog Park 4700 Westpark Dr.

Although not in the most aesthetically pleasing location (flanked on both sides by a highway and office buildings), Danny Jackson Family Dog Park makes this list because its location means less crowds, and the long lawn and shallow pools make for great spaces to sprint and scamper. Regulars at the park have remarked on the general friendliness of the other dog owners, many of whom are quick to share tennis balls for playing fetch.

4 Ervan Chew Dog Park 4502 Dunlavy St.

Ervan Chew Dog Park doubles as a playground, which makes it pretty much perfect if you have human as well as canine babies. On warm days, doggies splash around in the small pool, kiddies enjoy the swing sets, and parents with frosty beverages look on from the picnic tables. One caveat: Ervan Chew's modest size means it can be chaotic and crowded at peak times.

3 Johnny Steele Dog Park 2929 Allen Pkwy.

Located along scenic Buffalo Bayou, Johnny Steele Dog Park boasts plenty of open spaces as well as free "poop" bags, so there's no excuse for not cleaning up! In hot weather, puppies can cool down in the pond area; owners, in turn, can seek shelter on the shaded benches. The park sees significant action in the early evenings just before twilight and on weekends, so avoid those times if you or your dog are feeling unsociable.

2 Millie Bush Dog Park 16756 Westheimer Rd.

A perennial favorite, Millie Bush Dog Park makes it onto nearly every "best dog parks in Houston" list (including ours) due to its gi-normous size and thoughtful segregated areas for small and large dogs, each with its own pool. Patrons also rave about the consistent upkeep of the landscaping and the stunning views at sunset.

1 Dog Run at Market Square Park 301 Milam St.

This park, instituted in honor of dog advocate Holly Anawaty, is ridiculously convenient for residents of downtown, while also serving as a nice destination for Houstonians and hounds looking to frolic in a different neck of the woods. Separate areas are available for different-sized pooches, and a well-lit walkway means your playdate can extend into the later evening.

Joanna O'Leary is a freelance writer based in Houston. Her exploits are chronicled on brideyoleary.com.



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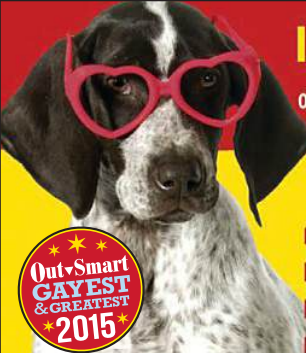
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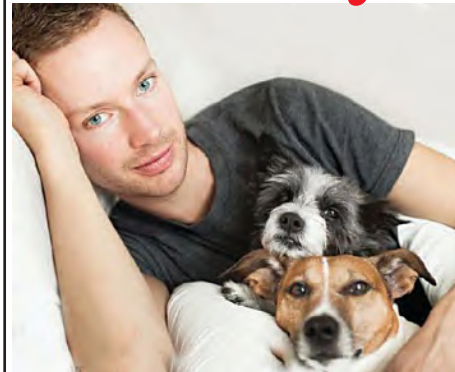
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Hello, Doggie!

Two Michaels and their pets.

By **Donalevan Maines**

Photo by *Curtis Reese*

Fur flies when Michael Philome and Michael Pockuba disagree on the details of how they met, but there's no question as to what great matchmakers their dogs are.

The three dogs' wagging ways put to shame the skills of that famous matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi of *Hello, Dolly!* fame.

This self-described "furry family" lives in an apartment in southwest Houston.

"We met at a dog park in Miami," says Pockuba. "I was walking Chase and Charlotte; Mike was walking Dutch. The dogs were playing—or fighting. Mike came up to me."

No, no, says Philome. "I have no idea how he dreamed that one up."

According to Philome, who claims to have a more detailed memory, their meeting was "kind of love at first sight" outside a South Beach restaurant in Miami. "I was walking by, and he smiled at me," says Philome. "I made it a block before I came dashing back and simply said, 'Hey I think you're beautiful. I'd like to take you on a date. Trust me, you won't regret it.' He smiled again and said, 'Why not!'"

Pockuba says, "Our first date, he made me a real picnic with a picnic basket and everything. I had no idea anyone did that anymore! We went to an outdoor theater, and he'd bought red wine and white wine because he didn't know which I liked. I drank both of them; I didn't know you don't mix them."

Feeling sick from being over-served, Pockuba passed out on Philome's couch. When he awoke up the next morning, says Philome, "That's when he met Dutch, my then-two-year-old pit/Lab mix. Dutch kept licking Mikey on the face. The two of them just took off like a rocket. Mikey spoiled him so much—all rules went out the window. They began to eat, sleep, and play together all the time. It made me love Mikey more, honestly."

And that's when Philome says he learned that Pockuba had a rat terrier named Chase back in Houston. "Mikey began to talk about



When Michael Pockuba (l) and his partner, Michael Philome, first met, there was an instant spark between them. But when the pair bonded over their love for their dogs, they knew the connection would last.

Puppy Love

his own dog who he left back home. There was so much sadness in his voice. So with other things weighing in, we decided that he had to go back to Houston," says Philome.

The couple spent the next year or so flying back and forth to see one another—"long-distance stuff." Pockuba also picked up another pet, says Philome, "another rat terrier with a missing tail who had been abandoned after delivering a litter. We both decided this misfit was our angel. Her name is Charlotte."

In October 2014, Pockuba says, Philome and Dutch moved to Houston to join him and Chase and Charlotte. "They say the first year of marriage is the hardest," says Philome. "Well, through ups and downs, we have weathered storms and become a family. Dutch is our guardian—so much so that if either of us raises our voice, he will immediately issue a reprimand. Chase and I bonded in our excessive vanity; we only clash on who gets to sit on a velvet upholstered chair affectionately known as 'the throne.' I am Charlotte's bed, and her chair. She is so sweet and annoying; I love her for it."

Philome, who graduated from college with a business and finance degree, runs a Creole catering company, while Pockuba is completing a communications degree at Texas South-

ern University.

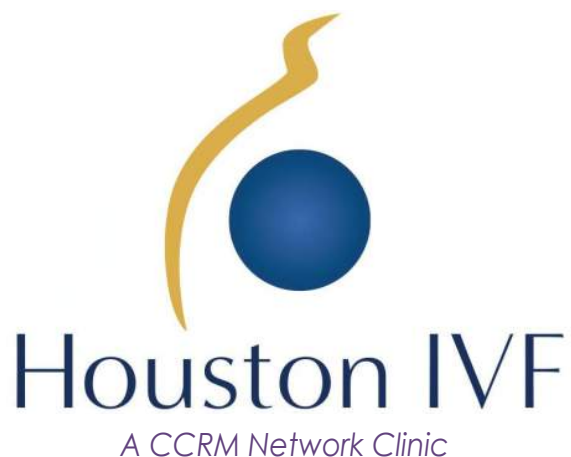
"We now exist as an unruly group which, without warning, can burst into loud fits of play and howling, or pile under a single blanket [to spend] the whole weekend slumbering," says Philome. "I had no idea that this would be my happy fate when I ran back to that man with that gorgeous grin. I had no clue he would be the key that delivered me from solitude and ushered me into what I now know as my furry family."

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



Meet the Furry Family

Philome and Pockuba's lives wouldn't be complete without their three beloved dogs, Dutch, Chase, and Charlotte.



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OUTSMART'S Leading Ladies of 2016

Celebrating the accomplishments of Houston's top LGBTQ women leaders.

By Megan Smith

As Beyoncé entered the Super Bowl stadium during last month's halftime show, seven words reverberated throughout the arena and at Super Bowl parties worldwide: *Okay ladies, now let's get in formation.* Though controversy regarding her performance ensued, the self-described feminist and pop diva's message is simple: when we band together, women can make powerful change happen. We are fierce leaders, and we won't back down from a fight.

This concept isn't new to the LGBTQ women of Houston. These women have worked for years on every level—in activism, philanthropy, business, politics, and more—to ensure that equality is achieved on all fronts. To honor Women's History Month in March, OUTSMART reached out to the community for nominations of LGBTQ women leaders making an exceptional difference in Houston. Below, our nominees discuss their current work and future plans for the LGBT community, as well as divulge the past decade they'd like to visit.

Ali Gorczynski

While Houstonian Ali Gorczynski was a college student in Washington DC, she met a

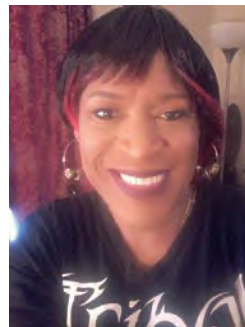
group of LG-BTQ activists outside of the White House—activists who would change her life. “I became friends with those activists and became a member of their group, GetEQUAL,

which is now a very influential player in the fight for social justice on all fronts,” she explains. “While in GetEQUAL, I worked on the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and the fights to pass marriage equality and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. I've been organizing and working as an activist ever since.” Gorczynski, who is an out lesbian, currently serves as the outreach and field coordinator for the Texas Freedom Network, where she collaborates with college students and other young people on voting rights, reproductive justice, and LGBTQ equality through public policy and community organizing. Prior to her current

job, she worked as the political manager for the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, helping to elect viable, pro-choice, openly-LGBT candidates to public office. During her time with the Victory Fund, Gorczynski saw former mayor Annise Parker win her re-election, and council members Mike Laster and Robert Gallegos get elected to office. Gorczynski was also recently elected to the board of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus, the South's oldest civil-rights organization dedicated solely to the advancement of LGBT equality. When asked what decade she would like to live in, Gorczynski's answer was, not surprisingly, *political*. “I was born in the '90s, so if I could, I would live in the '80s so that I could watch Ann Richards give the 1988 Democratic Convention keynote. Cecile Richards, Ann's daughter and the president of Planned Parenthood, is the founder of the Texas Freedom Network where I work. That's what I'd call a full Texas circle!”

Reagan White

Reagan White wouldn't choose to live in any other decade—this self-described “beautifully made” black transgender woman is happy simply being the authentic self she is today. White began attending a weekly transgender support group after coming out a little over a year ago. Thanks to mentors Ian Snyder and Dana Louise, White has not only found peace in her transition, but has become an advocate for other transgender community members. “My goal is to pass that encouraging power on to at



least one person,” she says. “Because if I can change that one life, that person could go on and change the world.” When asked which issue she feels is most important to the community, White responds with not one, but

seven. She calls them the seven E's—education, employment, economic development, entrepreneurship, endowment, encouragement, and enterprise. White advocates for these issues, and also spreads support through her “daily thought” postings on social media—small words of encouragement to her transgender brothers and sisters. “I started a few months ago, and I've gotten so much positive feedback and have been asked to continue,” White says. “The goal is to encourage all transgender people to love and embrace life authentically.”

Sandy Bubbart

What keeps Houstonian Sandy Bubbart motivated? “Everyone's sweet tooth!” she exclaims. Since 1985, Bubbart has owned and operated The Acadian Bakers, the only lesbian-owned bakery in Houston. She was catering same-sex wedding ceremonies way before the Supreme Court ruled marriage equality to be the law of the land. She even baked the cake for former →



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OUTSMART LEADING LADIES OF 2016

continued from previous page

mayor Annise Parker and Kathy Hubbard's wedding. "I'm just busy baking my buns off!" Bubbert says. But before she was covered in flour full-time, this longtime OUTSMART Gay-est & Greatest winner was also involved in numerous LGBT community organizations. She served as vice president of the Log Cabin Republicans of Houston; secretary, vice-president, and board member of the Diana Foundation; a founding board member of the Montrose Center;

and a board member of Lesbians Over Age Fifty, among others. Today, she's an advocate for homeless gay youth, the issue she feels

is most important to our community. Bubbert has also been recognized with a plethora of community awards, including five presidential certificates of merit, the 2011 Museum District Business Alliance Community Improvement Award, and six "Best of Houston" awards from *Houston Press*. And if Bubbert could time travel, she wouldn't just be a baker, but a baking queen—in the Victorian era, that is. "They knew enough and were just smart enough not to be dangerous!" she laughs.



Kim Frederick

If Kim Frederick could live in a different decade, she'd choose the 1960s. "I would have been on the front lines for civil rights in all aspects," she says. "There is a certain empowerment you get from fighting your heart out for something you believe in. And on a side note, the music was spectacular!" While she may have missed the first civil-rights movement, Frederick is hardly sitting back this time around. As a longtime feminist and out lesbian, she has dedicated her work to ensuring LGBT equality, racial justice, and women's equality. Frederick founded and co-leads HRC Super Volunteers, a national grass-roots network of volunteers to help elect Hillary Clinton as president. She has



watched that organization's membership grow into the thousands and spread across state lines. Fredrick notes that Hillary Clinton was one of her earliest role models, along with Eleanor Roosevelt, Ann Richards, Barbara Jordan, and Shirley Chisholm. "It's not fair that women make up half the population but are so grossly underrepresented in government," Frederick says. "It's not fair that sexism is so pervasive and sometimes so subtle that even women participate in it, perpetuate it, or don't even know it's happening. It is so normal, and our society has come to accept this, so we haven't had the major uprising we need—a critical mass. I wasn't around for the first women's movement, but the critical mistake made then was not bringing women of color to the table in leadership roles. We need to find a way to build those bridges and form a strong coalition." At the very beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement, Frederick marched in one of Chicago's rallies before returning to Houston to attend several more and promote the movement's message on social media. On the LGBT advocacy front, Frederick assisted her girlfriend, Melissa Vivanco, in support efforts for the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, and previously headed her workplace's LGBT resource group. "It is not fair when an LGBT person can get fired simply for being gay," Frederick says. "I genuinely care about the world in which I live in, and everyone else that lives on this planet—including future generations. I believe in fairness, equality, and justice."

Julie Mabry



Houstonian Julie Mabry is in love with her city. "I've lived in Beaumont, Albuquerque, Denver, Tucson, San Antonio, and Houston," Mabry says. "No city has made me feel as warm and fuzzy as Houston." Mabry, who is an out lesbian, is the owner of Pearl Bar Houston, the city's only lesbian lounge. "Pearl

is a reflection of the pride I have in my community and my city," she explains. "Lesbians deserve a place to feel safe and sexy. I will always work to maintain this space for my community." But Pearl Bar isn't just a great place for lesbians to relax among friends—it's also a space to build community and support LGBT philanthropic organizations. Last year, Mabry joined Her Destination Unknown's fundraising team to help raise \$28,000 for AIDS Foundation Houston. "Part of my activism in Houston is hosting fundraisers at Pearl," Mabry explains. "Last year, we were able to raise/donate over \$60,000 to our community." For others who are interested in getting involved, Mabry suggests getting involved with the →

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Meetings are open to the general public and although only Council members are allowed to vote, public comment is always welcome at the beginning of every meeting. The Council meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at Noon at our offices located between Westheimer and San Felipe in the Galleria area (near METRO bus route 82). Call to request a calendar, membership application or more information.

Affected Community Committee

The Affected Community Committee meets at different locations each month so that consumers can sit in on a meeting, ask questions and have a voice in allocating nearly \$24 million dollars for HIV/AIDS services in the Houston area.

Call the office for the date/location of meetings (meeting start time is usually 2:00 p.m.). Please note the following special meetings:

March: consumer training on designing services

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The calendar of all Council and Committee meetings and a wealth of other information is available on our website: www.rwpcHouston.org. Check the calendar regularly for topics of specific interest to you. We hope to see you soon!

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OUTSMART LEADING LADIES OF 2016

continued from previous page

Human Rights Campaign. “We need boots on the ground to help others learn how their vote matters,” she says. As for what decade she’d like to live in, Mabry says she’s fine right where she is. “I’ve lived to see an openly gay mayor elected in a major city, and witnessed the legalization of nationwide gay marriage. I love the life I’m living! Maybe Hillary will win the presidency and finally come out,” she jokes. “That would be a great addition to the 2010s!”

Alexis Melvin

Alexis Melvin rarely follows the rules. That’s why, when asked which decade she’d like to live in, she responds with two answers—the 1920s and the 1960s. On one hand, there’s “flappers, the music, speakeasies, cars with running boards, and equality and sexual freedom just starting to be seen.” Then there was the ’60s, with its “rock and roll, Carnaby Street mod fashion, Compton’s Cafeteria and Stonewall Inn actions, Mary Quant and mini skirts, a major move toward equality in the U.S., the space race, and Dr. Who!” It was also when Melvin, who identifies as a bisexual, gender-fluid transgender person, began to advocate for fairness and equality for the transgender community. “I have a passion for fairness and helping people,” Melvin says. “When I see a situation that is not fair, I have to do something about it. Members of the transgender community are treated unfairly in many ways. This has improved drastically, but we still have much to do.” Melvin currently serves as a board member and treasurer for the Transgender Foundation of America—an organization that she’s been involved with for the past eight years. For the past decade, she’s also been a part of the Houston

Transgender Unity Committee, where she is currently chair and treasurer. “There is still significant discrimination for transgender individuals in employment, employment security, healthcare, public accommodations, government services and benefits, education, police protection, personal safety, and many other areas,” Melvin says. “The transgender community has to contend with being left out of many of the LGB equality advances because some equality organizations consider it politically expedient to remove protections for the transgender community from proposed legislation to make it easier to pass. In the recent campaign to



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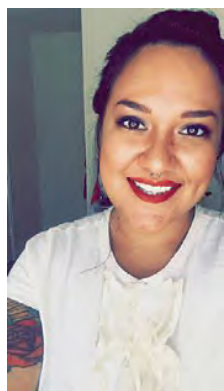
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repeal the HERO ordinance in Houston, the transgender community was attacked with lies and misstatements that were not challenged by [some pro-HERO groups]. These lies will have to be challenged so that we can regain the acceptance that we had in Houston, and move forward in our quest for equality.”

Rebecca Treviño

Rebecca Treviño’s activist roots run deep. From an early age, her parents taught her that being a part of a community meant giving back to it in any way possible. “They instilled in me to always stand firm in my beliefs and convictions,” the bisexual Texas Southern University social-work student says. “This was strengthened as I began my journey through



my social-work education and became *woke* to various social and economic justice issues. There are far too many injustices in our society. Many of these injustices do the most harm to women—especially black, brown, and trans women. I am a Latina and intersectional feminist. I wear my identity with pride, [and I] stand up

for those who are marginalized and oppressed in an effort to build a stronger community.” Treviño previously completed a term with AmeriCorps, served as a volunteer pod leader with Houston Unites, is currently an active member of the Organization of Student Social Workers at TSU, and serves as vice president of The Glass Slipper Foundation, a local nonprofit that works to educate and empower at-risk youth through leadership and prevention programs in an open and inclusive environment. Since November 2015, she has also served on the board of the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats, which helps to elect pro-equality political candidates to public office. “I believe the most important issue in my community right now is increasing civic engagement among young people,” she says. “There is so much untapped power that exists within our community. Millennials are now the largest living generation! Being part of the political process through civic engagement is necessary for creating change. My advice for anyone who wants to get involved is to find out what you’re passionate about in your community, find your inner power, and get to work! Educate yourself on the political process and find out which candidate is going to support you and what is important to you. Become a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar, register as many people as you can to vote, and get them to the polls! This is a big election year. And don’t forget that local and state elections are just as important as the presidential elections.” →



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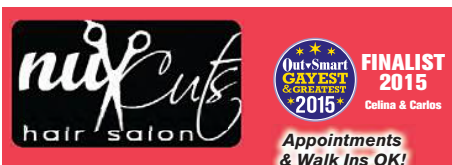
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OUTSMART LEADING LADIES OF 2016

continued from previous page

As for which decade Treviño would choose to visit, that would be the 1970s. "I'm all about dancing the night away while rocking big hair and even bigger shoes!"

Lorraine Schroeder

For Lorraine Schroeder, each decade just keeps getting better. "I want to keep moving forward," she says. Schroeder has been the director of the LGBTQ Resource Center at the University of Houston since the center's inception in 2010. "Working with young people, I get daily affirmations that the work we do makes a difference," Schroeder says. "The negative messages that some young people still hear from their families and society have a profound impact on their well-being. It is a great feeling getting to help introduce them to the awesomeness of the LGBTQ community, and making them aware of their own awesomeness." For the past three

years, she has also been a volunteer with AssistHers, helping to provide non-medical assistance to elderly and disabled lesbians. Schroeder, who identifies as a bisexual lesbian ("It may sound crazy, but that is what fits for me," she says),

also hopes to broaden society's understanding of gender and, in turn, transgender and genderqueer people. "It is an honor and great fun to work alongside of all the wonderful LGBTQ people in Houston," she says. "We have so many dynamic leaders and advocates in our community, I am just happy to be a part of it."



Kristina Tutt

Growing up in a small town, Kristina Tutt felt a great deal of shame about being gay. She didn't have any mentors to look to, and her exposure to LGBT culture was minimal. "In college, I was blessed with an amazing lesbian mentor who introduced me to culture, pride, and the history of our incredible community," Tutt says. "This helped me overcome my shameful feelings and plant my roots firmly in my lesbian identity. Over the last 15 years, I have learned to love and accept myself for exactly who I am, and I want to give other LGBTQ people the same opportunity." That's why Tutt left her full-time job in January 2015 to start Inspirational Outcomes, a business that teaches LGBTQ people how to combat shame and live as their authentic selves. "I am a Certified Daring Way Facilitator, which means that I am trained to facilitate groups based on the research of Dr. Brené Brown," Tutt explains.



"This includes experiencing vulnerability as courage, increasing self-compassion, creating meaningful connections, and developing resilience to shame."

Tutt will host Inspirational Outcomes

workshops on March 12 and 13 in Houston, April 9–10 in Austin, and again in Houston on May 21 and 22. "We all say 'LGBTQ' as if it's one five-letter word, but the truth is that we often treat one another as if we're from different worlds," Tutt adds. "If we truly want to overcome things like violence, employment discrimination, and youth homelessness, we have to lift one another up in unity instead of tearing each other down, particularly with regards to our trans brothers and sisters. Apart, we are many separate people with different lives and goals and identities, but together we all sit under the same umbrella, just trying to steer clear of the rain." When asked what decade she'd like to visit, Tutt responds, "Probably the 1960s, because that's when all the real activism was happening. I would have loved to be a part of the sit-ins and protests and peaceful demonstrations!"

Lynn Schwartzburg

If Lynn Schwartzburg could revisit a decade, it would be the early '80s. "I wasn't out then," she says. "I missed the fun, or so I hear." But since coming out as a lesbian, Schwartzburg has immersed herself in the LGBTQ community, giving back to a plethora of philanthropic organizations including the Human Rights Campaign, the Pride 5K Fun Run, the Black Tie Dinner, and, most prominently, AssistHers. "One year, I saw AssistHers in the Pride parade and thought, 'When I retire, I'll volunteer with



them," she says. "I soon realized that I didn't need to wait until retirement, and I joined AssistHers—which led to joining their board of directors. The board members were, in my eyes, strong, successful women, and I wanted to learn from them." Schwartz-

burg has been involved with the organization—in a variety of positions—for nearly 15 years. She currently serves as the president of the group's board and as vice-president of finance. "My mom taught me that 'those who

can do, must do,'" Schwartzburg says. "She has been an incredible example of compassion in action by helping people during her nursing career, with friends, and through volunteering." Along with her wife, Linda, and their late dogs, Boudreau and Thibodeau, Schwartzburg also spent several years as a volunteer with Caring Critters, a group of volunteers and their pets participating in animal-assisted therapy activities. "Boux and Thib were beloved visitors to all the patients and clients who got to spend time with them," she says. "After Thibodeau died of complications from bone cancer, it wasn't the same, and Boudreau retired from service and enjoyed his remaining year being king of the house." Moving forward, Schwartzburg says she is always looking for ways to make organizations run more efficiently, as well as to recruit others with those skills. "I am a computer nerd who loves planning, Excel, databases, reports, charts, and graphs," she says. "Organizations need people with those skills, and we are hard to find because we don't always come forward." For those looking to get more involved, Schwartzburg advises, "Follow photographer Dalton DeHart around for a while until you find a group that speaks to you. [Laughs] Don't think that you have to be the loudest voice in the room to be heard or make an impact. Helping out in your own little way helps the whole community. I'm proof that the little way works." ■

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We Aren't Sluts

My experience getting on PrEP.

By Ryan M. Leach

I am HIV-negative and I am on PrEP. Why am I sharing this very private piece of medical information with you? If you are HIV-negative, then I want you to be on PrEP, too. Yes, you. I don't even know who you are, but you owe it to yourself to consider it.

PrEP, or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, is a drug regimen that was approved for use in America in 2012. The regimen involves Truvada, a one-pill combination of two types of medications that are usually used to treat HIV after infection. Studies have shown that if relatively healthy people who are HIV-negative take the drug correctly, it can be almost entirely effective in preventing HIV infection. In fact, in a recent study of people on PrEP, no patients who used the drug correctly contracted HIV. This indicates that it works. Another study released in the *Oxford Journal* concluded that short-term daily usage of Truvada had the same impact on the body as an aspirin.

PrEP is a huge development in the fight against HIV. It could potentially eliminate the disease, or at the very least reduce the number of new infections every year. Why aren't more people on PrEP? Why isn't *everyone* on it?

My uncle contracted HIV in the 1980s during the early days of the virus when it was considered a "gay plague" and an almost certain death sentence. I am a part of the first generation of people who have never lived in a world in which HIV wasn't a consideration. My uncle eventually died in the 1990s from complications related to AIDS. He was the last to die among his circle of friends who also succumbed to the disease—part of a generation of gay men that our community lost. Over 30 years and 40 million deaths later, we still have no cure for HIV. If it were 1981, people would be breaking down the pharmacy doors trying to get this drug. But in 2016, many people at high risk for infection have never heard of PrEP or seem unconcerned with possible infection, perhaps due to im-

provements in HIV treatment and quality of life. Common sense would dictate that PrEP should be part of more of our lives. The thing getting in the way of common sense is shame.

Shame has likely lead to more infections than any other reason because it prevents people from becoming more proactive about their sexual health. HIV and being HIV-positive has always carried a harsh stigma with it. The criminalization of people living with HIV has contributed to this, as well as our general attitude about the disease. In some circles, it is

Shame has likely lead to more infections than any other reason because it prevents people from becoming more proactive about their sexual health.

commonplace to ask someone if they are "clean"—code for HIV-negative. This implies that being HIV-positive is "dirty." Many people still believe that HIV-positive people did something to deserve it, or that being HIV-positive means you were a slut, a drug addict, or both.

I imagine there isn't a person on the planet who hasn't either been called a slut or assumed that someone else is a slut. The dictionary tells us that a slut is "a promiscuous woman." How's that for sexism? For the sake of argument, let's expand that definition to include men. Accusing someone of being a "slut" has been an effective way of shaming people into submission since the term's origin in the 1400s. Our societal fear of being condemned as a "slut" has lent itself to the misperception that people on PrEP are sluts.

But quite the contrary, people on PrEP are responsible. They have empowered themselves by taking control of their health and their sexual identity. I didn't really understand that until I decided to get on PrEP. I reached out to Legacy Community Health Services in Montrose after my own physician seemed uninterested in talking with me about PrEP. This is apparently commonplace, as many doctors are not well-educated about it. I called Legacy and set up an appointment for the next day with a patient navigator. You do not need health insurance to access PrEP at Legacy, although it does

make it easier. I filled out some paperwork and then received information about the drug. Afterward, I was sent to the on-site lab where I had blood drawn and a urine sample taken. To get on a PrEP regimen, I was tested for HIV and every other sexually transmitted infection (STI) initially, and will again every three months. This ensures that I have not been infected with HIV or any other secondary infection that may require treatment. PrEP only prevents the transmission of HIV. It will not prevent other STIs, like drug-resistant gonorrhea. It is still recommended that patients on PrEP use condoms, but part of Legacy's realistic approach to healthcare is understanding that not everyone will adhere to that. People who aren't using condoms without PrEP will likely not use condoms while on PrEP.

Roughly two weeks after my blood was drawn and tested, I had a second appointment with a Legacy doctor. At this appointment, I received another rapid HIV test. It's a lot of testing, because PrEP, when administered to someone who is HIV-positive, will not effectively treat their infection and they could build up a resistance to future treatment.

I tested negative again. HIV testing is never without stress, even when you know you are negative. I always wait for the results holding my breath. My doctor asked me some more questions about my health and provided more information about the drug. I was then sent down to the on-site pharmacy to pick up my prescription. Legacy, through a grant with Gilead, the company that makes Truvada, provided me with a coupon that saves me from paying any required copay. PrEP was completely free for me, and took a total of about two hours of clinic time.

You may be reading this and thinking that I must be a slut because I decided to get on PrEP. If so, that's cool. Maybe I am, or maybe I'm not. Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn. As my mother always said, "What other people think of you is none of your business." →



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WE AREN'T SLUTS

continued from previous page

What I do know is that I am doing everything I can to prevent the spread of HIV, and if that means people think I'm a slut, then I'm okay with that. I've probably been called worse things by better people anyway. But if I have somehow convinced you to at least look into getting on PrEP, then you should know that you aren't a slut either. In fact, whether you go on PrEP or not, you are not a slut. You can be on PrEP and never have sex with anyone, or you can have sex with everyone in town, and you still won't be a slut. You can also keep whether or not you are on PrEP entirely to yourself, or write an article that is published and shared with the world! It doesn't really matter. It's no one else's business. If you are being responsible to yourself and your partner or partners, then that's all that you need to worry about.

And by the way, people who call other people sluts are insecure and need to find a hobby.

For more information in Houston about PrEP, call the Legacy clinic at 832.548.5221.

Ryan Leach is a community leader who enjoys oversharing and encouraging people to be kinder to themselves and their community. He is not a slut, and neither are you. Feel free to email him at rumla1978@gmail.com.



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The Beginning of the End

New funding to help reduce Houston's high rate of HIV cases.

By Januari Leo

Over the past several years, Houston has made several notable “best of” lists. Business Insider declared Houston to be “the best U.S. city for accumulating wealth,” while the *Smithsonian* magazine dubbed us the “Next Great American City.”

However, not all designations are quite so rosy. According to the Centers for Disease Control's 2013 HIV Surveillance Report, Houston ranks number 12 in the country for new HIV cases.

According to the recently updated National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which seeks to reduce new HIV transmissions significantly by 2020, over 50 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases are in the South. As of 2012, over 21,000 Houstonians were living with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis, with over 1,200 new diagnoses in 2013. In a state that overwhelmingly funds abstinence-based sex-education programs in public schools, refuses to expand Medicaid, and has the largest number of uninsured residents (19 percent, compared to 11 percent nationally), the odds are stacked against bringing these numbers down.

“It has become increasingly obvious that if we want to see a reduction in HIV cases, we are going to have to take matters into our own hands,” says Venita Ray, public affairs field specialist with Legacy Community Health. “We can no longer use a single-issue approach to ending the epidemic in Houston. We have a vision, but it's going to take all community hands on deck to make it a reality.”

Last year, Legacy applied for and received an AIDS United and Ford Foundation Southern Regional Expansion of Access and Capacity to Address HIV/AIDS (REACH) grant,

which supports the improvement of HIV/AIDS-focused policy and advocacy activities at community-based organizations in nine states of the U.S. South. This is the first year that Texas has been included, and Legacy is one of three agencies across the state to receive funding.

“Reducing new HIV transmissions in the Houston and Gulf Coast region through prevention, education, and testing is one of Legacy's top priorities,” says Katy Caldwell, executive director for Legacy Community Health. “Through the Southern REACH grant, we will develop programs that help shape responsible HIV/AIDS public policy and address the underlying factors contributing to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in Houston.”

Over the next year, Legacy will facilitate a number of activities that will result in a five-year plan to reduce new HIV cases in Houston. The project, titled Ending New Diagnoses (END) HIV/AIDS Houston, will bring together community and agency leaders from across the city to identify and solidify steps that must be taken to improve health outcomes for Houstonians.

“The key to the success of this project is thinking in terms of intersectionality,” says Ray. “We will have all of our traditional HIV/AIDS partners at the table, but in order to truly address the problem, we must consider other factors that have an impact. Faith, LGBT, communities of color, domestic violence, housing, employment, and criminal justice all play major roles in why we are where we are today.”

The plan will kick off on March 29 with a two-day symposium that will both present the state of the disease at the national, state,

county, and local levels, as well as give participants an opportunity to break into workgroups to begin assignments that will take place over the next four months.

“The symposium will be by invitation only, because we felt that it was important for attendees to commit to the work that will have to take place in order to make this successful,” says Ray. “We've been working closely with the Health Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School to help design the structure of the symposium, as well as the direction for the workgroups. But ultimately, we want a community-driven plan. They are the experts.”

Workgroups will meet monthly through July, and participants will then have one more opportunity to come together and provide feedback on the results before the document is released for final printing. The five-year plan will be available to everyone on December 1, 2016, which is World AIDS Day.

“Putting together the plan is the easy part,” Ray says. “The real work begins with implementation. But Houston is a progressive city that gets things done. We're looking forward to joining the ranks of Seattle, New York State, and Atlanta in coming up with a comprehensive plan to address HIV/AIDS.”

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



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The Southern REACH grant will help develop programs that help shape responsible HIV/AIDS public policy and address the underlying factors contributing to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in Houston.

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Hungry for Victory

The 6th annual Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Houston Champagne Brunch returns this spring.

By Ryan M. Leach

Springtime in Houston is rife with opportunities to support worthy causes. But with so many galas, luncheons, campaigns, and cocktail receptions, it is easy to get lost in the shuffle. Since 2010, one event has been able to rise above the rest—a unique celebration of leadership within one of the most politically active communities in Houston. This event is, of course, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Champagne Brunch.

The 2016 brunch will take its sixth annual victory lap at the Corinthian in downtown Houston on Sunday, April 17. The crowd, comprised of political Houston's top movers and shakers, will again don their best pastels and gather to raise funds to help elect openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people to office.

And Houston has quite a bit to boast about. Aside from helping to elect former mayor Annise Parker to citywide office nine times, the Victory Fund has also given support to council members Sue Lovell, Mike Laster, and Robert Gallegos. (The latter two are currently serving at City Hall.) But most notably, the Victory Fund helps elect LGBT officials nationwide. The organization was integral to electing the first openly lesbian U.S. senator from Wisconsin, Tammy Baldwin. A major theme animating Victory Fund campaigns is that by having LGBT-elected officials at the table, it helps keep anti-LGBT civil-rights legislation off of the menu.

"The event has been hugely successful every year. We've maxed out our venues and increased the amount of dollars raised for LGBT candidates again and again," says event co-chair Tammi Wallace.

The Victory in Houston team has made an effort to open up the event to everyone. "In 2015, we had a sponsor underwrite seats for LGBT seniors, which was a first. We have de-



The Victory Fund Brunch co-chairs Ryan Lindsay (l) and Tammi Wallace (r) present Annise Parker with the inaugural Mayor Annise Parker Award at the organization's 2015 brunch.

cided to incorporate that annually, along with seats for LGBT youth leaders," she says.

Returning to co-chair with Wallace is another local Victory Fund board member, Ryan Lindsay. Under their leadership, in 2015, the Mayor Annise Parker Award was introduced to honor community leaders who have contributed significantly to the political advancement of Houston's LGBT community. Past honorees were Bruce Smith and the late Tony Carroll. This year it is being presented to attorneys Debbie Hunt and her wife, the late Connie Moore.

About the honorees, Lindsay says, "At our first meeting of the year Tammi suggested Debbie and Connie, and mentioned Connie's difficult battle with cancer. We got news that Connie passed away the next day. The decision to give the award to Debbie and Connie was unanimous. The legal team of Moore & Hunt has broken down massive barriers in Texas to successfully form and protect LGBT families. Before marriage equality was even on the horizon, they navigated our laws, strategized venues, and made it possible to provide security for gay parents."

Wallace agrees, "We can count ourselves incredibly fortunate as a community that Connie and Debbie have been such a vital part of our advancement. You can read the hundreds

of Facebook messages when Connie passed, reflecting the appreciation and honor for both her and Debbie—especially from the hundreds and hundreds of LGBT families that they have helped over the years."

"[Connie] would probably say that there are many others who have done so much more for the community, and deserve this kind of recognition for their work," Debbie says about her wife's legacy that will be honored in April. "Connie really enjoyed what she did for our clients in championing the cause for LGBT family rights, but she never thought it was anything extraordinary. It's just what she did—it's what we both do."

The event also features speakers from around the country who have benefitted from the support of the Victory Fund. This year's speakers are City Council Member LaWana Mayfield from Charlotte, North Carolina, and State Representative David Richardson from Florida. Both Mayfield and Richardson will offer up their inspiring stories of victory, in hopes of perhaps opening the wallets of brunch-goers hungry for another LGBT election victory.

Of course, LGBT Houstonians are hungrier than ever for a win after the terrible defeat of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance in November—a loss that reinforced the →

Victorious

BRAD ODOM-HARRIS FOR PRIDE HOUSTON'S 2016 MALE GRAND MARSHAL

Brad Odom-Harris has been and continues to be a caring and steadfastly involved member of Houston's LGBTQ community. Committed to celebrating our community's successes and working to push for further advancement, Brad takes great satisfaction in his past involvement with Pride Houston, having served on its board of directors for five years (2005 – 2010), two of which he served as President (2007 – 2009).

Since his time with Pride Houston, Brad has continued to stay active in the community, working to address the issues facing Houston's LGBT homeless youth. In 2011, Brad helped open the S.A.F.E. Spot, a daily drop-in shelter, and currently serves on the HRC Houston Steering Committee, coordinating HRC's efforts with area homeless youth organizations and organizing HRC's annual MLK Day of Service to collect clothing, food, and other essentials for Montrose Grace Place.



Brad Odom-Harris

Brad has also volunteered at countless events over the past 15 years, providing audio equipment and DJ services free of charge to organizations including Pride Houston, The Montrose Counseling Center, EPAH, and HRC. Brad has been a member of HRC's Federal Club since 1999 and HRC's Federal Club Council since 2011.

For these reasons and so many more, Brad Odom-Harris is the right choice for Pride Houston's 2016 Male Grand Marshal. For more information on Brad and his record of service, please visit his Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PrideGrandMarshalBradOdomHarris/) and be sure to go online and vote for Brad Odom-Harris at www.pridehouston.org/about/grand-marshal-voting-2016/



**BRAD ODOM-HARRIS
FOR PRIDE HOUSTON'S
2016 MALE GRAND
MARSHAL**

HUNGRY FOR VICTORY

continued from previous page

importance of the annual brunch and the mission of the Victory Fund. This event focuses on looking forward and making sure that LGBT people are represented at all levels of government, and on building momentum to broaden equality for Houstonians, Texans, and people throughout the country.

This year's honorary event chair is Travis Torrence, who is with Shell. He will join Lindsay, Wallace, and the rest of the Victory Fund board to raise a toast to celebrate past victories and those yet to come.

This event traditionally sells out, but all are welcome to attend and learn more about getting involved—not only with the brunch, but with all of the organization's other activities that further its mission. For brunch ticket information, you can search online at victoryfund.org.

What: The 6th annual Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Houston Champagne Brunch
When: Sunday, April 17, 11 a.m.

Where: The Corinthian, 202 Fannin

Details: victoryfund.org

Ryan M. Leach is a community activist who is also a former board member of the Victory Fund. He is dedicated to the social and political advancement of the LGBT community. Email him at ryanleach@outsmartmagazine.com.

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Restarting at Zero

Introducing the pastor
at Kindred Montrose.

By Neil Ellis Orts

In January, 94-year-old Grace Lutheran Church in the heart of Montrose held its last worship service and officially closed. At that same worship service, a new community known as Kindred was born.

Still affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, still a Christian community striving to offer radical welcome to all people, and still the site for many community programs (such as Montrose Grace Place, a ministry to homeless youth), Kindred is a “restart”—a chance to try new things in an old setting.

At present, Kindred is meeting at 6:30 on Wednesday nights at Café Campesino (2602 Waugh Drive) for prayer, study, and community-building. On March 20, they will begin weekly Sunday worship in the original church building at 2515 Waugh—but not in the mornings. They’ll be gathering in the late afternoon at 5:30 p.m. “It’s going to be ‘dinner church’—the idea of church, but over dinner,” explains pastor Ashley Dellagiacoma. “We’ll be worshiping at tables and chairs, much like Jesus might have gathered with his friends and disciples and shared sacred stories and contemplated their significance in our lives.”

I chatted with Pastor Dellagiacoma about what she hopes this new venture might offer to their Montrose neighborhood.

Neil Ellis Orts: Let’s start with the obvious. Why the name change and restart?



A Common Language

Starting on March 20, Kindred will begin hosting weekly Sunday worship in the old Grace Lutheran Church. These “dinner church” gatherings, as Kindred pastor Ashley Dellagiacoma (far right) calls them, will be held at 5:30 p.m.

Ashley Dellagiacoma: Churches and communities get stuck in the same patterns and rhythms. That’s a cycle into which new life can’t enter very easily. So the idea of the restart is that you have a community that values diversity and justice and the gospel, the radical idea that God loves us no matter what. We’re looking to the neighborhood and the community for who it is now, and let that shape who we are as a Christian community. That means actually getting to know our neighbors and figure out how to be good neighbors [to them], which is what we’re called to do as the Church—to care for our neighbors as ourselves. We get to take the tradition of the Lutheran Church and play with it a little and take it where the Spirit and God’s people lead us. Montrose is still a vibrant community, and that says to me God is still on

the move and doing things. It’s up to us to figure out where we can jump in.

You write in your first blogpost on the Kindred website that this is a chance to bring the church back to “zero.” What does that mean to you?

We’re asking, “If you had a blank slate to do anything, what would you do?” Everything is on the table—except for us being welcoming and inclusive for people of all orientations and identities and racial make-ups and socioeconomic status. That is the only thing that is not negotiable. We’re still Lutheran—that’s the foundation of who we are. But we’re not stuck having to do everything the way we’ve always done it. We’re not tied down by the way it’s always been. →

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RESTARTING AT ZERO

continued from previous page

Do you have a core group of people coming with you from Grace?

We do. Grace made this decision to restart. It wasn't decided for them by the powers-that-be in the Lutheran Church. They made this bold choice. There are people who were part of Grace who are anxious to see what is possible. These are people who have been committed to the Montrose community. They're just good people. They really care for one another. They call and check in on each other. That love remains, and we're trying to mobilize it and invite more people into that relationship.

If you were going to extend an invitation to people who don't have a history with church, what would you say?

I think one of the barriers to church is language. The church often comes across as a foreign language. A meal is a common language that we can all participate in and contribute to. My hope is that by gathering around a table for worship, [it won't look like] a spiritual hierarchy. A meal is a common language. A meal is something we can share in a sacred setting, in our homes, or in a bar. I hope it is something that people feel like they can contribute to. If it's just me and this leadership team of dreamers sitting at 2515 Waugh Drive trying to think of what might be interesting, or what we think God is saying, we're going to miss something. We're going to build a church that looks just like us. There's more out there, so I hope people will lend their voices to this.

What would you say to people who were once involved in a church and left for one reason or another?

Let's be honest. The Church has hurt people and left them out to dry when they needed this unconditional community the most. We need to be honest about that part of our history. I think it's true of all of us—we're broken people and we screw up, but we can't figure it out on our own. I don't want to sugarcoat it for people. I don't want to say Kindred is totally different—we're still going to mess up and we're still going to put our foot in our mouth. But we're creating a culture where it's okay to say that. It's okay to say we messed up, and let's try something new. Let's invite our critics into the tent and let them shape us, too. But more than targeting an audience, it's about getting back to the simple act of following God and loving—not in an overly flowery or romanticized way, but in a risky and profound and earthy way. I think that takes out some of the parts of church that have been poisonous in the past. Again, we'll [mess up]—we're really good at it—but the motivator and the core of it is just going back to this crazy gospel thing. I think that connects with people who have been broken and hurt.

Neil Ellis Orts is the author of a novella, Cary and John.



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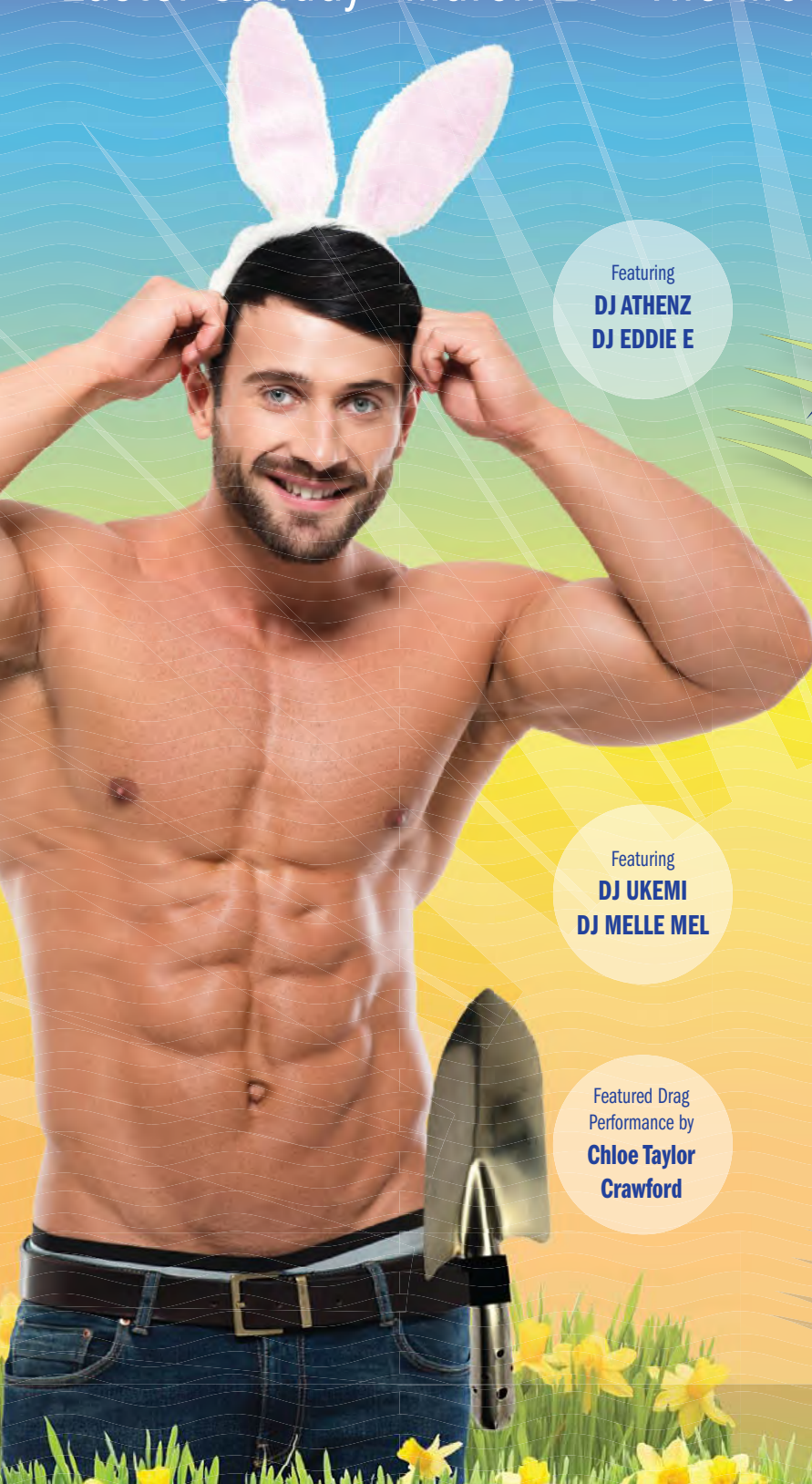


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A Small-Town Haven

LGBT programs at Sam Houston State University.

By **Bradley Donalson**

If you're new to Houston, you aren't alone. With the population increasing by over 100,000 new residents every year, newly minted Houstonians enjoy being in a major metropolitan environment complete with all the perks of a strong LGBT support system. With the Montrose Center, the Diana Foundation, Legacy Community Health Services, one of the largest MCC churches in the country, and an active social scene, it is easy for people who have lived here for any length of time to forget that such perks are unheard of in places that aren't that far away.

The Bearkats of Sam Houston State University (SHSU) are only 70 miles from central Houston, but that can be too far for someone looking to feel connected to an LGBT community. In 2008, Dr. Drew Miller (currently the school's assistant vice president of student services and executive director for counseling and health services) and one of his colleagues decided to help LGBTIQ students on campus by starting the Haven program. Miller conceived the project in response to hearing students complain that "they weren't really supported or understood or appreciated" and were unsure about who to turn to. Haven offers training sessions to anyone who wants to learn more about the community and the unique problems faced by people who identify as LGBTIQ. It also lists volunteer participants who can serve as safe contacts for students who are in need. From the get-go, Haven has attracted a steady number of faculty, staff, and student participants. The Haven website lists only email addresses for students, while the 42 faculty and staff currently listed have office locations, emails, and phone numbers published.

This web of support encourages a feeling of equality and acceptance on campus. When asked about Haven's impact on the environ-

ment for LGBT students on campus, Miller claims it has definitely improved. He tells how LGBT students feel like they have a place at the table when dealing with the administration. "Even if they don't get it right, [students] see the willingness of the administration and faculty to struggle with the issues in an effort to support them."

Dr. Miller and the Haven project were also instrumental in helping form the student organization GSK—which can stand for either Gamma Sigma Kappa or Gay/Straight Kats—as the functional gay-straight alliance on campus. Charlene Perez is the current president of GSK, and she describes the organization as "the LGBT advocacy organization on campus at Sam Houston State University focusing on support, education, political activism, and building social relationships." With events such as Freedom to Marry Day, the Transgender Day of Remembrance, and an Ally Week on the campus mall,

GSK helps to raise LGBT awareness in the entire student population.

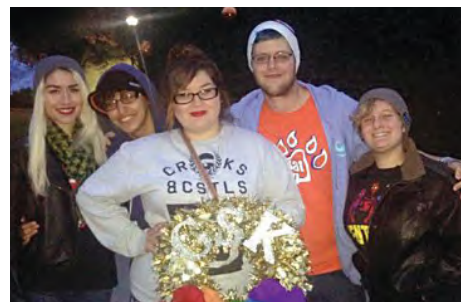
One of GSK's major celebrations is an annual Pride Week, which is March 14–19 this year. GSK recently reached out to Pride Houston's co-chair Teresa Carpenter for assistance, and Perez says that Carpenter's help has been invaluable in helping them reach out to local businesses, advertise Pride Week, and make plans to grow the event in the future. "[Carpenter] has brought such a great attitude and aura into our group," says Perez. Events this year will include a movie night, Pride Prom, a vigil, a drag/talent show, a "Sex in the Dark" open discussion (where anonymous questions about sex education are read and answered in a dark room), and a picnic.

As a small town in rural Texas, it would be all too easy to assume that Huntsville is a tense place for LGBT students. As a counselor, Miller

puts things in perspective by explaining the biggest frustration he hears from students is simply the difficulty with finding someone to date. "When you hear people being frustrated with things of that nature, the overall climate is not as bad as people [assume]."

More information about Haven can be found at shsu.edu/campus_life/haven, and information about GSK can be found at their Facebook page.

Bradley Donalson is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



LGBT Support in Huntsville

Gamma Sigma Kappa (or Gay/Straight Kats) is the gay-straight alliance on Sam Houston State University's campus. The group will host its annual Pride Week on March 14–19.

The Pure Perfection of White

Step into spring with these sleek and simple home furnishings.

By Kevin Hamby, RID

“White is the quintessential companion to all colors, providing a strong contrast in space that can carry the eye to the next color with ease.”

Spring is on its way, and it's time to simplify our surroundings. Crisp white is the new gray, so why not change into this season's inspiring hue?

Changing your attitude and feelings about your home can be quite challenging. We often regard the items in our home as valuable, heirloom, and sentimental, so it's a struggle to relinquish some of them so you can contemplate a new way of living.

The best way to inject some fresh air into your domicile is to start small. It can be a cozy nook in the living room, guest bedroom, or even the bathroom—any space that you feel can handle the change without too much disruption.

Some of us have a negative reaction to using white within our surroundings because of the perception that it's difficult to keep clean and perfect. But with today's technology, stains on finishes and textiles are a thing of the past. Walls can be painted in an eggshell finish that can be wiped down. All-polyester slipcovers that feel comparable to fine linen can be thrown in the wash. White doesn't have to be scary! In fact, white is the quintessential companion to all colors, providing a strong contrast in a space that can carry the eye to the next color with ease. White is sophisticated and calming, and if used correctly, enhances objects in a way that's similar to what we see at an art gallery or museum. And it can make that family heirloom look even more special.

Let's start with the basics. Benjamin Moore (benjaminmoore.com) “Simply White” OC-117

is their color of the year. This hue has a soft glow that is not too stark. It looks best in a flat finish, but if you have more of a maintenance issue, then stick with the eggshell finish. Paint the walls, doors, and trim all the same color and finish to create a continuous canvas.

If you are looking to update the bedroom or living room this spring, High Fashion Home



“Simply White” OC-117
• Benjamin Moore (benjaminmoore.com)

(highfashionhome.com) Silk Dupioni Drapery Panel in Milk White (in the 10-foot length) is great for puddling on the floor. Use simple and timeless drapery hardware, and install close to the ceiling for a dramatic effect that lets the richness of the textile embrace the surroundings. Drapery helps to soften the hard architectural edges of a room, allowing the space to feel more relaxed. →



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THE PURE PERFECTION OF WHITE

continued from page 58



① Silk Dupioni Drapery Panel in Milk White
• High Fashion Home (highfashionhome.com)



② 14 oz. Pure White Duck Cloth Canvas Slipcover
• LS Slipcovers (lsslipcovers.com)

Mixing old and new creates a great feeling, as does mixing different styles of furnishings. There's no better way to express "eclectic" than by using a traditional classic wooden side table with a modern lounge chair. The polished stainless-steel Major Chair in white leather from Mitchell Gold+Bob Williams (mgb-whome.com) can create a timeless look with an injection of sleek lines. The contrast this creates with other furniture styles is sublime.

Refined versus rustic. When defining a space, it's important to break lines and traditions by using one or two pieces that are natural or organic. For example, the live-edge table from Arka Living (arkaliving.com) creates warmth and reflectiveness to an otherwise uniform space. →



③ Major Chair in Polished Stainless Steel Finish
• Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams (mgbwhome.com)



④ Living-Edge Artisan Wood Coffee Table with Stone Base
• Arka Living (arkaliving.com)

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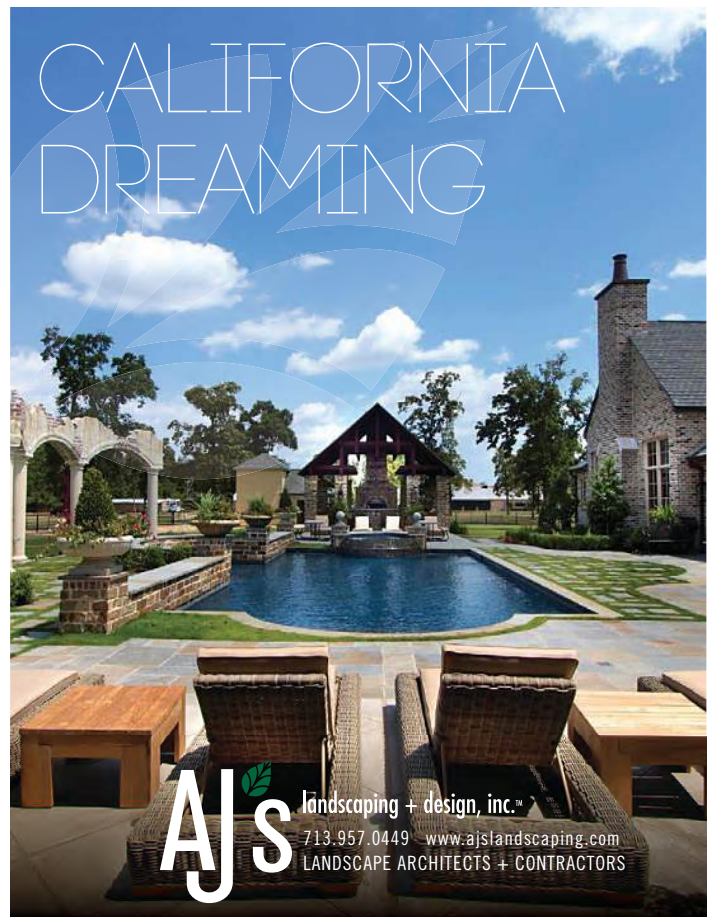


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OutSmart GAYEST & GREATEST 2015

THE PURE PERFECTION OF WHITE

continued from page 60



Scavolini Easy Storage Units • Scavolini (scavolini.us)

Creating the right wall unit for all of your audio-video gear can be a challenge, and storage can be an issue in any room. But Scavolini (scavolini.us) makes it look easy by incorporating sleek lines with a combination of contemporary colors. Most of their pieces are wall-mounted, which creates a more integrated architectural approach to the space.



The Archer Floor Lamp by Robert Abbey
• Cantoni (cantoni.com)

Lighting is the most important component in a space, and we'd be remiss if we did not explore its many possibilities. Without light, you would not be able to enjoy color. The Archer floor lamp from Cantoni (cantoni.com) creates illumination with dynamic style. The tensile arched arm and the round drum shade creates an illuminated canopy over the seating arrangement, while exploring the verticality of the space.



"Flutter" Rug by Rusty Arena
• AER Textiles (aertextiles.com)

No floor is complete without a suitable rug. Rusty Arena is a local Houston artist who has created hand-painted wall coverings and distinguished textiles over the past three decades. His new rug line from AER Textiles (aertextiles.com) will give any room elegance and artistry. "Flutter," with its white and grey tones, can ground a seating arrangement and charm any space.



Art by Patrick Renner (patrickrennerart.com)

Last but not least, you cannot finish a room without attention to the blank canvas that is the walls. It doesn't matter what artwork is selected, because art is a subjective, personal decision. Patrick Renner (patrickrennerart.com) is a Houston artist of the famed Montrose Blvd. Funnel Tunnel, and has investment artwork available. His medium of painted boards creates the punch of inspirational color needed to complete our "pure perfection" white concept.

Kevin Hamby is a registered interior designer in the state of Texas, professor of interior design at Houston Community College, and owner of Kevin Hamby Designs. His award-winning interior-design work spans residential and commercial projects from Minute Maid Park to River Oaks Country Club. kevinhambydesigns.com

Dig the DIY scene? Learn to make your own stylish pet bed (on the next page).



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How to Make a DIY Mid-Century-Modern Pet Bed

Let your furry friend relax in retro style.

What was once old is definitely new again as mid-century modern furniture sweeps its way back into this year's top home interior trends. But those angled table legs and simple, sleek lines aren't just for human enjoyment. Thanks to this DIY project

from Our Nerd Home, your furry friends can be just as stylish with their very own mid-century pet bed. Get your creative juices flowing and follow the instructions below. Barks and purrs of joy are guaranteed! —Megan Smith

MATERIALS:

- Pet pillow
- Plywood
- Screws
- Wood glue
- Round tapered wood table legs (4)
- Angled table leg brackets (4)
- Painter's tape
- Paint (any color)
- Paintbrush



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Start by purchasing a square pet pillow that will accommodate your furry friend's size. You will base your measurements for the bed frame size on this pillow.
2. Depending on the size of the pet pillow, you will need to purchase 1–2 sheets of plywood to create the base and three sides of the bed frame. You can cut the sheet(s) yourself to fit the appropriate dimensions for your pillow, or have it done at the home-improvement store.
3. Once you have your pieces cut, align the sides on top of the base to form a box that's open in the front.

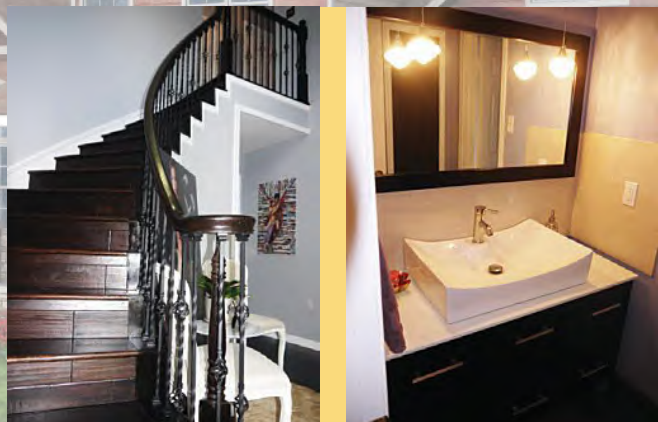
4. Line the seams with a small amount of wood glue before screwing the sides into the base. Set aside.
5. Take your four table legs and use the painter's tape to tape off all metal parts. Using your favorite color, paint the table legs. Let them sit until fully dry.
6. Screw one table leg bracket on to each corner of the bottom of the bed frame's base. Attach one leg to each bracket.
7. Paint the bed frame to match the table legs.
8. Add your four-legged friend and enjoy!

This project was originally featured on Our Nerd Home. For more information: ournerdhome.com.



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Wheel Love 2016

Automotive trends to ponder

by James Hurst

According to *Global Investing Insights*, the automotive industry is facing some global changes which will impact everyone, as well as other industries across the world. With the reduction in fossil-fuel consumption, the automotive industry is gradually moving toward renewable sources of energy. As electric vehicles plug into the grid to charge, some will be able to upload power back to the grid during times of high demand. In addition, autonomous vehicles (also known as “driverless vehicles”) are on the horizon to upend our concept of the open road. With the advances in technology and computers, some of the first industries to feel the impact will be the taxi/rental car and delivery-service industries. Eventually, the consumer on the open road will experience the winds of change. Until then, OUTSMART would like to introduce you to some interesting automobiles for 2016—they range from practical and fun-loving to exuberant and over-the-top.



BUICK

Buick Cascada

Buick introduces the all-new Cascada for 2016. This luxury convertible is designed to let you enjoy the open road with the top up or down. The premium soft-top features acoustic and thermal insulation for comfortable all-season driving. With the pull of a lever, it transforms from a quiet sedan to a convertible in only 17 seconds, while driving up to 31 m.p.h. Buick designed the Cascada with long doors and the Easy Entry system that tilts and automatically slides the front seats forward for convenient access to the back row. Advanced technologies include available OnStar 4GLTE with a WiFi hotspot to keep you connected as you explore the open road. Cascada is powered by a 1.6L 200 hp turbocharged engine and features a sport lowered chassis, Stabilitrac technology, 20-inch wheels, and Hiper Strut Suspension. Starting price for this sexy new Buick is \$33,065.



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Cadillac CT6

For 2016, Cadillac introduces the first-ever CT6 sedan. This bold, innovative platform creates a beautifully crafted automobile with an available 3.0L V6 Twin Turbo engine. The CT6 interior is designed to stimulate your senses with custom-stained exotic woods, rich leathers, excellent craftsmanship, and a Bose Panaray Sound System. Cadillac offers collision-avoidance technology through an assortment of radar, cameras, and ultrasonic sensors that detect potential hazards. The CT6 has available 4-wheel steering which, combined with the innovative fusion technologies, creates a high-strength frame for quieter acoustics. The increased rigidity makes for a beautiful sedan with precise handling. The CT6 is available from Cadillac today, starting at \$53,495.



Kia Sedona

Exceptional style, sportiness, and versatility are all good descriptions for this minivan from Kia. It has room for eight, storage for the necessities, and a long list of standard and optional safety features. The 2016 Sedona offers multiple seating configurations, is powered by a 276 hp V6, six-speed transmission, and has a variety of technologically advanced features, including available Smart Cruise Control and BlindSpot Detection with Lane Change Assist. The Sedona is arguably the best-looking minivan available today. Sedona's pricing starts at \$26,995 for the base model and climbs up into the mid \$40,000 range, depending on the options one checks off. A well-equipped, leather-lined EX can run around \$33,195.

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LAND ROVER USA

Range Rover Discovery Sport

The 2016 Discovery Sport can be described as a modern, well-proportioned midsize luxury SUV. According to Range Rover, it is designed for those who want to go off the beaten path and explore. The styling is smooth, clean, and simple. The Sport offers plenty of passenger space in the first and second rows, while the folding third-row seating is best suited for storage and/or small children. Range Rover offers the Discovery Sport with a turbocharged 2.0L four-cylinder engine producing 240 hp and 250 pound-feet of torque. It is mated to a nine-speed automatic transmission sending power to all four wheels. The capable all-wheel drive and Terrain Response system adjusts the Discovery's parameters for optimum traction on various surfaces such as snow, mud, or sand. This luxury SUV starts at \$37,455.



FIAT USA

Fiat 500X

The 2016 Fiat 500X is built on a new global platform that the 500X shares with the Jeep Renegade. This subcompact crossover should broaden Fiat's appeal, as it is more comfortable, has better-quality materials, and caters better to the North American mindset. The base model (designated as the Pop trim) is powered by a 1.4L four-cylinder engine producing 160 hp and mated to a standard six-speed manual gearbox. Four additional trim levels are offered, powered by a 2.4L four-cylinder engine producing 180 hp, with a nine-speed automatic transmission. The Fiat 500X options include an all-wheel drive system. Base prices range from the Pop, starting at \$20,900, upward to the Trekking Plus trim that begins at \$28,900.

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BMW USA

BMW 435i Gran Coupe

The 2016 BMW Gran Coupe can be described as a sedan that works like a hatchback. On the surface, the Gran Coupe looks like any traditional sedan, but open the decklid, and a liftgate hinges open from the roofline, revealing convenience and utility, especially with rear seats folded. Gran Coupe buyers can choose all-wheel drive or a more efficient four-cylinder engine mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission. The 435i is powered by a turbocharged DOHC 24-valve inline 6 delivering 300 hp and 300 pound-feet of torque. The entry level 428i Gran Coupe starts at \$41,650 and rises to \$49,950 for the 2016 XDrive 435i. Of course, the BMW 4 Series is available in a wide array of choices, from the coupe to the convertible and iconic M4.



LINCOLN MOTOR COMPANY

Lincoln Black Label MKC

The 2016 MKC is Lincoln's sport crossover with the refinement of a luxury sedan. This very attractive vehicle sports a low roofline with a sculpted exterior. The Black Label MKC is considered the top-of-the-line model. For 2016, the Lincoln offers a whole new personalized and exclusive experience, starting with a choice of either scheduling a dealership visit or a personal shopping-assistant meeting at your home or office. During the visit, the Black Label representative will detail the various options available for your vehicle, which include Venetian leathers, microsuede, wood trim, and four available designer "themes." Black Label customers are treated to an exceptionally comprehensive ownership package. These perks include unlimited "anytime" car washes, free loaner, pickup/delivery, and a "Culinary Collection" membership to a curated list of restaurants nationwide. The Lincoln Black Label MKC is certainly designed to catch your eye and create an experience. Starting at \$46,455.



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2016 LINCOLN
BLACK LABEL MKC



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This newest member of the Mercedes-Benz family is a very attractive, muscular SUV. The 2016 GLE Coupe is described as an SUV with the heart and soul of a sports car, powered by a 3.0L bi-turbo V-6 producing 362 hp and 384 pound-feet of torque. Of course, the GLE offers all the latest technology, from the available Parking Assist Package and Surround View system to the Bang & Olufsen BeoSound premium sound system. This newest member of the Mercedes-Benz family should prove to be a formidable challenger to the rest of the pack. The GLE starts at \$65,100.



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16

A silver Cadillac Escalade SUV, shown from a front-three-quarter view. It has a large chrome grille with the Cadillac logo in the center, and multi-spoke alloy wheels.

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AUTO TRENDS

continued from page 74



VOLVO USA

Volvo XC90

The all-new Volvo XC90 has been named the 2016 North American Truck of the Year. It should prove to be the safest, most advanced, most powerful, and most efficient luxury vehicle they have ever made. Traditionally known for their boxy designs and safety, Volvo has taken Scandinavian design to a new level with an SUV that is beautiful, both inside and out. The all-new supercharged and turbocharged four-cylinder engine produces 316 hp and 296 pound-feet of torque, and is mated to an all-new automatic eight-speed Geartronic transmission. Pricing begins at \$43,950. ■



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Judy, Judy, Judy

The regional premiere of *End of the Rainbow* at Stages Repertory Theatre.

By Donalevan Maines

Lightly dusting Judy Garland's face with makeup, her confidant Anthony says, "Just look straight ahead and don't move a muscle."

Judy replies, "That's what Minnelli said to me when we were having sex."

Minnelli? That would be director Vincente, father of Liza and one of Judy's several gay ex-husbands, while Anthony is "an amalgam," actor L. Jay Meyer says regarding the character he plays in the regional premiere of Peter Quilter's musical drama *End of the Rainbow* at Stages Repertory Theatre.

Anthony shares the stage with two real-life characters, Judy and her "fifth and final" husband, Mickey Deans, who enters on her arm five years after a famously disastrous concert tour in Australia.

Did I mention that Judy met Deans at his . . . gay . . . bar, and that he gave her drugs that night?

Oh, Judy, Judy, Judy.

"She certainly surrounded herself with gay men—even married a few," says Meyer, who came out on the first National Coming Out Day in 1988.

"Through Liza" is how actor H.R. Bradford came to learn about Judy.

"I must have been 15 or 16 when I saw *Cabaret*, on video," says Bradford. "That performance. The sound and the look. The dancing! [Bob] Fosse got me. I loved it so much that I started researching Liza and her mother, Judy Garland. I am still learning things about her."

It hasn't escaped the attention of Bradford, who isn't gay, how both Judy and Liza married gay men. "On one [online] forum, someone asked why gay men married Judy. The answer was, 'So they could meet Liza,'" he laughs.

Meyer's research reveals that Judy's father was also gay, so apparently it runs in the family. It's part of Judy's herstory.



Timeless Talent

Judy Garland is the subject of *End of the Rainbow*, a play that runs March 2–April 10 at Stages. Carolyn Johnson (clockwise from top right) plays Judy, H.R. Bradford plays "final" husband Mickey Deans, Kenn McLaughlin is the director, and L. Jay Meyer plays Anthony, an amalgam of characters.

The show's out director, Kenn McLaughlin, says, "No one, no one, no one gave as much of her soul to the audience. Judy was so unique and beautiful. The play is about the last months of her life, and her story is so incredibly painful to imagine. But then you get to her songs, and you see how she communicated beyond all of that. She really made a connection with gay people and the deep and secret things in our hearts."

As Judy in *End of the Rainbow*, veteran Houston actress Carolyn Johnson is called upon to sing, among other tunes, the classic Judy hits "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby," "The Man that Got Away," "When You're Smiling," "Get Happy," "Come Rain or Come Shine," and, yes, "Over the Rainbow."

Johnson, says Meyer, doesn't disappoint. "Oh God, she's brilliant. She's stunning. Rehearsals are a master class in watching someone develop a character who is real, but not impersonate them. [Not only does] Carolyn embody so much of who Judy Garland was—her mannerisms (she has clearly done her homework)—but her voice is incredible. She is magical."

McLaughlin adds, "Jaws have dropped."

Johnson says her first reaction was to be

"thrilled" at being cast as Judy Garland. "My second reaction was to be completely overwhelmed, because she is such an icon. You can count [our true icons] on one hand: Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, and Judy Garland. It's a little daunting because of all the expectations. The first thing I had to do was let go of all of that. It has been an amazingly enlightening process."

Johnson took a break from rehearsing *End of the Rainbow* to reprise her role in Horton Foote's *A Coffin in Egypt* last month at Lincoln Center in New York City.

The performance reunited Johnson with other cast members from *Coffin*'s premiere last year at Houston Grand Opera, plus the New York presentation added Isabel Keating in a nonspeaking role. Coincidentally, Keating played Judy Garland in the 2003 Broadway production of *The Boy from Oz*, opposite Hugh Jackman as one of Liza's gay ex-husbands, the late Peter Allen. Jackman won the Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Musical, while Keating was nominated for Best Featured Actress in a Musical (along with Beth Fowler as Allen's mother, the late Marion Woolnough).

Tracie Bennett as Judy and Michael Cumpsty as Anthony were nominated for Tony →

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JUDY, JUDY, JUDY

continued from previous page

Awards when *End of the Rainbow* bowed on Broadway in 2012.

Stages bills the show as “a savagely funny and deeply moving portrait of the beloved American star. Showcasing Garland’s indomitable talent and wit, this musical drama captures the majesty of her fearless performances against the backdrop of her troubled life offstage.”

After Judy Garland died on June 22, 1969, an estimated 20,000 fans filed through the funeral home in New York City as she lay in state, and 1,500 mourners stood outside the chapel during her funeral service.

A routine police raid on the Stonewall Inn gay bar in New York City occurred on June 28, 1969—just six days after Garland’s funeral. The riot and protests that ensued are widely regarded as the beginning of the gay civil rights movement.

What: *End of the Rainbow*

When: March 2–April 10. OUTSMART night at Stages will be held on March 9.

Where: Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway

Details: stagestheatre.com or 713.527.0123

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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Bloomin' 'Queens'

The world premiere of the new musical *The Sweet Potato Queens*.

By Donalevan Maines

“Bloom where you’re planted” could be a line from the new musical *The Sweet Potato Queens*, but it’s actually advice from the grandmother of out actor Dylan Godwin, who co-stars in the show’s world-premiere production this month at Theater Under the Stars (TUTS).

The seed for the musical was planted here last spring in two TUTS staged readings that gave the show’s creative team an opportunity to try out their material before a total of about 400 theatergoers in Zilkha Hall at the Hobby Center.

Now, the bloomin’ thing is back for its first full production.

Melissa Manchester composed the music, with lyrics by Sharon Vaughn and book by Rupert Holmes, who found fame performing “Escape (The Piña Colada Song)” before winning Tony awards for the 1985 Broadway musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He also helped create the 2007 hit *Curtains* for which out actor David Hyde Pierce won the Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Musical.

Godwin reprises his role from the readings as George, the “flamboyant gay best friend” who helped inspire Jill Conner Browne to find her voice as a “Sweet Potato Queen,” aka SPQ, and matriarch of “the only female drag queens in existence, complete with fake rear ends and majorette boots.”

Browne went on to pen multiple #1 *New York Times* bestselling books touting SPQ philosophies of empowerment. They created a global phenomenon, with more than 6,200



Celebrate Yourself

Clockwise from top left: co-directors Bruce Lumpkin, TUTS’ artistic director, and Marley Wisnoski; Dylan Godwin, who plays George, the “flamboyant gay best friend”; Kathryn Porterfield, who plays Jackson Jill; and Susan Koozin, who plays Queen Jill.

chapter groups in 37 countries. Members include “men, women, gay, straight, rich, poor, drunk, and sober,” says Browne. “So when I say there is no line—*there is no line*.”

TUTS says *The Sweet Potato Queens* is loosely based on Browne’s life-story and her infectious, uplifting philosophy “which was borne out of her need for some excitement and a new direction.”

Browne’s original SPQ group, consisting of women in green-sequined dresses, red wigs, cat-eyed glasses, boas, and tiaras, rode in a St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Jackson, Mississippi. Today, the SPQs have their own parade in Jackson, along with a weekend filled with events, which was moved this year to March 31–April 3 so as not to conflict with the musical at TUTS.

“Yes, we really do wear bathrobes,” says Browne at a Saturday morning pre-parade brunch of pig candy, shrimp, grits, “and much, much more.”

Another “must” is that the “official” name of every SPQ is Tammy, which Browne says is “used to preserve some shred of a semblance of anonymity.” (For further information about SPQs, as well as their planned “Million Queen Parade,” visit sweetpotatoqueens.com.)

The main tenet of SPQs, explains Godwin, is to “do what makes your heart sing. Celebrate yourself.”

After last year’s readings, the musical’s creators sent ideas back and forth to co-directors Bruce Lumpkin and Marley Wisnoski, then returned to Houston in December for a private table-reading of the work in progress. The new version rearranged some of his scenes, says Godwin, adding, “[Lumpkin’s and Wisnoski’s] handprints are all over it.”

The show also adds two songs and introduces a new character who is a “Spud Stud.”

“Spud Studs,” in the parlance of SPQs, are men “in the entourage” of SPQs “who make themselves useful in various and sundry delightful ways.”

That’s from the glossary of SPQ terms in Browne’s third book, *God Save the Sweet Potato Queens*, which describes five men that every SPQ must have in her life at all times: “One you can talk to, one who can fix things, one you can dance with, one who can pay for things, and one to have great sex with. The good news is: all but one of them can be gay.”

Offstage, Godwin and Wisnoski have been BFFs since he wowed her at the 2014 tryouts for *Reefer Madness* that was part of the →

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**GREENWOOD KING
PROPERTIES**

BLOOMIN' 'QUEENS'

continued from previous page

TUTS Underground series of edgy musicals. "He gave a phenomenal audition," she explains. "It was so exciting to meet such a really talented individual, then to actually become really great friends outside of the business as well. Dylan approaches everything sincerely and honestly. In my opinion, he is one of the best actors in Houston."

Wisnoski grew up in Louisiana, she says, "making my neighbors be in plays I wrote and directed."

Midway through school at Baylor University, the actress in her decided what she really wanted to do is direct—a profession she then pursued with a master's degree at the University of London Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Her job at TUTS changed her direction from directing dramas to directing musicals. "That's why she's so incredibly good," says Godwin. "Even with song and dance and spectacle, she knows what serves the story."

The duo says they enjoyed meeting a number of SPQs at last year's reading, including the Mississippi man who inspired Godwin's character. "He is a singular spirit," says the actor. (The Jackson man, whom the SPQs met when he was their waiter, also holds the distinction of being named the first "honorary Sweet Potato Queen.")

Browne also attended, but it was Holmes and the Grammy Award-winning Manchester whom Godwin and Wisnoski were most excited to meet. "My dad had a rock band, so I grew up with all the major artists. I knew Melissa Manchester's music," says Wisnoski.

"I knew everything about her," adds Godwin. "My mom, driving me to school, played her greatest hits." Among them was "Don't Cry Out Loud," in which Manchester sings about Baby, who "cried the day the circus came to town 'cause she didn't want parades just passing by her."

As befits Baby's feelings (and yes, that "different kind of love she thought she'd found"), *The Sweet Potato Queens* begins and ends with a parade.

In addition, Act II begins with a funeral, but in true SPQ fashion, it's no Debbie Downer. Instead, it's a show-stopping celebration of the foods that Southern women make for their neighbors when someone dies.

Godwin promises, "It will be hard for anyone to walk out of the theater not humming. Every song has a great hook."

What: *The Sweet Potato Queens*

When: March 17-27

Where: The Hobby Center, 800 Bagby

Details: tuts.com/underground

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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By Henry V. Thiel
Photos by Molly Stark

Longtime friends Douglas Stark and Michael Clark (l) and Mary McGowan and Ellen Klimenko (r) held their double wedding ceremony in Niagara Falls, New York, on June 20, 2014.

Double the "I Dos"

Meet Mary & Ellen

The story of Mary McGowan and Ellen Klimenko began in 1988, in the basement library of their church, Resurrection MCC. Along with the now-deceased (but not forgotten) Rev. Ralph Lasher, McGowan was the facilitator of a very active AIDS/HIV ministry. She was teaching a class on death and dying when she looked up and, across the room, noticed a very new face in the group—and a lovely face at that.

"I had seen this face mostly in the Sunday evening service," remembers McGowan. "I wasn't even sure of her name, so I took a quick sideways glance at the sign-in roster to try to identify this intelligent-sounding and beautiful lady. (Just so I could respond to her inquiries concerning the meeting appropriately, of course—or so I told myself.)

"Her name was Ellen Klimenko. Our eyes met across the long table. They sort of locked, and for several moments, we were both unable to see or think clearly. I remember thinking, 'No, God, this is not a good time. I'm not ready for a new relationship yet. I may never be ready, God. Are you listening to me?'

"I did not hear an answer," McGowan says. "God had already picked out my partner, my life-mate, and now my legally married spouse. I, of course, was still unaware of that fact," she laughs.

They didn't see each other again until one hot summer night in July while attending a potluck in the fellowship hall of the church. McGowan was standing in the line for dinner with longtime friend Jeff Kaler when she caught a glimpse of the same beautiful, suntanned lady, sitting with Rev. Lasher and his partner, Harry Gibson. McGowan stepped out of the line and, using the couple as an excuse to approach, began a conversation. McGowan asked Klimenko if she was there with anyone, and Klimenko quickly responded.

"No I am not."

"I said, 'Great, because you are having dinner with me,'" McGowan recalls. They had a wonderful time that evening, eating, talking, and laughing. As Klimenko was leaving, McGowan walked her out to her truck where they kissed goodnight, and a whirlwind courtship began.

Klimenko and McGowan have been together for 28 years. When they began talking seriously about marriage, it still looked as if Texas would never catch up to the present century. There was never a formal proposal. It was just understood from their many discussions that they both wanted to be legally married.

"To us, it was still very romantic the way we came to our decision on getting married. This was a mutual agreement, and we knew it was right for us," Klimenko recalls.

"Since we had to have a destination wedding, and our longtime friends Douglas Stark and Michael Clark were already in the midst of planning their wedding in Niagara Falls, we decided to join them," she explains.

"It was the perfect place, since my parents honeymooned there and Ellen's parents married there."

Since both sets of parents are deceased, they felt like they were carrying on a family tradition.

Meet Douglas & Michael

Douglas Stark and Michael Clark met through friends at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church on October 2, 1982.

"And sparks started flying!" Stark admits.

Their first date was to House of Pies for coffee after a membership course at the church. True to those simple beginnings, there was no fancy ring or fabulous dinner when Stark and Clark got engaged. Nor did they need the five carats or the four courses. From the time they had that first coffee date, they felt something they had never felt in any other relationship before.

One night in bed, they were talking about how they felt about each other. At the very same moment, each began to say, "Would you marry..." Before they could finish their sentences, they both said "Yes" at the same time. →

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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from page 82

They called the church two weeks later and asked if they could have a Holy Union ceremony, the only option available to gay couples in 1984. "We had the Holy Union to show our commitment to each other, and to our friends and family," shares Stark.

Thirty years later, Stark and Clark were making plans for a legal wedding. "The beauty of a gay wedding is that you can mix the traditional with



A Holy Union

Ellen Klimenko (l) and Mary McGowan's romance started in 1988 when the pair met at Resurrection MCC.

the untraditional," Stark observes. "So Michael and I decided to join our good friends Mary and Ellen and get legally married in Niagara Falls."

The first thing the foursome did was send out joint "Save the Date" postcards, followed by an invitation from one couple or both, since they have many friends in common. The couples rented a house where they hosted four days of wedding events.

"Mary found the house in Niagara Falls, Canada, through Trip Advisor," explains Stark. "The references were wonderful, as were our hosts. They worked with another house down the street, so we were able to get housing for almost all of our guests within walking distance."

The couples had their version of a "rehearsal dinner" the night before the big day at a restaurant they also discovered on Trip Advisor. "We were not disappointed," nods Clark. "The dinner was a great way for everyone to get acquainted. In a traditional wedding, you have two families to bring together. In ours there were four families."

"We chose to go informal," says Stark, "with unassigned seating, at tables of nine that each had one spot reserved for one of the four of us who were getting married. That allowed the four of us to rotate among the tables, so we got to meet everyone and make sure people were talking. Our guests were a delightful mix of people, about 50/50 LGBT and straight. We had a buffet, an open bar, and the service was incredible."

The Wedding

Douglas Stark and Michael Clark were legally married at Niagara Falls, New York, on June 20, 2014, at 6:30 p.m. in the Bridal Chapel of Niagara Falls. Longtime friends Mary McGowan and Ellen Klimenko were married at 7 p.m. Ellen and Mary had been together 28 years, and Douglas and Michael for 31.

"We waited a long time for this opportunity," says Klimenko. "I am so glad more than 60 of our friends and family were able to join us. It made the day that much more special."

For Stark and Clark, who had already been "married" in their home church, the ceremony was an affirmation of their relationship. The legal component was important to McGowan and Klimenko as well, but no more so than the deeply personal spiritual meaning of the ceremony. It's customary for one to cry at a wedding. So at a wedding where four people are tying the knot, it's no surprise there was not a dry eye in the house—or in Michigan, North Carolina, Wales, and Galveston, where friends gathered to watch the weddings via Skype. Stark and Clark's children and grandchildren were the witnesses. McGowan and Klimenko chose two best friends to stand up with them.

"We had two separate cakes that copied the theme of each couple's invitation, and a local smokehouse did a great meal that could compare to one in Texas," Clark explains. "The jalapeños,



Worth the Wait

Douglas Stark (l) and Michael Clark held a Holy Union ceremony in 1984. Thirty years later, they legally wed.

smoked cheese balls, and shrimp were the big hits.

"Later in the evening, we all changed clothes and had a very casual bonfire," Clark remembers fondly. "What a great evening."

"It felt so good to be able to marry after all these years together," adds Stark, "and to have my relationship with my stepdaughter be legally recognized, since Michael and I raised her together," he says, fighting back a tear.

"Love is love, and only love can make a family," says Clark. "After all these years, to finally have equal rights under the law, it's just amazing. I am so happy that now everyone can marry the person they love, just like we did." ■

One Big Wedding Party

Bruce Padilla & Shelby Kibodeaux tie the knot.



Sparks Fly

Bruce Padilla (l) and Shelby Kibodeaux first met at Pacific Street on Cinco de Mayo in 1994.

If you are a pet lover, you've probably seen Shelby Kibodeaux and Bruce Padilla out and about with their two- and four-legged friends. Whether as event chairs or co-chairs, the couple has raised more than \$1.5 million in the past few years for Citizens for Animal Protection (CAP), Houston PetSet Fierce & Fabulous Soiree, the inaugural aniMeals Best Friend's Brunch for Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels program, and CAP's Bad to the Bone party.

Padilla is currently regional manager for luxury handbag-maker MCM Worldwide, and Kibodeaux owns a pet-sitting service named Sit, Stay, Walk, Play. "He gets to do what he loves every single day, caring for pets all over Houston," according to Kibodeaux's husband.

Padilla and Kibodeaux met at Pacific Street, a nightclub in Montrose, on Cinco de Mayo in 1994. "It was more like ships passing at sea," states

By Henry V. Thiel
Photo by Kim Coffman

Padilla. "We would see each other when we were out and about, and I always knew I wanted to meet him, but I never said anything until that fateful night when we both went to the restroom at the same

time. When I saw him, I told him I couldn't believe that after we had seen each other out for so long, we were finally meeting in the restroom!"

"I told him how cute I thought he was. I loved his red hair and goatee, and said one of these days we will be together!" Padilla explains. "I didn't know he didn't live in Houston, and that was why I only saw him every now and then. When I told him that I'd like to go out on a date with him, he probably thought I was crazy, but I didn't care. I knew he was the man for me."

Fast forward to 1996, when Kibodeaux moves to Houston and rents an apartment. "I told him he could always move in with me if he wanted. He said no a bunch of times before I finally convinced him—and the rest is history," adds Shelby. "We've been together ever since. Like a lot of gay couples, we always considered ourselves married, and referred to each other as husbands—never as partners or any other name."

"In 2014 when it became legal to marry in New Mexico, we thought about getting married in Santa Fe, but the logistics involved proved to be overwhelming. So I said let's just wait until they make it legal everywhere," Padilla explains. "It's just a matter of time, so we did."

"Neither of us proposed to the other, since we always thought of ourselves as being married. We knew one day we would make it legal."

"When the Supreme Court made it legal on June 26, 2015, I messaged →

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Shelby and said "Now that it is legal, when do you wanna get married?"

He replied, "Whenever we can get it all put together."

"So we decided to do it on my birthday, August 16, so I could have the birthday party that I always wanted for my 50th that I never had, since I was diagnosed with cancer a month prior," adds Padilla. "Such is life—but the cancer is all gone now." Since time was short, they invited people to the party through Facebook. "We invited just over 300 people, and much to our surprise, almost every single one showed up!"

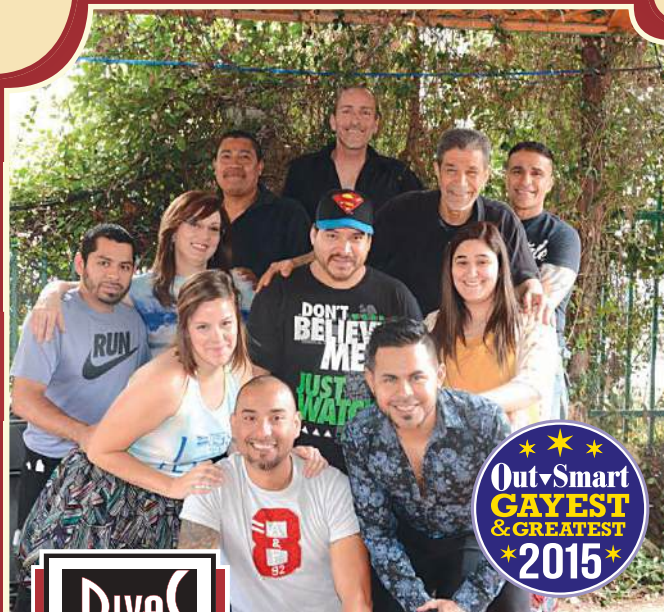
"It was a Sunday afternoon at Harwood Grill. The owner had become a friend, and he wanted to host our wedding. The place was perfect—just big enough to hold all of us.

"We always knew we wanted to have a party, and not a wedding, so it was very casual. Since we didn't think we could get 300 people to stop drinking and having fun to watch us get married, we decided to get married before most guests arrived. We had a private ceremony with about 30 family and friends," says Padilla. "And then the party started!

"The party was great! We had friends from all parts of our lives. My family from New Mexico, his family from Louisiana, old friends from 15 years ago, and new friends from all the charity events we do," says Padilla. "It was great to have all our friends, and it turned out perfectly. Eating, drinking, lots of pictures, great food, great cake, a few dogs—it was just a great time. It couldn't have turned out better if we had planned it for a year, and it was perfect for us since we are the most casual couple around.

"It was important to us to support our community," states Padilla, "so we asked the guys at Cake Addict on T.C. Jester to make our cakes. Mine was Snoopy-themed and Shelby's was Dalmatian-themed. The guys there are awesome, and they make the best cakes."

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist.



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Ⓢ Fearless
Jaden Smith is seen here at the premiere of *Divergent* in 2014.

Will Smith on his son Jaden

(BBC Radio 1Xtra, 2/8/16, A.Dot)

Re: Jaden's gender-fluid style. He started wearing dresses a year or two ago and was recently named the new face of Louis Vuitton's womenswear campaign.

There's a really powerful internal quality as an artist that as parents we encourage. You gotta get out on the edge, you have to try things, you have to be comfortable doing things that people don't agree with, and you have to be comfortable doing things that you could fail. And Jaden is 100 percent fearless, he will do anything... [H]e is completely willing to live and die by his own artistic decisions, and he just doesn't concern himself with what people think.



Ⓢ The Future
Lexa (Alycia Debnam-Carey) and Clarke (Eliza Taylor) in *The CW's The 100*.

Eliza Taylor

(Entertainment Weekly, 2/29/16, Shirley Li)

Fans of *The 100* are "praising the way it's pushing the envelope with a diverse cast and an openly bisexual lead, The CW's first. Clarke's [Eliza Taylor] romance with Lexa [Alycia Debnam-Carey] spawns fervent hashtagging (the battle cry: #Clexa) in particular. 'If we can take anything good from the apocalypse, it's that we live in a world where gender and sexuality and race isn't an issue,' Taylor says. 'There's the greater issue of survival.'"

President Barack Obama and Ellen DeGeneres

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano



© Mutual Admiration
President Barack Obama was a guest on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* on February 12.

Ellen: I cannot tell you or thank you enough for what you have done for the gay community.

Obama: It's one of the things I'm proudest of, because my whole political career has been based on the idea that we constantly want to include people and not exclude them. . . . But I will say [as] we were driving over here today—and I meant this, I said it to my staff—I said, as much as we've done with laws and ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," etc., changing hearts and minds—I don't think anybody has been more influential than you on that. I really mean that. Your courage—and you're just really likable. You being willing to claim who you were, that suddenly empowers other people. And then suddenly, it's your brother, it's your uncle, it's your best friend, it's your coworkers. And then attitudes shift. And the laws followed, but it started with folks like you. I'm so proud of you.

Joel Grey

(*Entertainment Weekly*, 2/19/16, Liz McNeil)

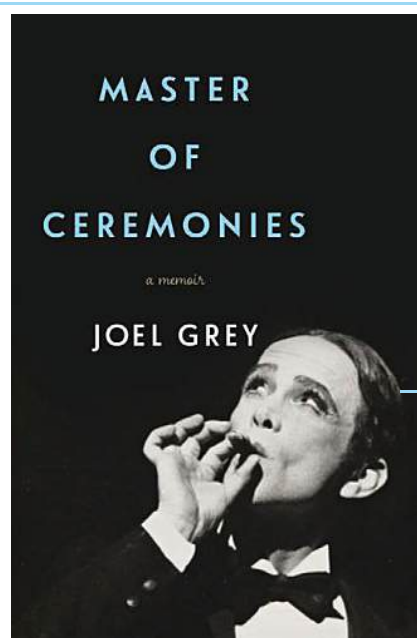
83-year-old Joel Grey, who played the Master of Ceremonies in the 1972 *Cabaret* film (and won an Oscar for the role), has published his memoir, *Master of Ceremonies*.

Liz McNeil: At 16, you told your parents you'd had an affair with a man.

Joel Grey: When I told my mother, I remember reaching out to her, and she said, "Don't ever touch me again, you disgust me." It was one of the worst moments of my life. Secrets became necessary.

Much of the book is about your sexual awakening.

It was so confusing. Something that seemed so natural, people were going to jail for. I didn't understand it. I was having sex with women, too. I went to a therapist who said, "You'll outgrow it." I believed it. For a minute.



Nick Jonas

© Nothing to Prove
Nick Jonas is pictured here as Nate Kulina, the gay character in DirecTV's *Kingdom*.

(*Complex*, Feb/Mar/2016, Kerensa Cadenas)

As a heterosexual male, [I am] open and comfortable about loving my fan base, gay or straight, because to me there is no difference, it is my fan base. Your sexual preference does not matter to me and it shouldn't matter to anybody. . . .

The goal is acceptance on all levels— that should be the focus. . . . I have nothing to prove. I'm very comfortable in my own skin and I'm thankful to have as many close gay friends as I have, people who have been so supportive in my life, and have always been there for me.



'Carol'

New film explores a lesbian love affair in the 1950s.

When Bette Met Mae



In the fall of 1973, a cocktail party was given by Charles Pollack, a West Hollywood designer, for his houseguest Bette Davis and her guest, Mae West. Davis and West had never met, but each held the other in high regard. Also present were Vik Greenfield, who had been Davis' personal assistant, and Wes Wheadon, a neighbor and friend of both the host and Bette Davis. Wheadon tape-recorded the evening. Nothing was sacred, and alcohol loosened tongues as the evening progressed. The women discussed—among many other topics—censorship, husbands, boyfriends, and even what each thought of being impersonated. The tape recording made that night was painstakingly restored and synched to on-screen actors' movements to create this film, bringing the original party back to life. Many invented and innovative techniques were used to bring the evening to the screen. The documentary also adds back-story clarification (narrated by Sally Kellerman) about the topics under discussion, which serves to underscore the very real impact each woman had not only on film history, but on our culture today. MVD Entertainment Group (mvd2b.com).

—Troy Carrington



Budding Romance

Out director Todd Haynes (c), flanked by *Carol* stars Rooney Mara (l) and Cate Blanchett, attend the *Carol* photocall during the BFI London Film Festival last year. The DVD is being released this month.

Based on Patricia Highsmith's seminal novel *The Price of Salt*, Todd Haynes' new film *Carol* follows two women from differing backgrounds as they fall into an unexpected love affair in 1950s New York.

Therese Belivet (Rooney Mara) is a young, aspiring photographer who spends her days working as a clerk at Frankenberg's department store. Carol Aird (Cate Blanchett) is an older, alluring woman who is trapped in a loveless, convenient marriage.

The film opens following a man as he walks through a hotel lobby and bar. He orders a drink and starts for the phone booth to make a call when he notices Therese—an acquaintance of his—visiting with Carol at a table in the lobby. The man calls out to Therese, interrupting the women's conversation, and asks if Therese will be attending a party at the home of a mutual friend that evening. Therese says she plans to be a little late to the party, but Carol insists that they go ahead, quickly getting up from the table and leaving.

The story actually begins a few months prior to that scene, as

Carol drives into the city from her suburban home to find a Christmas gift for her daughter. As Carol is walking around the Frankenberg's sales floor, Therese lays eyes on her and is immediately captivated. Carol approaches Therese's counter and explains that she is looking for a particular doll for her daughter, Rindy. When Therese informs Carol that they are out of stock, Carol shows her a picture of Rindy and asks what she wanted when she was that age. Therese says she had wanted a train set, and after describing her favorite set that they carry in the store, sells one to her. Carol fills out the payment and shipping information to have it sent to her house. She wishes Therese a merry Christmas and begins to leave, but turns around to compliment her on the Santa hat that her boss she has required her to wear. There is an instant connection between the two women, and they become so mesmerized with each other that Carol forgetfully leaves her gloves behind on the counter, and Therese does not realize this until Carol has already left.

Taking her address from the shipping information she filled out,

Therese mails the gloves back to Carol, who then calls Therese at work to thank her and ask her out to lunch, saying it's the least she can do. Therese hastily accepts the invitation, thrilled to have another opportunity to see Carol. At lunch, Carol reveals that she is married to Rindy's father, Harge (Kyle Chandler), but expresses her intent to divorce, as she is not happy with him. Therese tells Carol how she is somewhat dating this man named Richard (Jake Lacy), who wants to marry her and take her on a trip to Europe, but Therese is also not satisfied with this relationship. The two women are clearly intrigued by each other. Carol calls Therese "a strange girl . . . flung from out of space." But her strangeness and delicacy seems to be what attracts Carol to her, and Carol's charm and grace draws Therese in.

From here, their connection deepens as they begin seeing each other regularly, and their passion for each other inevitably grows. With both women craving more from their lives, their need for each other becomes obvious. Given the circumstances and time period, however, they soon encounter unexpected tribulations that could lead to the demise of their budding romance. As the opening scene is revisited toward the end of the film, the audience is fully aware of the relationship between Therese and Carol, and the scene takes on a deeper meaning than it appeared to have at first glance.

Nominated for six Academy Awards and featuring appearances by Sarah Paulson (*American Horror Story*) and Carrie Brownstein (*Portlandia*), *Carol* is a beautiful testament to the extremes that the heart can endure for love.

Carol will be available on DVD and Blu-ray March 15.

B. Root is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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The Rocky Horror 'TV' Show

Laverne Cox will play Dr. Frank-N-Furter.

Let's do the time warp again with Fox Television Studios as they produce a remake of the widely worshipped cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Fox and the Jackal Group will release a "reimagining" of the beloved trans-empowered musical this fall, starring a whole new cast and featuring critically acclaimed directors and producers. The new production will be based on the original 1973 staged musical by Richard O'Brien, who starred as Riff Raff in the 1975 film adaptation.

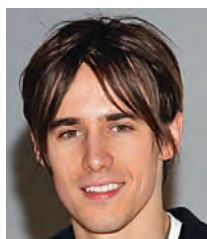
Now let's take a jump to the left! The film's enormous following includes ecstatic fans from all walks of life who still appear at midnight screenings with live actors and choreographed dances. Regarded as the longest-running film in movie history, Rocky Horror is celebrating 40 years of continuous distribution with reported gross earnings just south of \$140 million.

And then a step to the right! Fox has carefully hand-selected an all-star cast to play our favorite characters in fishnets, Halloween heels, theatrical makeup, and vibrant hair colors. Long-time RHPS patrons can rest assured that the Fox production will feature the beloved Tim Curry, but in a different role. Curry starred in the 1975 film as Dr. Frank-N-Furter, the bone-chilling, gender-bending mad scientist whose obsession is to create the most perfect and beautiful human being. Despite Dr. Frank's taste for murder, cannibalism, and eugenics, his lavishly sexy performance of "Sweet Transvestite"—complete with white pearls, fishnets, and black corsets—embodies every feature of punk and rock 'n' roll, including tenaciously kinky lyrics.

In the new movie, Tim Curry will play the criminologist narrator that was originally played by Charles Gray. Emmy Award-nominee Laverne Cox is slated to play protagonist Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Cox is a highly regarded LGBT advocate, actress, and television producer; she is best known for her striking performances as Sophia in the Netflix original series *Orange Is the New*



Laverne Cox
Dr. Frank-N-Furter



Reeve Carney
Riff Raff



Tim Curry
The Narrator



Ryan McCartan
Brad



Christian Milian
Magenta



Staz Nair
Rocky



Adam Lambert
Eddie



Ben Vereen
Dr. Everett Scott



Victoria Justice
Janet



Annaleigh Ashford
Columbia

original movie. Lambert gained fame after starring on *American Idol* in 2009, and has since released several hit singles and top Billboard albums. Lambert is most famously known for his stunning vocals, flawless dance moves, and his advocacy in the LGBT community.

The first Transylvanian we meet, Riff Raff, will be played by singer-songwriter and actor Reeve Carney, who is best known for his performance as Peter Parker in Broadway's *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. The beautiful model and talented singer-songwriter Staz Nair will star as Rocky, the perfect human being created by Dr. Frank-N-Furter to replace Dr. Frank's previous lover, Eddie. Rocky was originally played by Peter Hinwood in the 1975 film.

Victoria Justice and Ryan McCartan will star as Janet and Brad, originally played by Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick. The young and talented Justice has appeared in several television series, such as Nickelodeon's *Zoey 101* and *Victorious*; McCartan stars as Diggie in Disney's *Liv and Maddie* and *Heathers: The Musical*.

Lou Adler, the executive producer of Rocky's film adaptation, will return to executive-produce the new production. Adler is an award-winning producer, director, talent manager, and singer-songwriter; he has won several Grammy Awards, earned himself a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2012. Award-winning producer and director Gail Berman will join Adler in executive-producing the new film. Berman is a successful movie and Broadway producer, best known for her work at MTV Films, Paramount Pictures, Nickelodeon, and for several hit series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *24*, *American Idol*, *House*, and *Arrested Development*. The talented Kenny Ortega will team up with Adler and Berman to co-produce as he heads the film's choreography, music, and dance. Ortega has an impressive résumé of music productions, including the successful *High School Musical* trilogy, *Hocus Pocus*, *Dirty Dancing*, Madonna's "Material Girl" video, and Michael Jackson's *This Is It* film.

Filming for the new production began this past winter. In the meantime, catch a midnight weekend screening of the original movie at Houston's River Oaks Theatre. See you in Transylvania!

Victoria Desselle is a native Houstonian, writer, and photographer. She enjoys exploring multiple facets of Houston; she also enjoys fusion tacos and her Harley-Davidson jacket.

Black, and is the first trans woman of color to play a lead role in mainstream television.

Stage performer, singer-songwriter, actor, and Grammy-nominee Adam Lambert will take on the role of Eddie, played by Meat Loaf in the

‘American Crime’

Rape, race, and more.

You may be confused by three similarly titled anthology series racking up attention now: *American Crime Story*, *American Horror Story*, and *American Crime*. The first features Sarah Paulson in a Marcia Clark wig, the second features Sarah Paulson in a Betsey Johnson wig, and the third . . . doesn't really do wigs.

While ACS and AHS sparkle with the camp gaudiness we've come to expect from a Ryan Murphy bonanza, *American Crime* is a brittle, tough drama from John Ridley, who wrote and produced *12 Years a Slave*. And though Ridley is clearly the best equipped to handle touchy issues on television, he could learn a lesson or two from Murphy about lightening the mood.

This season centers on a private Chicago high school in the weeks following the alleged rape of a male teenager by members of the school's beloved basketball team. At first, the show seems like a straightforward drama that picks up on the alarming prominence of athletics-related sexual-assault scandals. But with each episode, Ridley subverts expectations for his characters. The male victim of the rape isn't repressed because of his sexuality, but because of his class; his mother is a waitress, and his status as a financial-aid recipient makes him an easy target in the school's ruthless cover-up. His assailant, the white team captain, cleaves to the team's elite status to hide his own homosexuality. His co-captain, the team's most visible black player, is too sheltered by his affluence to handle the racist implications of the investigation.

Ridley doesn't force his audience to feel sorry for any of his characters on account on their race, gender, or sexual orientation, making even the most liberal viewers question their assumptions about whom they choose to root for. Free of clichéd material and given the chance to be ugly, the show's ensemble can take swings and be unlikeable. At the start, Anne Blaine (Lili Taylor), the victim's mother, seems like an embattled, underprivileged outsider, but proves herself to be dead-set on revenge, even at the cost of her son's well-being. On the other side of the battle, Terri LaCroix (Regina King), the team captain's mother, resorts to near-paranoia and ruthless aggression to protect her son from the investigation.

This is a bleak world to inhabit, but thanks to a powerhouse ensemble that includes Felicity Huffman, Andre 3000, and the supreme aforementioned King, Ridley's brutal message hits with an impact that intensifies every week. Some of the political monologues would come off as mere finger-wagging on another series, but when Regina King talks about race, you're



Tough and Brittle

Anne (Lili Taylor) with her son, Taylor (Connor Jessup) in *American Crime*, now airing on ABC.

going to pay attention. Unfortunately, the teenage actors seem overwhelmed by the subject matter; most of them just seem to weep through their script pages.

American Crime isn't exactly a joy to watch, and the overreliance on invasive camera work, clammy dialogue, and pretentious editing doesn't make it easy to digest. That

Ridley can push boundaries with sensitive issues should come as no surprise, but as the veteran behind a range of titles (including *Undercover Brother*, the upcoming *Ben-Hur* remake, and even an episode or two of *Justice League*), he could have used his varied genre experiences to challenge the conventions of dramatic storytelling to keep *American Crime* from sinking into its own self-serious grimness.

Can a show about race, violence, and societal oppression be funny, absurd, or outrageous, and still be considered "important"? Even though *American Horror Story* and *American Crime Story* often reduce serious issues to offensive levels of silliness, they at least start with positive intentions: to exorcise stigma, challenge taboo, and expose the invisible—without losing entertainment value. *American Crime* has the bona fides, the cast, and the Emmys to push the boundaries of social dialogue on broadcast television. Perhaps it should learn to do it with a smile. —David Goldberg



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Troye Sivan, Emily Wells, LeIf, CocoRosie, and more.

Inas X "Love Is"



Pop recording artist Inas X has released her debut music video for "Love Is." The positive dance/pop hit

was inspired by the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage and X's desire to capture the historic moment. The video showcases people from all walks of life to illustrate the message that love is for everyone. The joyous feeling is infectious, and by the end you have no choice but to give in to the power of love. "I knew how important this was for so many people," she says. "Love shouldn't be something that's restricted. It's a beautiful thing, and there needs to be so much more of it in the world. I just had to capture this moment in a song." • "Love Is" marks the first single from her debut EP, which is set for release this year. More at inasx.com. —Suzie Lynde

EDITOR'S NOTE: See Inas X in Houston on March 9 at House of Blues.

Queer Icelandic-transplant **John Grant's** second album, *Pale Green Ghosts*, was one of the best albums of 2013—if not the best. His 2010 solo debut, *Queen of Denmark*, was no slouch either. Grant's new disc *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* (Partisan) is also something special, although it falls short of the brilliance of *Pale Green Ghosts*. Not as immediately accessible as its predecessors, the first couple of songs—the title cut and "Snug Slacks"—may take a few spins to get used to. Don't be deterred, because the rewards of "Down Here," "Global Warming," "Voodoo Doll," "Geraldine," and "Black Blizzard" are plentiful. Grant also has a history of working with remarkable female artists—Sinead O'Connor, who can be heard on *Pale Green Ghosts*, also covered Grant's song "Queen of Denmark." On *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*, Grant is joined by Tracey Thorn on the incredible "Disappointing," and by Amanda Palmer on the difficult "You & Him."

On his exceptional debut album, *Blue Neighbourhood* (Capitol), gay multi-hyphenate **Troye Sivan**—YouTube sensation, actor, singer/songwriter—comes off like a cross between Perfume Genius and a queer male Lorde. Sivan touches on serious subjects, including faith and coming out, on this multi-hued disc, beginning with opener "Wild," which sounds of the moment with its female choir chanting "wild." The same holds true for "Bite," with its synth beats and snaps, as well as for "Fools" and its '80s keyboard play. Sivan is joined by Broods on the thumpier "Ease," co-written with the sibling duo. Fellow YouTube

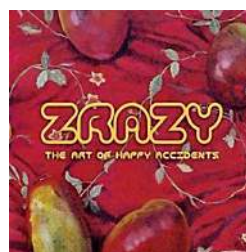
marvel Betty Who can be heard on the divine "Heaven." Sivan is at his most Lorde-ly on "Youth," and "Talk Me Down" approaches Sam Smith territory. There's really not a clunker to be found here, and the deluxe edition, which features six more tracks, including the XXYXX remix of "Wild," is the way to go. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Sivan performs on March 17 at House of Blues in Houston.]

Language Barrier (Church Key/SugarCube) by **Shirlette Ammons** has the ability to wow listeners in precisely the same way that the Grant and Sivan discs do. Ammons, a true original, doesn't sound like anyone else on this fantastic album. Whether she's venturing into hip-hop ("Earth Intro

Segue" or with German rapper Sookee on "Language Barrier Segue"), making the kind of punk that would make Sleater-Kinney jealous ("Earth Intro" with the aid of Indigo Girls), or leaving her mark on dance-funk (with Meshell Ndegeocello on "Dear Nora"), Ammons is resplendent. The combination of outstanding guest performers (Hiss Golden Messenger, Heather McEntire of Mount Moriah, and Aurelia Meath of Sylvan Esso) and the sheer variety of music exemplified by "Aviator," "On the Road," and "Travel Light," should eliminate any potential barriers to enjoying the work of Shirlette Ammons.

Openly gay male hip-hop acts were unthinkable just a few years ago. Sure, there were deeply indie underground acts such as Tori Fixx, Tim'm T. West, Johnny Dangerous, and Rainbow Flava, to mention a few, but their cross-over appeal had limitations. In recent years, artists such as Big Freedia, Cazwell, and Frank Ocean have kept the floodgates open, allowing for performers such as **LeIf** to make full-length debuts like **Riot Boi** (Terrible). You have to give LeIf credit for giving the album the title he did—as if to declare that now that riot grrrls have been sanitized for public consumption, gay rappers can't be far behind. Like the aforementioned Ammons, LeIf is comfortable incorporating a variety of elements into his sound and style, with standout tracks such as "Water," "Taxi," "Change," "Rage," "Koi," and "Umami," being the best examples.

Heartache City (cocorosie-music.com), the new disc by freak folk/electro duo **CocoRosie** →



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(Casady sisters Sierra and queer Bianca), is as accessible as a CocoRosie disc gets. The colorful balloons and scary clown costumes on the cover are indicative of what's inside. "Lucky Clover," "Forget Me Not," "Un Beso," the folk-blues of "Big & Black," and even the spoken-word fantasies of "Lost Girls" and "Tim & Tina," should appeal to longtime fans as well as those looking for a musical experience out of the ordinary.

Queer Irish duo **Zrazy** (Maria Walsh and Carole Nelson) could (and should) write a book about their experiences in the music world. For example, *Come Out Everybody*, their 1997 domestic debut (a repackaging and re-ordering of their 1996 second album *Permanent Happiness*) arrived just as the major-labels' interest in '90s queer music was peaking with acts such as Jill Sobule, Melissa Ferrick, and others. Sadly, suits and execs have short attention spans, and soon Walsh and Nelson were back to releasing their work on their own label. **The Art of Happy Accidents** (Alfi), Zrazy's sixth album (the first in 11 years!), was worth the long wait. "You Make Me Happy" is proof positive that Zrazy hasn't lost its singular touch, and is sure to put a smile on your face. Also recommended are "Down with Jazz," "Snow," "Heaven Is Here," and "Night Crossing."

Queer U.K. trio **Mr. Strange** (featuring Mr. Stench, Mr. Stirling, and of course, Mr. Strange) cites influences as vast as Lady Gaga and Nine Inch Nails. After listening to **Electric Pornography** (mrstrangemedia.com), you might want to add Queen and early Ministry to that list. Mr. Strange makes old-school electro/industrial (remember those genres?), and it's kind of refreshing. Electrifying tracks include "Do It Like Pete Burns," "Stormtrooper in Drag," "Deviant Ritual," and "Tension."

Emily Wells' Promise (Thesis + Instinct) lives up to and exceeds the promise of her 2012 album *Mama*. A multi-instrumentalist known for her violin skills, Wells delivers an album of dreamy chamber-pop that should be sipped slowly like a hot beverage. Theatrical, bordering on the operatic (listen to "Los Angeles"), the album is at its most accessible on "Pack of Nobodies," "Antidote," "You Dream of China," "Come to Me," and "Richard."

If the above-mentioned Wells has a flair for the operatic, then the theatrical bent of **The Random Hubiak Band's The Bleached Bones of Titans** (reverbnation.com/therandomhubiak) is more '70s show-tune-y. Still exhibiting a strong Billy Joel influence, prolific front-man Rand Hubiak is a confident-enough songwriter to include a three-part song-cycle—"Jaffa I: Naked on the Rocks," "Jaffa II: Stoned at the Gate," and "Jaffa III: Erased by Time and Sea"—as the disc's centerpiece.

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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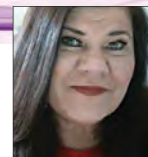
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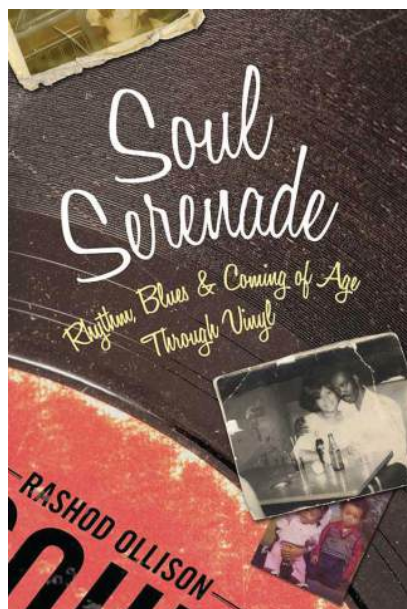
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a complex, contradictory, and entirely human woman who is pulled in many directions by her obligations to her husband and family and her role as the nation's First Lady, as well as by a compelling need to care and be cared for. Hickok is revealed as an accomplished journalist who, at the pinnacle of her career, gives it all up for the woman she loves. Then, as Roosevelt is transformed into Eleanor Everywhere/First Lady of the World, Hickok must create her own independent, productive life. Drawing on extensive research of the letters that were sealed for a decade following Hickok's death, the author creates a compelling narrative: a dramatic love story, vividly portraying two strikingly unconventional women, neither of whom is satisfied to live according to the script society has written for her. *Loving Eleanor* is a profoundly moving novel that illuminates a relationship that few were privileged to see—a celebration of the depth and durability of women's love. Persevero Press (perseveropress.com). —**Suzie Lynde**



Ⓢ Soul Serenade: Rhythm, Blues & Coming of Age through Vinyl

by Rashod Ollison
2016, Beacon Press
(beacon.org)
240 pages • \$25.95



Vinyl is making a comeback. Those are five words that can put a smile on a music aficionado's face. A CD isn't the same, they say. An MP3 is nowhere near as good. You don't get the right sound unless you're spinning vinyl, so it's coming back. But for people like Rashod Ollison in *Soul Serenade*, it never really left.

There was once a time when "Dusty" Ollison's parents were happy. He knows it's true; he has evidence of it, in the form of a picture taken at the beginning of their marriage, which lasted 13 years. When they split, he was old enough to witness (but too young to understand, having become injured to the fights) the cheating and the drinking at his home near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

After Ollison's father fled his family, leaving Ollison's mother with a tween and two small children, he rarely returned. But he left a gift behind: stacks of vinyl.

Ollison says he remembers poking around music stores

with his father, ogling covers, eager for approval of his taste in performers. Chaka Khan, Bobby Womack, Stevie Wonder—Ollison recalls his fascination with the sight of their record labels spinning on the turntable. Michael Jackson gave him comfort, Aretha was a mood barometer, and they all taught him about grown-up love through lyrics. With his mother working two full-time jobs to keep food on the table, Ollison counted on music to anchor him. It was his means of escape as his oldest sister took her rage out on him, as his family moved repeatedly and as he was bullied in school for "actin' like a woman."

While in denial at first about his feminine gestures and tender heart, by age 13 he could no longer ignore that he was gay.

School, by then, had joined music as a thing of refuge; Ollison excelled at his lessons,

achieved good grades, made friends, and expanded his playlist. As he grew, he also wondered about his father sometimes, but was largely indifferent even as the man lay dying.

And then an aunt told Ollison something that made him change his tune.

Soul Serenade starts where many good memoirs do: with a faded picture of a time that barely seems possible. From there, we're surprised by a death that promises to taint much of what's to come, all wrapped in family lore.

But don't get complacent. Author Rashod Ollison doesn't allow any lingering. Soon enough, his story involves angry yelling, a smack upside the head, profanity, TV-as-babysitter, fists, and sore feet. We're taken from neighborhood to neighborhood as the lights are shut off, the rent isn't paid, and Ollison is taunted with words that his sister has to explain. It's chaos, but it's also a darn good tale in that it doesn't dissolve into whining or poor-me-ing—a testament to Ollison's storytelling skills.

Soul Serenade is one of those books that sticks in your brain—not only for the musical memories it evokes, but because the memoir itself leaves its mark. And if that sounds like solid gold to you, then give this book a spin.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

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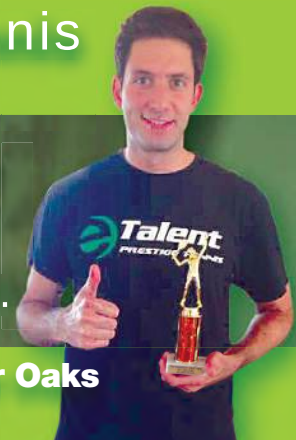
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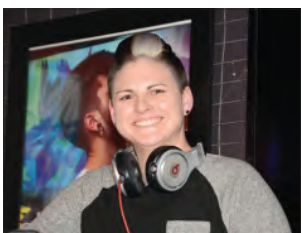
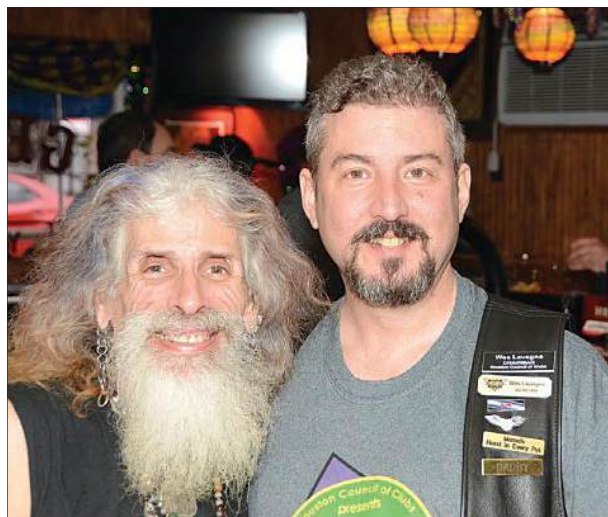
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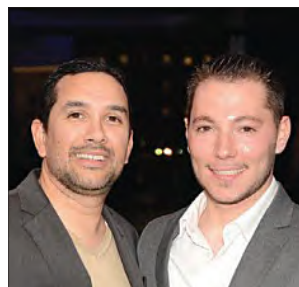


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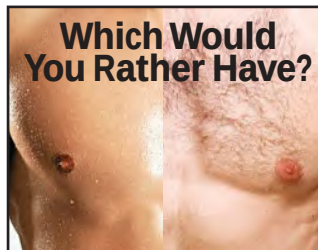
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This always-fun party bar opens daily (7am-2am Mon.-Sat., 11am-2am Sun.), serving fantastic food (11am-9pm) daily. Fifty-cent wing specials on Tuesday and Thursday pack the house. "Let Us Entertain You" with our Sunday drag performances. Party promotions nightly. Crawfish served every Sunday 11am-9pm. 2409 Grant St. • 713.522.2867 • bayoucitybar.com.

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 • club-2020houston.com.

CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management, and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Frwy, next to Colorado • 713.278.2582 • crystaltheclub.com.

CROCKER BAR

Resident DJ Johnny spins on Fri. and Sat. nights at this comfortably remodeled Montrose nightspot that also offers karaoke on Tuesdays and Thursdays and extended happy-hour prices throughout the week. 2312 Crocker • 713.529.3355.

F BAR

Award-winning DJs spin nightly at this "boutique nightclub" that offers elegance without arrogance and features a stage, dance floor, VIP area, glass-encased quiet bar, and attractive patio. Tues. and Sun. drag shows feature frequent special guests. 202 Tuam St. • fbarhouston.com • 713.522.3227.

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Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. Sports Saturdays and Sundays start at 3pm with dart and pool tournaments. 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. • jrsbarandgrill.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.

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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.

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the historic Magnolia Ballroom. Thursdays are Hip Hop, Fridays (Electro House), & Saturdays (Dubstep, Trap, and House). @MinistryHouston • ministryhouston.com • 709 Franklin St.

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

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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.

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.

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.SOBEL.

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 drag contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas • 713.571.7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com.

VIVIANA'S

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Galveston

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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.

THIRD COAST DOWNTOWN BAR

The newest and largest dance club in Galveston features the best shows on the island Friday and Saturday nights hosted by KiKi Dion Van Wales. Sunday Fun Day features Drag Bingo, followed by The Chat—an hour of humor and topical discussions. Then there's the Texas Hold 'Em tournament, and finish the night with karaoke hosted by Taylor L. Much more Monday through Thursday. Doors open at 4 p.m. Mon.-Sat., and at 3 p.m. Sun. 4216 Postoffice St. • 409/765-6911.

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THE ROOM BAR AND LOUNGE

One of only two LGBT hangouts in North Houston/Spring, this bar and video lounge has a 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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This is a particularly active and energetic month. Normally, this means we are making decisions and making some headway in our lives. We get a boost from the solar eclipse in Pisces, connecting us to our inner lives. The corresponding lunar eclipse on the 22nd in Libra will prompt us to share more of our inner lives with others. Can we trust our intuition and our choices? • The last week in March is very energetic and could create some rocky and unexpected events. • The sun enters Aries, the sign of spring, on the 19th at 11:30 p.m., and Easter is the first Sunday after the March 23 Full Moon and the March 19 entrance of the sun into Aries.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). You are in a time of hibernation and retreat. Choose your company carefully this month, because you will not be up for much drama. Continue to pay attention to your health and workout regimens. You can certainly make a lot of headway there. You will emerge from your time of retreat much more energetic and willing to get back to the projects at hand. The full Moon on the 23rd will bring relationships into focus for you. There are big changes happening at work at the end of the month. You will want to be your own boss and have more control over what goes on.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). This month you are focused on your career and your business and community associations. This could be an especially good time to take on a leadership role in an organization that is connected to furthering your career or security goals. Friends and associates can be especially helpful and supportive this month. Don't be afraid to call on them. Relationship energies are very strong, and potentially very reactive. Toward the end of the month, you're ready to have some time to yourself.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). This continues to be a busy and active time for the Gemini. A part of you is trying to expand and step off the path you have been following for a long time. You are having stronger expectations, and want to have a more direct hand in your decisions and choices. You are having an especially strong focus on your career, both this year and this month. You will be narrowing down your options after the 25th of this month. The relationships in your life are also going through a similar re-evaluation process. Look for friends to be more supportive in the latter part of the month.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). As the month

opens, you are in a much more intellectually creative time that's especially good for teaching, writing, or working on continuing education. You have been continually trying to establish a new path in your life, and while you haven't exactly arrived at that point, you are getting prepared to do something about it. In the latter half of the month, you are much more energetic and clear about what you want to do. Continue to work out and focus on getting healthier.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Relationships continue to play a significant role in the early part of the month. You will want to interact and feel more connected with those closest to you. You are still putting a lot of energy into your home and your family by trying to get things cleaned up and organized. Some family members will not be open and accepting of your new plans. You have been discovering some of your hidden talents this year, and you are looking to give this part of yourself a real place in your life—and in a potential new career. Toward the end of the month, you're feeling much more active and energetic.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Relationships take the spotlight this month, and it's a good time to renew your existing relationships or market yourself for a new partnership. You continue to be in a review-and-renew time with your career. You are looking for something to feel more connected to, so that your work fulfills a sense of inner satisfaction rather than feeling like you're just rolling the rock uphill all day. This is also a good time to be doing home repairs, or even to consider relocating. Toward the end of the month, you will begin to focus on your financial life and freeing yourself from financial burdens.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). This month you are focused on organizing your office, home, and health routines. Take a gentle approach to your health, such as yoga or Tai Chi Chuan. Relationships take on more significance by the latter part of the month. It continues to remain unsettled with your relationships as you work out new rules and new freedoms. Conditions continue to shift at home as you are working on home remodeling or even moving. This can be a time when you have to deal with your parents as they age, forcing you to take on more familial duties and responsibilities.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Your need to rush rush rush and get things done yesterday finally begins to slow down after March 5. Your relationship dynamics will also be less confrontational, and hopefully you will be able to sleep better. You are paying a lot more attention to your finances this year, and especially this month. Toward the end of the month, you begin to work on improving your work environment and your health. This continues to be a good year for you to involve yourself in community or business organizations. Don't be afraid to step into a leadership role.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This month you are very much more energetic,

ready to start new endeavors and confront the problems in your life. Mars, planet of action, enters your sign for the next three months. This is also a great time for getting yourself in shape. And all the while, you are continuing to consider long-term security plans associated with your career and your relationships. Home and family are very important this month, and you may need to have evenings to yourself to recover from the constant daytime pressures. You do lighten up some by the end of the month, but you are still trying to make the best use of your time, love, and money!

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). The need for some level of constant and continuing change has been keeping you going for several months now. You are ready to take a break from all the activity, especially in the first half of the month. If you have the time, take the opportunity to get away from your work and routines for a short trip out of town. It will do wonders for you. Even if you can only turn off your electronic leash for a weekend, you will benefit from that release. Toward the end of the month, you are back on the busy track and focusing more on your family and home life. Clean out those closets and storerooms.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). This month you are working on making better use of your skill sets. You will be more aware of how you are treated by other people. You may be looking for a better place to work, and especially to increase your financial base. Friends and community groups will need your help and support this month. In business, this is a good time for you to take a leadership role in your community. By the end of the month, you are ready to take action on the plans you came up with in the earlier part of the month. Make sure you have an exit plan, just in case you get overwhelmed.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). Happy birthday to the Mermaids and Mermen. This is your



personal yearly cycle of review and putting news ideas into action. This continues to be a period when you are looking at how you can make the best use of your time. Although there are plenty of social activities and travel

opportunities, you are weighing and measuring the cost and the benefits of any activity that you commit to. This continues to be a good time for relationships—business, friendship, or romance. You are more action-oriented and focused on your finances as we get to the end of the month. This is a good time to promote yourself in your career. Take a leadership role—they are just waiting for you to do it.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2016 forecast at OUTSMARTMAGAZINE.COM. For more astro-insight, log on to lillyroddy.com.



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On January 28, Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast held its *Roe v. Wade* Luncheon at the Westin Galleria. Pictured are **Melaney Linton** and **Jamia Wilson**.



The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund held its Table Captains event on February 4 at the home of **Dean Putterman**. Pictured are Putterman, **Elizabeth Campbell**, **Ed Finger**, **Aisha Moodie-Mills**, **Travis Torrence**, **Tammi Wallace**, and **Ryan Lindsay**.



On February 11, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus held a fundraiser at the home of Constable **Alan Rosen**. Pictured are **Jennifer Schechter Rosen**, Constable **Rosen**, **Alan Bernstein**, and members of the Caucus board.



On February 8, The Jen Collection and Edward Sanchez Cosmetics held a pre-sell at Sloan Hall. Pictured are **Miya Shay**, **Marcus Sloan**, **Edward Sanchez**, **Kady Smalley**, **Shawn Kuehn**, and **Shannon Hall**.



The Mystery & Fantasy Mardi Gras Party was held on January 30 at Limelight. Pictured are **Robert Harwood**, **Ed Bradshaw**, **Arnold Arenas**, **Clifford Dotson**, and **Scott Miller**.



On February 6, MSIO held its "Mystic Project Runway" event at the Power Center. Pictured are MSIO Royalty III **Kaylynn Burns** and **David Wallace**.



The Diana Foundation held its "Diana Cajun Review" event on February 20 at the Magnolia Ballroom. Pictured are **Nathan Wright**, **Tanner Williams**, **Phillip Johnson**, and **Everett Evans**.



On January 21, Out & Equal and My Gay Houston held their social at Tarakaan. Pictured are **Dave Cyranowicz**, **Mike Craig**, **Sabrina Iacovazzo**, **A.J. Mistretta**, and **Piran Esfahani**.



On January 31, HRC Houston held its "Guess Who's Coming to Brunch" event at the home of **Tommy O'Neill** and **Brent Whiteley**. Pictured are Whiteley, O'Neill, **Daniel Rose**, **Randall Hance**, and **Steve Bolton**.



On February 20, OutReach United held its "OutReach Goes Vegas" night at Jaguar Central Houston. Pictured are **Bryant Johnson**, **Gary Wood**, **Justin Pitt William Fu**, **DJ Crain**, and **Robert Vasquez**.



Houston Public Media held its special final taping of *Manor of Speaking* on February 23. Pictured are Bishop **Andy Doyle**, **Helen Mann**, **Ernie Manouse**, **Luke Wrobel**, **Joanne King Herring**, and **St. John Flynn**.

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