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MARCH '20

Wheel Love

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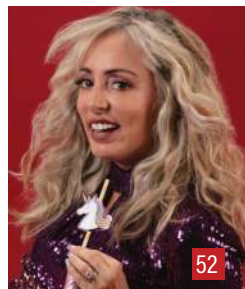


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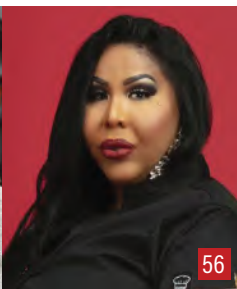
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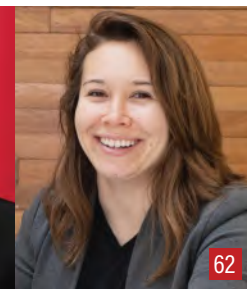
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On January 2, a record nine women were sworn in to Houston City Council, making the 16-member legislative body majority female for the first time in history. Many of these ladies are progressive millennials and people of color who are driven to make Space City a place that truly reflects its constituents. I look forward to witnessing all of their political achievements over the next four years.

At all levels of government—from Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo to United States Representative Lizzie Fletcher—Houston women are getting things done. And the upcoming wave of local female politicians are just as strong and deserving of our votes during the March 3 primary. If you're unable to vote this time around, get registered by April 2 to participate in your party's runoff elections in May.

In addition to politics, girl-bosses are thriving in every field. This March issue of OUTSMART is proof of just that, as we introduce you to six local businesswomen who have each perfected a unique craft. Our cover stars Kha-

lia O. Guillory, Jenny Block, and Angelina Marie chatted with writers Marene Gustin, Sam Byrd, and me about their various lines of work.

Elsewhere in the issue, writer Ryan Leach sits down with Diamond Stylz, the creator of the *Marsha's Plate* podcast. Stylz and her two co-hosts, Mia Mix and Zahir "Zee" Ray, serve up the perspectives of the transgender community that are vitally important, but too rarely showcased.

Because it's Women's History Month, writer Brandon Wolf interviews Tori Williams, the creator of Moving Right Along Garage. From 1982 to 1984, Williams and six other Montrose-area ladies ran Houston's first auto-repair shop established by women and for women. Wolf also spoke with the owners of Club Houston about their recently completed renovation, and social worker and author Robert Snellgrove about his new book, *The Masculine Eros*.

Writer Bill Arning previews the queer photography we can look forward to during the the 2020 Fotofest. That biennial exhibi-

tion runs from March 8 through April 19 at venues around the city, and the 2020 theme is African Cosmologies.

Lastly, OUTSMART's new editorial intern Alys Garcia Carrera talks to openly gay country artist Katie Pruitt before her Houston show on March 21, while writer David Goldberg interviews New York comedian Zach Zimmerman, who brings his standup act to the city on March 12. And if you still haven't had enough LGBTQ entertainment, be sure to check out our monthly Queer Things to Do calendar.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you!



Lourdes Zavaleta
MANAGING EDITOR

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Rockets Host Their First-Ever Pride Night

LGBTQ-themed event occurs April 2 at Toyota Center.

By LOURDES ZAVALETA

The Houston Rockets will host their first-ever LGBTQ Pride Night on April 2, when the team goes head-to-head against the Golden State Warriors.

“Embracing inclusivity is something our team believes in strongly,” Rockets’

CEO Tad Brown tells OUTSMART. “It is our responsibility to celebrate all members of our community, including LGBTQ fans. Pride Night will provide an experience that shows how much we support and appreciate them.”

Brown notes that the LGBTQ-themed evening will include an entrance party, entertainment, and a conversation with out Warriors’ CEO Rick Welts.

“Rick will tell us about his journey to becoming the first openly gay professional sports executive,” Brown says. “He’ll show fans how to embrace their own paths, and teach us more about how to support the LGBTQ community.”

Clutch City’s first Pride Night has been in the making for over a year. Brown explains



NBA Faces of Pride

Rick Welts, openly gay CEO of the Golden State Warriors, will lead a conversation on LGBTQ inclusion in professional sports during the Rockets’ April 2 Pride Night.

that the team initially discussed the event internally, and after receiving overwhelming support from owner Tilman Fertitta, Rockets staff members reached out to local community leaders for assistance.

Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce President Tammi Wallace and Chamber member Jack Berger have been working alongside the Space City team

to ensure that it will provide fans with an unforgettable night that appropriately celebrates LGBTQ Houstonians.

“The Rockets’ Pride Night makes a huge statement not only to the LGBTQ+ community, but also sends a strong message across the country—and the world, for that matter—that Houston is an LGBTQ+ inclusive city,” Wallace

NEWS CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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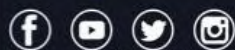


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says. “[The event] speaks volumes and truly honors LGBTQ+ fans.”

Due to the conservative traditions of men’s sports, there are currently only a few NBA teams that host LGBTQ-affirming events. This is changing, though, thanks to teams like the San Francisco-based Warriors, which hosted the NBA’s first Pride Night in 2018.

“Inclusivity and acceptance are becoming more common across all sports,” Welts says. “I’m very proud that the Rockets decided to host their first Pride Night this year, and I’m honored to participate in the event.”

Welts, who came out publicly in 2011 while he was CEO of the Phoenix Suns, says he feared that being openly gay would hinder his opportunities as a professional sports executive. “There was no one [out] in my field that I could look up to,” he recalls. “I had no idea how things would turn out. That was a big barrier for me.”

Welts ultimately chose to open up about his sexuality to inspire the next generation of LGBTQ folks who dream of working in the field of sports. “My goal was for a kid out there to hear my story and see that they could live as their authentic selves and have a wonderful

conclusion to their own story.”

However, LGBTQ representation in professional men’s sports is still a rarity. While retired NBA star Jason Collins received overwhelming support after coming out as gay seven years ago, no one else has followed in his trailblazing footsteps. There are currently no openly LGBTQ active players in any of the four American major male professional leagues.

Events like the Rockets’ Pride Night may help shift this narrative by affirming LGBTQ fans and players, Welts says. Brown agrees, adding that “professional sports have the opportunity to lead in a unique way, and LGBTQ inclusion should be a priority.”

Pride Night will become an annual Rockets’ event, Brown says, adding that the team hopes to show their pro-equality stance throughout the season.

“This isn’t about making a difference for just one day,” he says. “Going forward, the Rockets want to see Pride Night become a tradition that shows our [public] support for the LGBTQ community.”

For tickets and more information about the Rockets’ Pride Night, visit nba.com/rockets.



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A New Houston LGBTQ Business Group

Out Professionals will provide local networking events.

By MARENE GUSTIN

Out Professionals was founded in 1983 as a place for LGBTQ professionals to meet and advance their careers," says national board President Charlie Conard. "Early on, membership was driven by word-of-mouth invitation. Since it was not uncommon for people to be fired if they were outed, meetings were private, almost secretive, and photography was forbidden. Accordingly, the original name of Out Professionals was the somewhat "closeted" NYACN—the New York Advertising and Communications Network, which privately catered to LGBTQ people in advertising, marketing, and communications.

"In 1999, the board decided to 'christen' the organization with the new name Out Professionals to cast a wider net to other professions."

Since those early days in New York City, Out Professionals has grown to include thousands of members, and this year the nonprofit is launching chapters in Los Angeles and right here in Houston.

"Houston is forecasted to soon replace Chicago as the third-largest city in the U.S. behind New York City and Los Angeles," Conard says. "It made perfect sense to expand our Out Pro networking opportunities to the second-largest city, Los Angeles, in January 2020 and Houston in April 2020. Serving the local LGBTQ communities in the three biggest markets, from the East to the West to the Gulf coasts, sets the stage for future expansion, innovation, and coast-to-coast networking.

"We are also fortunate that Out Pro board member Pete Beausoleil has relocated back to Houston. While we were sad to see him leave, he is the perfect leader to help launch the Houston chapter because he understands the Bayou City and has strong local connections." Beausoleil is CEO of a healthcare company and is very excited to help launch the Houston chapter with a meetup called Out Pro Lounge-Houston, to be held on Wednesday, April 8, at the Belvedere Lounge in Uptown Park. Admission, which is normally \$10, is free with advance registration before March 20. A generous anonymous donor

has stepped up to help the group get started in Houston. Annual dues are \$65 a year and include free access to monthly mixers.

"Our New York meetup group mushroomed to almost 200 members in a flash," says Beausoleil, "which suggests Houston's LGBTQ professionals [would also welcome] a sophisticated and innovative networking forum on a regular basis."

One of Beausoleil's first Houston recruits for Out Pro was Jacques Bourgeois, a business development specialist who, along with Eric Hulse, helped start Houston Gaymers and is on the board of Bunnies on the Bayou.

"Pete approached me about this in December," he says. "This will be a chapter of the national group, but some of our focus will be a little different than New York's. This won't just be monthly cocktail parties. I want to focus on pushing legislation to protect

LGBTQ workers' rights. Texas is still a right-to-work state, and that means workers can be fired if they are out. And, we want to expand networking to all of the community, from oil and gas workers to artists and healthcare workers. We'll also provide continuing-education classes."

Here's what you can expect at the April 8 mixer: when someone arrives at an Out Pro Lounge Networking Mixer, they receive a customizable name badge, color-coded for their industry. There is an extended rainbow of 15 colors that represent the major industries.

Attendees also have the opportunity to add an "Actively Hiring" or "Active Job Seeker" sticker to their name badge. These stickers help them stand out as having an immediate need.

"Out Professionals provides focused networking events for both established and aspiring LGBTQ professionals who work in corporate environments, which is approximately 87.6 percent of LGBTQ professionals (according to Community Marketing Insights & Research, 2018)," says Conard.

INFO: outprofessionals.org/houston
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Pete Beausoleil

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By LOURDES ZAVALETA

QUEER THINGS to DO



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MUSIC

MARCH 18

Orville Peck @ White Oak Music Hall

Masked Man
The openly gay Canadian country crooner comes to Houston.

Just as the conservative traditions of country music were being challenged by LGBTQ fan favorites Kacey Musgraves and Lil Nas X, openly gay singer Orville Peck dropped his debut album, *Pony*, in March 2019. The glamorous, fringe-faced

masked cowboy made his mark on the genre with vocals reminiscent of Johnny Cash and melancholy lyrics that reflect the lonely experience of growing up queer in a heteronormative small town. Now on tour, Peck rides into Houston to perform a show at White

Oak Music Hall. Join the enigmatic figure for an unforgettable experience, and even upgrade your general-admission tickets to VIP status to meet Peck for a photo op, get an exclusive merchandise gift, and more. tinyurl.com/vbq89h8



MUSIC

March 21

Katie Pruitt

Openly gay country singer and songwriter Katie Pruitt makes her Houston debut at White Oak Music Hall. Pruitt's show will be opened by musician Tré Burt. whiteoakmusichall.com

COMMUNITY
MARCH 20

Rainbow on the Rink

Show off your Pride at Discovery Green's Rainbow on the Rink. The LGBTQ celebration features roller skating, a dance party, entertainment, and a fashion show featuring designs by Yahaira DeHill, who creates garments entirely out of recycled materials.
discoverygreen.com



COMMUNITY

March 1

AIDS WALK HOUSTON

Help take the next step in ending the HIV epidemic at Houston's 31st annual AIDS Walk. Hosted by AIDS Foundation Houston and beginning downtown at Sam Houston Park, funds raised from the 1.8-mile walk will go to local HIV/AIDS service organizations that provide programs to the almost 30,000 Houstonians impacted by the virus. To register for the event, visit aidswalkhouston.org.

COMMUNITY

March 7

LGBTQ+ VOLUNTEER FAIR

Pride Houston hosts an LGBTQ volunteer and Pride town hall. Attend the event to find ways to assist Houston's queer community and learn about Pride Houston's plans for this summer's celebration. To register for this event, visit pridehouston.org.

STAGE

March 7

DRAW DIVA BRUNCH

House of Blues Houston presents Draw Diva Brunch: Country Queens. Enjoy a breakfast buffet and drinks while Space City drag queens pay homage to country artists.
tinyurl.com/t6xk4kv

COMMUNITY

March 8

SPACE CITY SISTERS' CHILI COOKOFF

Houston's drag-queen nuns host an inaugural chili cookoff at BUDDY'S Houston. Join a team and participate in the competition, or be a judge and vote for the tastiest recipe. Proceeds benefit the Space City Sisters' Pride fund.
tinyurl.com/rzt8r5s

March 10 is National Women and Girls HIV Awareness Day

SOCIAL

March 13

LGBTQ VETERANS HAPPY HOUR

Every second Friday of the month, hang out with LGBTQ veterans and allies at a happy hour event at BUDDY's. The event kicks off with karaoke, hosted by Houston's DJ Cori.
tinyurl.com/v5rwy2c

COMMUNITY

March 13

BRINGIN' IN THE GREEN

Attend Bringin' in the Green's St. Patrick's Day party at 2346 Wroxtton Road. Proceeds from the Montrose Center's annual event benefit Hatch Youth Services' rapid rehousing program for local LGBTQ homeless youth.
tinyurl.com/s8lyklb

HEALTH

March 14

OUT FOR HEALTH

Founded and organized by students across all Texas health-science centers, Out for Health is an annual health conference that addresses the needs of LGBTQ people. This year's conference is held at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and discusses strategies to help medical professionals uplift marginalized communities and provide more inclusive healthcare.
tinyurl.com/reqnqpy

COMMUNITY

March 14

FIRST LADY AND FIRST GENTLEMAN OF MONTROSE PAGEANT

Attend the First Lady and First Gentleman of Montrose Pageant at Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon. Hosted by Grecia Montes Docca and MyKey Whitney, the competition is open to all contestants with an entry fee of \$75.
tinyurl.com/yx6cyk6x



TV

March 14
MORE

FUNNY WOMEN OF A CERTAIN AGE

See lesbian comedian Carol Leifer (r), trans comedian Julia Scotti (l), and four other funny women do their shtick on a very funny special on Showtime.
sho.com



STAGE

March 19
ACTOUT

Join Lambda NextGen at the Alley Theatre for ActOUT featuring George Orwell's *1984*. Meet young LGBTQ Houston professionals at a complimentary reception, which will be followed by the production.
tinyurl.com/s8myet8

March 20 is National Native HIV Awareness Day

COMMUNITY

March 28

PRIDE GALVESTON BENEFIT

Go to 23rd Street Station Piano Bar for a Pride Galveston benefit. There will be food, raffle items, entertainment, and more. Proceeds benefit the Island's 2020 LGBTQ celebration.
tinyurl.com/tzvra9

March 31 is International Transgender Day of Visibility

MORE QUEER THINGS TO DO →

ALLEYTHEATRE

1984

BY
GEORGE ORWELL
ADAPTED BY
MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN
DIRECTED BY
ROB MELROSE

MAR. 6 – MAR. 29

ActOUT

THURSDAY MAR. 19
LGBTQ Pre-Show Mixer

ALLEYTHEATRE.ORG

UNITED

Official Airline of Alley Theatre

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

QUEER THINGS to DO

SAVE the DATES

COMMUNITY

April 4

HRC Houston Dinner

The Human Rights Campaign Houston hosts its 23rd annual dinner gala at the Marriott Marquis. Entitled Live, Act, Vote, the event is hosted by the HRC steering committee and dinner co-chairs Jenni Tranweaver, Todd Litton, and Rey Ocañas. tinyurl.com/v74z5nm

SOCIAL

April 12

Bunnies on the Bayou 41



Celebrate Easter Sunday at Texas' largest outdoor cocktail party—Bunnies on the Bayou 41. Head downtown to Sesquicentennial Park and enjoy entertainment, food, drinks, and more. This annual event raises funds for local LGBTQ charities. bunniesonthebayou.org

COMMUNITY

April 30

Pride 2020 Kickoff

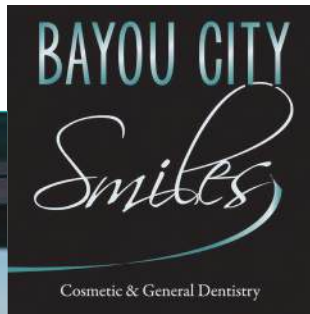
Join your friends at Pearl Bar for Houston's LGBTQ Pride celebration kickoff. The party features several announcements about this year's festival and parade, including the lineup of entertainers and special guests, the marshals and honorary grand marshals, and the celebration grant recipients. While you're there, purchase Pride tickets and merch. tinyurl.com/rrshtsz



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The Goat-Rodeo Party?

After the Iowa Caucuses, the Democrats need a new nickname.

It has long been said that Republican voters want to fall in line with their candidates, but Democratic voters want to fall in love with their candidates. Sometimes—like now, for goodness' sake—I think that we Democrats should rename ourselves the Goat-Rodeo Party, because that's how organized we are.

It seems like we go out of our way to make things more difficult, more prone to failure, and chock-full of finger pointing and bellyaching.

We were given an example of that last month in Iowa. Right out of the gate, the Iowa Caucuses debacle seemed to herald an election year where our opponent is Joseph Damn Stalin, and beating even him may be an impossible task for us. We don't have our ducks in a line. We don't have ducks. Drawing lines is not part of our skill set. Screw the damn ducks, we can't even get a line in a line.

A high-tech company was hired to make an app to count Iowa's votes. The company was made up of former Hillary Clinton staff members. Ding! They had never completed, or even fully tested, a project this big before. Ding! Ding!

That tech company is named—ready for it?—*Shadow*. Ding! Ding! Ding! Hiring a tech company named Shadow is kinda like pleading on your knees for a very creepy catastrophe to happen.

It took two full days for the Iowans to get election results that were supposed to be easily obtained in an hour. Okay, maybe it's a girly thing, but I do like a little teasing before I get the big results—but (and I'm hollering here) only in the damn bedroom.

In the days following the much-publicized corn-country calamity, Shadow took the time to



explain to the tweeting world what happened. Here are their honest-to-goodness true Shadow posts—and my allegorical translations.

Shadow's Tweet #1: As the Iowa Democratic Party has confirmed, the underlying data and collection process via Shadow's mobile caucus app was sound and accurate, but our process to transmit that caucus-results data generated via the app to the IDP was not.

What That Means: I'm getting a lot of questions from the fire marshal, so I just want to make it clear that my goal was to cook a tasty and satisfying meal for my loved ones, not to burn my kitchen to the ground. Also, I was paid a substantial amount of money to do this.

Shadow's Tweet #2: We will apply the lessons learned in the future, and have already corrected the underlying technology issue. We take these issues very seriously and are committed to improving and evolving to support the Democratic Party's goal of modernizing its election process.

What That Means: Standing here in the smoldering ashes of what was once my kitchen, I am

committed to improving and evolving as a cook.

The Shadow Company may have been speaking English, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Since both the Texas primary election and the conventions to elect our state's Democratic delegates are this month (March 3 and March 21, respectively), I would like to send out a warning to both our state and local Texas Democratic Party leaders.

Top Five Tech Companies You Should Not Use:

- **Masked Figure in a Cloak, Inc.** – Company motto: “When you need election-night data network security, it's time to call Masked Figure in a Cloak, Inc.”
- **SmokeScreen, Ltd.** – Company motto: “Ensure fair and transparent election results using the proprietary technology of SmokeScreen, Ltd.”
- **Mystery, Inc.** – Company press release: “We are excited to be launching our new digital election-infrastructure company, Mystery, Inc.”
- **NPIL Bank** – Company press release: “For your foreign-inter-

ference needs on election night, Nigerian Prince International Lottery Bank stands ready to help you with data transfers.

- **Cavalcade of Random Prime Numbers, Inc.** – Company press release: “We have been a trusted supplier of arbitrary numbers to the Texas Legislature. We supply the numbers you want, or the numbers you need—your choice!”
- **The Exodus Tabernacle-of-Fire News Service** – Company press release: “We have an opening for a new client. We do not use apps. We use large stone tablets, and our golden calves are no longer on back order.”

We have a Texas Democratic Party caucus event on March 21, where you can register for your favorite presidential candidate and decide if you want to go to the Texas Democratic Convention in June. (Of course you do, because it's in San Antonio.) If we're still trying to decide on a presidential candidate by then, it won't be much of a caucus—probably more like a good-ol' fit-pitchin'. Either way, you do not want to miss it.

We *do* like to fight in Texas. It is common knowledge that honky-tonks were created so people could fight to music. Honey, there were so many fights at my last Democratic county convention that we needed a scoreboard and corporate sponsors. Two more conventions like that and we can get the city to build us a stadium.

To get all of this explained in simple English, go to texasdemocraticconvention.com. Hope to see you there!

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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Before the November 3 Election

... we've got some preliminary business.

The month of March is upon us, and because this is an election year, it's primary election time!

The March 3 Super Tuesday primary election falls on my mother's birthday, so happy anniversary of your 39th birthday, Mom! (And yes, I've already bought your presents.)

But back to the column.

You may have heard, thanks to the ad nauseum avalanche of TV commercials, that we're having a big election on November 3 to determine if we're even going to have a country left when 2021 rolls around. Because you OUTSMART readers are intelligent people, I'm presuming you know the trouble our beloved country is in.

I'm also hopeful that on that glorious November 3 evening, we'll hear that the people have spoken and our Great American Political Horror Story will be over. I pray that Orange Foolius will be a one-term president and we will be cruising toward an orange prison jumpsuit to go with his orange spray-tan as we chant, "You're Fired! Lock Him Up!"

But before we can get to that glorious evening, we first need to handle some preliminary business. We hold these March 3 primary elections to whittle down the number of candidates vying for the Democratic and Republican Party nominations.

The already-way-too-damn-long Democratic primary resulted in none of my preferred candidates being on the ballot. I supported Kamala Harris until she was forced to drop out.

So who did I vote for during Super Tuesday early voting? It definitely wasn't Bernie Sanders, to give you a hint.

Then there's the race for U.S. Senate. Republican John Cornyn has to face the voters this year, so which Democrat will survive to challenge him? And there are various U.S. House races on the ballot, as well as the contests for Texas House and Senate seats in Austin.

In our area, Districts 4 and 6 are the two critical seats on the Texas State Board of



Education that we must flip blue to end the conservamadness that has gripped that body over the last decade. This board also has influence in setting education curricula and the content that appears in our textbooks.

That's why completing the mission of flipping the Board of Education blue is vital if you don't want GOP "alternative facts" in your child's textbooks. Because Texas buys a massive amount of textbooks for our 1,000-plus school districts in our bigger-than-France-sized state, it also has influence over what appears in school textbooks nationwide.

In District 4, Lawrence Allen stepped down to run for the Texas Lege, so that is a Democratic seat we need to keep that way. District 6 is the one I reside in, and it stretches from southwest Houston to Jersey Village, Cypress, and Spring. Because all of those areas are getting more diverse, we have a chance to flip District 6.

Michelle Palmer wants to be the Democrat who flips that District 6 seat, and Larry McKinzie is running to fill the remainder of Lawrence Allen's term. They are not only good people, but I'm always down with putting

actual educators on the Texas State Board of (Mis)Education.

We also have judicial seats on the ballot, from the Texas Supreme Court all the way down to our local district courts. There are Harris County positions up for grabs such as the Harris County sheriff, county attorney, district attorney, Harris County constable, tax assessor and collector, and Harris County commissioners in Precincts 1 and 3.

Steve Radack, the Republican who has held that Precinct 3 seat since I was a UH Cougar back in the Phi Slama Jama days, has finally retired. He even conceded that his district is getting more ethnic and blue, and he wasn't having any fun being in the minority since we flipped the Commissioners Court to Democratic control back in 2018.

And nope, conservafools, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo is not on the ballot this year. Damn, I love saying that!

Radack's retirement meant that a lot of people have jumped in on both sides to capture this critical seat. If the Democrats flip it, it would expand their majority to 4-1, with Jack

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

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Financial Accounts . . .

How many do young investors really need?

It has often been said that the sooner you begin saving and investing, the more you can grow your wealth over time. But for young investors, the wide range of available financial accounts and options can be somewhat overwhelming. So, how do you know which ones will be right for you?

While you don't need to have an in-depth understanding of each and every type of investment and savings account available, it is important that you are familiar with where you are now financially, and where you would like to be in the future. Getting you to your destination starts with having the proper accounts in place.

When You're Just Getting Started

There are many types of savings and investment accounts that are used by investors. But because everyone's goals are unique, the reality is that the "best" portfolio for you is the one that is set up to move you closer to your specific financial objectives.

With that in mind, the first step in deciding which type(s) of accounts you should have is to determine your short-, medium-, and long-term financial goals, as well as how accessible your money will be when you need or want it.

Money for Now, Money for Later

It's important to have a plan that works for a wide range of time frames throughout your life. For instance, you may want to purchase a home within the next several years. So having an account to build up funds for a downpayment is typically recommended. Likewise, in looking ahead to retirement, you may have a certain monetary goal, such as \$1 million, that you would like to have available by the time you turn age 65.

Because your financial goals will typically have different time frames, it is important to allocate funds for each goal into different types of accounts, as well as into various investments that will allow you to grow and protect your principal.

Given the wide range of goals that many young investors have, some or all of the following accounts may be recommended, based on your specific situation:



Short-Term Financial Goals

Short-term financial goals are those that you want to achieve within the next 12 months or less. Some examples here would be purchasing a new computer, making minor home improvements, or saving for the downpayment on a new car. You may also need money to pay for emergencies, such as repairing your car after a fender bender or replacing a broken refrigerator.

For short-term goals, then, it is important to have money available that you can easily get to in a base account, as well as in an emergency fund:

- **Base Account** – One of the most important types of financial accounts to have is a base checking account. This is where you can deposit income from your paycheck and other sources. You can also pay your regular living expenses, such as rent or mortgage, utility bills, groceries, and transportation costs from your base account. Banks usually offer a variety of checking accounts to choose from. Some may pay you a small amount of interest (typically if you maintain a minimum balance), and others offer free accounts where your average balance can fluctuate without you having to keep a certain dollar amount in it.

- **Emergency Fund** – Having an emergency fund is recommended for people of all ages. It goes without saying that items can—and do—break (including expensive items like appliances, cars, and computers). Having a repair bill can oftentimes set you back by hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars. So by having an emergency fund already in place, you will be much better prepared to pay the tab, and you can avoid putting the expense on a high-interest credit card. It will also allow you to continue paying your regular monthly bills without having to struggle. Because you want your emergency money to be there when you need it, you should consider keeping these funds in “safe” and liquid alternatives like a money market. Many financial experts agree that having 6–12 months of living expenses in an emergency fund is sufficient. But when you're just getting started, any amount is better than nothing.
- **Fun Account** – Another way to help keep yourself on track financially is to set up an account for “fun” items, like buying a new TV or a nice outfit. Having a slush fund available for these types of items allows you to use some of your money to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

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make non-essential purchases without impacting your other financial goals. It can also keep you from running up a large credit-card balance by instead paying for these things with cash up front.

These types of accounts would preferably be in money-market or cash alternatives, for easy access.

Medium-Term Financial Goals

Medium-term financial goals are those that you would like to accomplish within five to ten years. These could include a long vacation abroad or the downpayment on a new home. It can be helpful to keep these funds in an account that is separate from your base account where you access the money on a regular basis. Otherwise, you run the risk of depleting the funds you need for meeting these medium-term goals. In this case, it can be beneficial to have the following type(s) of accounts:

- **Specific Item or Event Account** – If you're saving for a specific item or event, such as a wedding, a new car, or a long-awaited dream vacation, you could open a separate account for this goal. Contributing to the account can help you get in the habit of making payments on a regular basis, too. For instance, if you estimate your future car payment to be \$450 per month, you could contribute \$450 into your account each month. Then, when you purchase the car, you will already be in the habit of paying that amount. Depending on your time frame (i.e., when you plan to take the money out), you may opt to grow the funds.

Long-Term Financial Goals

Long-term financial goals are those that have a timeline of ten years or more. One of the biggest long-term financial goals that people have is saving for college and retirement. If your goal here is still quite a few years out, going with options like stocks or mutual funds could provide you with some added growth—although these financial vehicles could also lose value in a down market. So, as you get closer to your goal, it may be necessary to readjust your investment options in this type of account.

There are several types of accounts that you could have for meeting your long-term financial goals, including a(n):

- **College Fund** – If you (and your partner) have children, you may also want to set up a separate college fund so that funds can be available for paying tuition, room and board, and other related needs.
- **IRA (Individual Retirement Account)** – There are two primary types of IRAs: Traditional and Roth. Both types of IRAs allow for tax-deferred (or tax-free) growth, so your money can compound

exponentially. If you have a Traditional IRA, you can typically deduct some or all of your annual contribution. The withdrawals from a Traditional IRA are taxable. With a Roth IRA, contributions go into the account after-tax, but you can make tax-free withdrawals provided they are considered qualified. Limitations and restrictions may apply. Withdrawals prior to age 59 or prior to the account being opened for five years, whichever is later, may result in a 10 percent IRS penalty. Future tax laws can change at any time and may impact the benefits of Roth IRAs. Their tax treatment may change.

- **Employer-Sponsored Retirement Account** – Depending on where you work, your employer may offer retirement savings options such as a 401(k), 403(b), or a SEP IRA. These accounts will also usually allow for tax-deferred growth that can help your money compound over time. As a younger investor, equities could provide you with the opportunity to increase your return, although there is also some risk involved. As you get closer to retirement, reallocating to more stable investment options is recommended.

It can be beneficial to contribute regularly to these longer-term accounts. If you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan, you can usually have money deducted directly from your paycheck. With personal accounts such as an IRA, the bank or financial-services company that manages the account can typically set up monthly contributions that are automatically moved over from your checking or savings account.

Making Sure the Bases Are Covered

Although there are some guidelines that help in determining how many accounts young investors should have, and what types of investments should ideally go in them, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution.

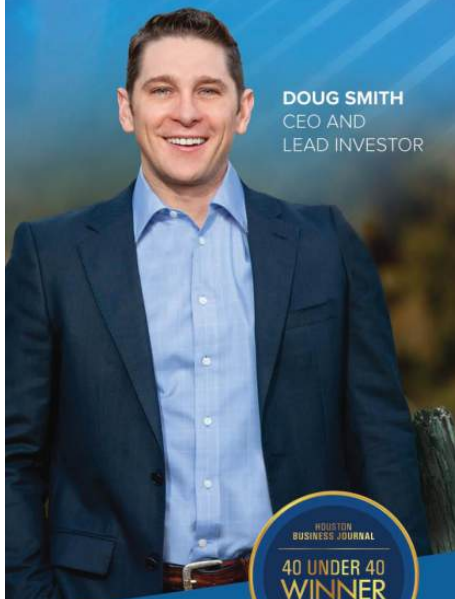
Because all situations and financial goals can differ, it is best to discuss your short- and long-term objectives with an experienced financial professional who can narrow down what works best for you.

In addition, those in the LGBTQ community should consider working with an advisor who is LGBTQ-friendly. That way, the advisor is more likely to be informed on financial regulations and laws that pertain to domestic partners and same-sex married couples, and can guide you in the proper direction for your specific goals.

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 Group LLC in Houston and was recognized as a "Five-Star Wealth Manager" in the September 2017 issue of Texas Monthly. Yung can be reached at grace.yung@lpl.com.

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Balancing Your Energy Checkbook

How to maintain your emotional bank account.

By DARYL SHORTER, MD



It's been said that the way you handle your cash reflects how you treat your finances. If you carefully fold your bills and place them in order from smallest to largest, you're probably the kind of person who checks your bank balance regularly to make sure you never even get close to an overdraft. On the other hand, if you shove crumpled bills deep into your pockets or purse, maybe it indicates that you're a bit more disorganized with your finances, or carefree (careless?) with your spending.

What's in Your Wallet?

Regardless of how neatly you may or may not treat your dollar bills, we can generally acknowledge the importance of paying for the things that support our lifestyle.

What if we attached that same level of importance to the expenditure of our mental and emotional energy?

Consider your own “emotional bank account”—the space where you store all of your thoughts, feelings, and emotions—positive experiences, meaningful exchanges and conversations, spending time with yourself or with friends, and participating in activities and hobbies. These things add to your emotional bank account by enriching you—not only in the moment, but for sustained periods of time. Just reflect on how even the memory of a positive event can return, just when needed, to bolster your sense of self, provide encouragement, or support you through a tough spell. Over time, we can build up this account by saving and storing up our emotional energy for when it's really needed.

In the same way that we can save up positive emotional energy for rainy days, there are certainly people, activities, and situations that can drain our emotional stores. We leave these experiences feeling stressed, upset, and depleted of the good feelings that may have been present prior to the encounter. In circumstances where we are persistently drained, it is possible to develop feelings of anxiety or dread before re-engaging. Or, we might struggle with confusion, sadness, or feeling overwhelmed in the aftermath, wondering what happened and how we allowed ourselves to get sucked in. Again.

A Return on Your Investment

If we think about our emotional energy the way we do our finances, it can help us to reorient when dealing with challenging relationships. This is not to suggest that our relationships should be entirely transactional or tit-for-tat. Always keeping track of who did what for whom can have the opposite effect from promoting fairness in a relationship, causing us to become hyper-aware of perceived inequities. Plus, there's no guarantee that just because someone does something nice for you that they wish you well or have the best of intentions for your life.

Instead, we can focus on the quality of the relationship and the return on investment. Over time, are you getting as much out of the relationship as you are putting in? Just like when we invest in a project and try to avoid throwing good money after bad, we should take care to invest our emotional energy in endeavors and people that promise a good return.

Spend wisely!

Your thinking can sometimes work against you and contribute to sapping your emotional energy. It's easy to feel nervous or anxious about many aspects of life, ranging from health and family to work or politics. Frankly, there's no shortage of things that we can obsess about. Spending time ruminating about things that we have no control over can be a tremendous drain and contribute to increased anxiety, insomnia, irritability, and frustration.

This might be especially true during an election year, for example. Perhaps you find yourself obsessively reading the news or watching political debates, wringing your hands about which candidate is best, and worrying about voter turnout. While arguing with people on Facebook or Twitter may satisfy a desire to participate in the political conversation, this behavior begins to drain more out of your emotional bank account than what you are depositing into it. One thing to ask yourself: do I feel enriched by this experience or drained by it?

If you walk away from these online ex-

changes feeling angry or depleted, the answer isn't to give up on politics. Instead, find ways to engage in political activities that ultimately enrich you. For example, if you're worried about voter turnout, then consider working with an organization that registers people to vote, and volunteer on Election Day to drive people to and from the polls. Or with your renewed level of awareness, simply plan to limit the amount of time spent on social media. However you plan to proceed, the ultimate goal will be to do those things that add to your emotional balance sheet rather than leaving you at zero.

Budget Your Energy

Since emotionally draining circumstances are impossible to escape entirely, perhaps the most realistic goal is to avoid obsessing about having only positive experiences all the time. Instead, we can focus on simply having more positive experiences than not—and avoid “going into the red” and completely depleting our emotional bank account. This way, you guard against running on empty or overdrawing that account. If a coworker is constantly draining you, how can you make a “positive energy” deposit and care for yourself midday in order to not feel so put upon? While venting to others can be helpful, taking action on behalf of yourself may do more to turn things around and contribute to a feeling of uplift. In addition to guarding against the people or situations that deplete your energy, seek out those activities that deposit energy into your account.

Ultimately, by remembering to think of our emotional energy as we do our money, we're reminding ourselves that careful budgeting can contribute greatly to our overall health and stability.

Daryl Shorter, MD, is a Diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and is board certified in both general and addiction psychiatry. His clinical practice focuses on veteran care, and he lectures widely on LGBTQ mental health. Dr. Shorter can be reached at dr.darylshorter@gmail.com

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Important Facts About DOVATO

This is only a brief summary of important information about DOVATO and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and treatment.

What is the Most Important Information I Should Know about DOVATO?

If you have both human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV-1) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection, DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Resistant HBV infection.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV infection before you start treatment with DOVATO. If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B, the hepatitis B virus can change (mutate) during your treatment with DOVATO and become harder to treat (resistant). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in people who have HIV-1 and HBV infection.
- **Worsening of HBV infection.** If you have HIV-1 and HBV infection, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking DOVATO. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before. Worsening liver disease can be serious and may lead to death.
 - Do not run out of DOVATO. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your DOVATO is all gone.
 - **Do not stop DOVATO without first talking to your healthcare provider.** If you stop taking DOVATO, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your liver.

What is DOVATO?

DOVATO is a prescription medicine that is used without other antiretroviral medicines to treat HIV-1 infection in adults who have not received antiretroviral medicines in the past, **and** without known resistance to the medicines dolutegravir or lamivudine. HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in children.

Who should not take DOVATO?

Do Not Take DOVATO if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine that contains dolutegravir or lamivudine.
- take dofetilide.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before using DOVATO?

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection.
- have kidney problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. One of the medicines in DOVATO (dolutegravir) may harm your unborn baby.
 - Your healthcare provider may prescribe a different medicine than DOVATO if you are planning to become pregnant or if pregnancy is confirmed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
 - If you can become pregnant, your healthcare provider will perform a pregnancy test before you start treatment with DOVATO.
 - If you can become pregnant, you should consistently use effective birth control (contraception) during treatment with DOVATO.
 - Tell your healthcare provider right away if you are planning to become pregnant, you become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant during treatment with DOVATO.

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you: (cont'd)

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed if you take DOVATO.**
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - One of the medicines in DOVATO (lamivudine) passes into your breastmilk.
 - 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.

Some medicines interact with DOVATO. 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 DOVATO.
- **Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take DOVATO with other medicines.

What are Possible Side Effects of DOVATO?

DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “What is the Most Important Information I Should Know about DOVATO?” section.
- **Allergic reactions. Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with DOVATO. Stop taking DOVATO and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms:** fever; generally ill feeling; tiredness; muscle or joint aches; blisters or sores in mouth; blisters or peeling of the skin; redness or swelling of the eyes; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue; problems breathing.
- **Liver problems.** People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with DOVATO. Liver problems, including liver failure, have also happened in people without a history of liver disease or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark or “tea-colored” urine; light-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis).** Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. **Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms that could be signs of lactic acidosis:** feel very weak or tired; unusual (not normal) muscle pain; trouble breathing; stomach pain with nausea and vomiting; feel cold, especially in your arms and legs; feel dizzy or lightheaded; and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Lactic acidosis can also lead to severe liver problems,** which can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). **Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the signs or symptoms of liver problems which are listed above under “Liver problems.” You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female or very overweight (obese).**



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DOVATO is a once-a-day complete treatment for adults who are new to HIV-1 medicine.

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*Undetectable means reducing the HIV in your blood to very low levels (less than 50 copies per mL).

†As compared with 3-drug regimens.

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ALPHONSO†

Living with HIV

What are Possible Side Effects of DOVATO (cont'd)?

- **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 new symptoms after you start taking DOVATO.
- **The most common side effects of DOVATO include:** headache; diarrhea; nausea; trouble sleeping; and tiredness.

These are not all the possible side effects of DOVATO. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Where Can I Find More Information?

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Go to DOVATO.com or call 1-877-844-8872, where you can also get FDA-approved labeling.

October 2019 DVT:2PI-2PIL

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Could DOVATO be right for you? Ask your doctor today.



Hot Sex vs. Your High-Tech Car

How rear-view cameras can ruin your sex life.

By JOHN AARON VILLARREAL



Ten and two. Look up. Look left. Look to your right. Then look left again. And always, always look behind you when you're going in reverse. If you took high-school

Drivers Ed, you'd remember that those were the basic rules most of us were given long before ever being allowed behind the wheel of a real car.

Now, with all the high-tech gadgets and gizmos, and the soon-to-be rise of self-driving cars, do they even offer this class anymore? Do they even need to? Either way, one thing is sure. Today's automobiles are more convenient and easy to drive than they were 30 years ago.

Take rear-view camera screens, for example. They've replaced the tiresome need for looking over your shoulder when backing out of the driveway. Some even have those virtual lines superimposed on the screen to help you back into those narrow parking spaces at Starbucks. And if that isn't enough, I hear some even have warning sensors and automated breaks! They potentially prevent you from accidentally scratching your bumper on some random kid meandering into your path before you're fully caffeinated. All great stuff!

So, you may be wondering, how can such conveniences be ruining your sex life? Well, it's insidious, but let's start with your range of motion. Muscles are meant to move. They adapt to the stressors given to them. This generally makes them supple and robust. The opposite occurs when movement is limited or omitted. Not only do the muscles involved become weaker, but they also become tighter, shorter, and less pliable.

But this isn't the first time technology has had a negative influence on our anatomy. Since the rise of home computers in the late '70s and early '80s, there has also been a correlating uptick in adults reporting upper-body pain and overuse injuries. Factor in the rise of hand-held devices like smartphones and tablets, and you will see a correlating increase in reported spinal injuries of the neck.

Known as "forward head syndrome," this



potentially painful condition is caused by the natural position most of us take when looking at our cell phones. The problem is that this prolonged and repetitively locked positioning eventually shortens the muscles involved and places tremendous stress on the bones that make up the cervical spine. This can lead to spinal disk compression, degeneration, and may also accelerate the development of osteophytes or arthritis—and in severe cases, nerve damage.

What does this technical mumbo-jumbo mean for your sex life? Well, for starters, you may experience tension headaches more than most (and nobody likes those). Forward head positioning also limits your jaw's ability to fully open (you can use your imagination there). Heck, this syndrome may even toss a kink in your ability to give a friendly "s'up?" nod to that hottie you've been cruising at the gym.

Gone unchecked, pain may ultimately be the most damaging thing that forward head syndrome can bring to your sex life. This pain can range from a nagging but straightforward kink in the neck to deep aches in the chest and shoulders. It may even result in painful neuropathy of the arms and hands.

That said, there is something you can do to prevent any of this from happening. First, it's essential to take a look at your current posture. For some people, this forward head syndrome is caused by spending long hours

in front of a computer or hand-held device. Others may have developed this posture due to a more severe condition like kyphosis. In that case, you may need the help of a chiropractor, orthopedist, or physical therapist.

Second, can you make use of other technologies? For example, instead of visually reading your email or e-book, could you have Siri or Alexa read them to you instead?

Lastly, be willing to take regular posture breaks and perform stretches that negate the effects of prolonged static positioning.

Here's a great sequence to try throughout the day. (Optimally, you should plan on repeating these exercises several times a day):

- **Head Drop:** Sit tall, and without rounding your shoulders, slowly point your nose toward your lap and rest your chin on your chest. Hold for five to ten seconds. Return to a neutral position looking forward with your ears over your shoulders.
- **Head Rotation:** From your neutral position, slowly turn your head to the left until you feel a stretch. Hold this position for five to ten seconds. Then return to a neutral position and repeat on the opposite side.
- **Long Neck:** From your neutral position, slowly point your nose toward the ceiling, gently pushing your chin toward the ceiling.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

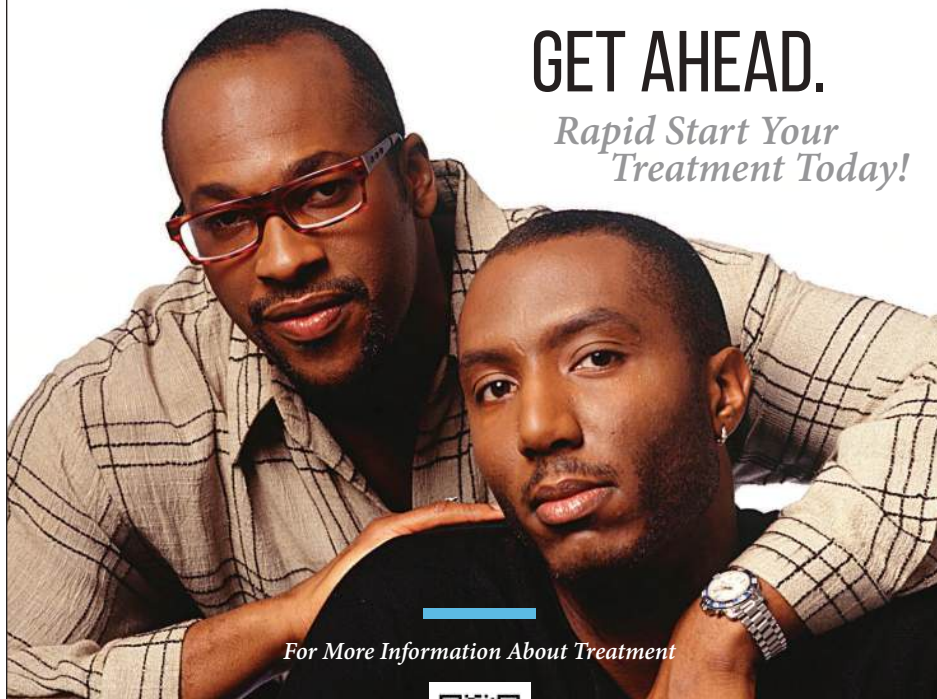
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FOR YOUR CALENDAR



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

March 1: AIDSWALK Houston

Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston at noon. INFO: aidswalkhouston.org

March 13: Bringin' In The Green

LGBTQ Houston's beloved annual St. Patrick's Day Party! Benefiting LGBTQ Homeless Youth. INFO: MontroseCenter.org

March 14: 67th Annual Diana Awards

The annual black-tie roast is a fundraiser for various Diana charity organizations. INFO: thedianafoundation.org

March 19: ActOut at the Alley

pre-show LGBTQ mixer before the performance of 1984. INFO: AlleyTheatre.org

April 4: 23rd Annual Human Rights Campaign Houston Dinner

Benefitting the Human Rights Campaign. INFO:

hrchouston.org/2020-dinner
CODE: SMART20

April 12: Bunnies on the Bayou 41.

Benefiting local nonprofit organizations. INFO: Bunniesonthebayou.org

April 23: Out@TUTS Night

presents *Pure Country*, a Texas-themed musical. After the curtain goes down mingle with members of the cast and crew, and sing a few show tunes. INFO: tuts.com/out

April 25: The Montrose Center Super Gayla,

a fundraiser for the Montrose Center. INFO: montrosecenter.org

April 30: ActOut at the Alley

pre-show LGBTQ mixer before the performance of *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. INFO: AlleyTheatre.org

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360 Degrees of Caring

The Menninger Clinic's new Montrose location will include a special focus on LGBTQ issues.

By RYAN M. LEACH

There isn't a community in the world that hasn't been impacted by mental illness. Stigma is a large part of the baggage that comes along with talking about and treating this health crisis. The Menninger Clinic is hoping to break through the noise and provide Houston with a community resource to not only fight the stigma, but also to treat the people who need care. Their next venture will bring them to the heart of the city and the heart of the LGBTQ community when they open their Menninger 360 clinic in Montrose.

"Montrose is the heart of the city, as far as I'm concerned," says Matt Estey, Menninger's program director. "It is centrally located, which gives us access to all areas of inner-loop Houston. 360 is a 'community integration' model of care, which means we want to use the community as the setting for our therapeutic work with clients—not theoretical office or classroom experiences. Montrose is walkable with plenty of greenspace, which is critical for our work [in promoting] wellness."

Estey is a self-proclaimed Army brat who was born in Indianapolis and moved nine times before graduating from high school here in Clear Lake. He eventually earned his graduate degree in social work from the University of Houston, and the proud Coog is also a proud member of the LGBTQ community. The 44-year-old has worked with Menninger closely since 2011, and has been in his current role since October 2017.

"The treatment model [Menninger 360] uses is known as Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT). Our two small interdisciplinary teams of mobile mental-health professionals work with our clients where they live, play, and

work. We do everything you would expect from an outpatient program—medication management, individual therapy, couples therapy, family therapy, vocational coaching and support, recovery support—and much, much more," says Estey.

"I like to say, 'If it's not illegal or unethical, we'll probably try it.' Our primary limitation is our collective creativity and willingness. All of our services are provided one-on-one, so when we say our program is individualized, that is exactly what it means. We specialize in working with clients who feel stuck and hopeless."

The Menninger 360 Clinic will also have a special focus on issues that uniquely face the LGBTQ community, according to Estey. "Multiple team members are part of our community, and the remainder are allies. We have team members experienced in working with clients regarding sexual identity, grief, trauma, and complex family-systems challenges. Since our focus is community integration, we work hard to collaborate with clients in connecting with like-minded Houstonians. We also have staff with expertise in sexual health and sex therapy."

The LGBTQ community is generally at a higher risk in dealing with mental illness, with higher rates of suicide and substance abuse compared to other communities. Having the Menninger Clinic offering programming within the Montrose area will have a significant impact on improving the lives of LGBTQ people dealing with mental-health issues.

When asked if there will be access to affordable care, Estey notes that the clinic is working to increase its outreach capacity. "While the 360 program is not covered under our charity-care

guidelines, our Bridge Up Initiatives have impacted thousands of school children over the last few years to support social and emotional learning."

Menninger's other options for potential patients include a mental-health clubhouse called The Gathering Place that is free and open to those experiencing serious mental illness.

They also provide free outpatient services—individual therapy, select group therapies, couples

and family therapy, and medication management—at their outpatient clinic in Bellaire, as well as stabilization and assessment services at other locations.

With the launch of a new electronic health records system last year, Menninger has also committed to providing detailed "superbills," so clients can obtain out-of-network reimbursement throughout the continuum of care.

"I'm always happy to meet with prospective clients or consult with providers who are curious about our services at 360, or the clinic in general."

INFO: Menninger Clinic Program Director Matt Estey, (409) 502-0957.



Program Director Matt Estey says the Menninger 360 Clinic features a community-integration model of care.

COMMUNITY

Photos by
DALTON DEHART and EDGARDO AGUILAR



A chili cookoff was held at the home of Glenn and Justin Dickson on Super Bowl Sunday. Pictured are Arnold Arenas, Glenn Dickson, Justin Dickson, and Joel Anderson.



On February 14, EPAH held a Valentine's Day cocktail fundraiser at Base Nightclub. Pictured are Anthony Forte, Marcus Hooks, Kennedy Loftin, and Randy Murry.



On February 13, Harris County Democratic Lawyers Association held a VIP reception before the Johnson, Rayburn, Richards Dinner. Pictured are Judge Jerry Simoneaux and Judge Katie Kennedy.



On February 18, EPAH held a dinner meeting at Indika. Pictured are Mike Bodin, Steve Netemeyer, and Randall Hendrick.

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Unapologetically Trans | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

Cagle being the lone Republican remaining on the Commissioners Court (for now).

There's also the Justice of the Peace position, the Harris County Civil Court 4 seat, and Harris County Department of Education seats on the long-azz March 3 ballot.

And no thanks to the Texas Republicans, we no longer have the ability to vote "straight ticket," so you'll have to vote in every race down the entire ballot, from POTUS to dog catcher.

If you aren't registered to vote, you still have time to handle your business before the May runoff elections and the November general election. You must be registered by April 2 to participate in your party's runoff elections, and by October 5 for the general election.

Since I did early voting last month, I'm just waiting to see who wins or makes the runoffs so I can do my part to pick our best candidates for that history-altering election this November.

Please vote, because the democracy you save may be your own.

Monica Roberts, a native Houstonian, is the founding editor of the GLAAD award-winning blog TransGriot. Her ongoing mission is to educate people on the lives of transgender people and fight for everyone's human rights.

Hot Sex vs. Your High-Tech Car | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

ing until you feel your throat stretch. Hold for five to ten seconds before returning to a neutral position.

- **Ear Drop:** Tilt your head so that your left ear moves toward your left shoulder. Once you feel a stretch, hold for five to ten seconds and repeat with the right side.
- **Chin Tuck:** Sitting tall and looking forward, pull your chin in (as though you're trying to exaggerate the appearance of a double chin) until you feel a stretch. Then hold for five to ten seconds before returning to a neutral position.

When performed regularly and over time, these stretch exercises should help to correct forward head posture and prevent the typical pain and symptoms related to it. The bonus is that these simple moves can allow you to still be able to use your digital gear and drive your high-tech car without fear of developing poor posture or pain. And, who knows? They might even help you cruise your way to some jaw-dropping sex, as well.



John Aaron is a father, writer, perpetual student, licensed bodyworker, certified health coach, personal trainer, and over-50 bad-boy wannabe. Find him at www.JohnAaronOnline.com.

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When LifeSmiles, You Can Smile Back

Meet Dr. Randy Mitchmore.

By MARENE GUSTIN

Going to the dentist can be a pain, but Dr. Randy Mitchmore's LifeSmiles clinic in Montrose can make the experience as painless as possible.

Think warm, fuzzy blankets. Headphones to block out distractions. Or how about a poolside view? Just walking in the door, you'll notice that the large 1930s house has original hardwood floors and a cozy fireplace.

And then there is the staff. "It's the culture I've created," Mitchmore says. "I tell the staff we are ladies and gentlemen, and we treat our patients like ladies and gentlemen. I spend

time with patients and ask them what they want—I don't *tell* them what they want. This is a guilt-free environment. There's no judging if you haven't been to a dentist in a while. We're just here to help."

And you might even get a glass of champagne served on a silver platter when it's all over.

"Our staff is amazing," he says. "And we also have the best whiz-bang technology." The Prettau Zirconia dental implants are made of a biocompatible material that is 200 times stronger than porcelain. "They won't chip or change color. And we can make them lifelike for people who don't want a perfect smile," he

explains, remembering a patient who wanted a small chip in a front implant so it would look more natural.

Mitchmore is a second-generation Houstonian who has always had a focus on compassionately caring for people. He started out studying for the ministry, but then switched to dentistry because of an uncle who was a dentist. He has a doctorate from the UTHealth School of Dentistry, and has had his private practice in Montrose since 1997—although he's been in practice for 40 years. He has advanced dental certificates from several institutes, and has written a shelf full of books on dentistry for both dentists and patients.

Mitchmore also holds two-day seminars for dentists who come from across the county to learn his techniques. He is one of the few dentists in the area who is certified in intravenous sedation, a technique that can gently calm nervous patients. His specialty is dental implants.

Mitchmore also spends an incredible amount of time and energy giving back to his community. He was recently appointed by Mayor Sylvester Turner as chairman of the Montrose Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), which works to rebuild sidewalks and streets in the district as well as focusing on safety issues. He also volunteers with Give Back a Smile, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry's project to repair the smiles of domestic-abuse victims. He spent years on the board of directors at Bering Omega Community Services, which offered one of the first dental clinics in the South for uninsured and underinsured HIV/AIDS patients. He and his longtime partner and husband of two years, Michael Horner, often host fundraising pool parties around the swimming pool behind the clinic.

Although Mitchmore says his work is also his hobby, the couple does find enjoyment

"I SPEND TIME WITH PATIENTS AND ASK THEM WHAT THEY WANT—I DON'T TELL THEM WHAT THEY WANT. THIS IS A GUILT-FREE ENVIRONMENT. THERE'S NO JUDGING IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO A DENTIST IN A WHILE. WE'RE JUST HERE TO HELP."

—RANDY MITCHMORE

outside of dentistry. "Michael is an IT guy, and he's younger than I am but more mature," the doctor admits. "We enjoy being outdoors, biking, scuba diving, and traveling. We try to do cocktails at home after a day of work, and maybe have dinner at Paulie's or Barnaby's Cafe."

The couple lives above the clinic in their

historic house, but they plan on moving soon. "Michael adopted a black cat he found under the funeral home next door," Mitchmore explains. LifeSmiles is next door to the Bradshaw-Carter Memorial & Funeral Services, another beautiful home on Alabama where cofounders Michael "Tripp" Carter and his late partner, Ronald Bradshaw, also lived above their business.

"We named the cat Blackie, and we had him for 17 years. I always told Michael that we would buy a home in Montrose after the cat passed away, so now that's what we're doing. But we'll stay in the neighborhood."

This month, Dr. Mitchmore is shooting a television news segment at the Montrose Center about oral-health tips for those living with HIV/AIDS.

"HIV isn't the death sentence it once was, so patients need to protect their mouth for a lifetime. The number-one thing I tell patients is to keep their mouth clean. That's the big thing—brush, floss, and get cleanings. If their meds are working, then they are just like any other patient."



For more information, visit lifesmiles.us.

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Reza Nouri (right) and client Benjamin Colbert.



Reza Nouri's American Dream

The Iran native's Hollywood Hair & Nails turns 17 this month.

By RYAN M. LEACH

Reza Nouri is the embodiment of the modern American dream. His salon, Hollywood Hair & Nails, will mark 17 years in business on March 23, and Nouri will be celebrating by inviting longtime clients (and potential future clients) to join him on March 25 for drinks and finger foods.

"I am feeling overwhelmed, thankful, happy, and sad. So many mixed emotions," says Nouri of the anniversary.

Nouri has been in the business of beauty only slightly longer than his Montrose salon has been around.

"It was so much fun when I started cosmetology school for the first four months. After that, I felt bored and was ready to work on real people. I was so anxious to be in the real world and to start working with clients," says Nouri.

While Nouri's clients are the key to his business, he has a much deeper connection to the people he helps make beautiful.

"I am pretty attached to my clients. I love my clients, and I see most of them two, three, or four times a week. I am in a uniquely beautiful relationship with every single one of them. Most of them have been coming to us since day one," says Nouri.

Hollywood Hair & Nails is located in the heart of Montrose, a far cry from where Nouri spent the early part of his life in Tehran, Iran. Nouri officially became an American citizen only last year.

"I moved to Houston 26 years ago from Iran. Leaving Iran wasn't a choice, and I was too young to understand. However, it was the right thing to do, considering what had happened in the motherland. My mother was pregnant with me during the Islamic Revolution."

Nouri was born in 1980, at the beginning of the war between Iran and Iraq. Death and trauma were all that Nouri saw for the first eight years of his life.

"It was really tough for everyone in Iran—being hated by other countries, plus living in a country with an angry, hateful, insecure fascist government that was prosecuting, arresting, torturing, and killing people, all in the

name of God. It was awful. I still feel suffocated just thinking about it,” Nouri admits.

In his early teens, Nouri, who identifies as gay, says he was trying to figure out who he was without putting a burden on his family. But being a gay Jewish Iranian teenager in Iran was difficult. Partially out of concern for his safety, Nouri’s family moved to America in 1993.

“I miss Iran so much, but I love this country more than life. In Tehran, I learned so much about the history of Iran and everything that happened to it. That is why I am who I am. With that said, [America] gave me something I never had before—a voice, and the freedom to express myself. It feels so good to be free! It may sound lame to some people, but they have never had their basic rights taken away from them,” Nouri emphasizes.

Nouri’s love for his country and his LGBTQ community in Houston is something he talks about lovingly and often.

“So many people made it possible for all of us to be here today. I remind myself every day of their sacrifice, and for that I am grateful. I try to do my best to keep their legacy and to pass it on. Sometimes I find myself frustrated for not doing enough, and I feel the weight of that every moment. I want to tell everyone the story of those who came before me—the fight that they fought [so that I am] able to be bold and strong enough to start my own business.”

Potential new clients who want a little piece of the magic created by Nouri in his salon can make an appointment online. “We do everything from head to toe, with the exception of shaving,” Nouri explains. “You may come into the shop feeling a certain way, but I make sure that before you leave I see you smile and that you look and feel awesome. My clients are my family. They are taking a piece of me with them everywhere they go. I want to compliment them [and help them] feel positive, since they are my walking advertisements.”

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Voilà, it's Viola!

The reigning Mother of Montrose recalls her journey to success.

By **DON MAINES**

Photo by **HARRY ROBERTS**



The reigning Mother of Montrose was conceived on Halloween in 1993, when Benn Parnell required a costume at the last minute.

"I had some trash bags, so, voilà! I had an outfit and a name: Viola DeGradable," he explains.

However, far from decomposing like biodegradable material, Parnell's drag persona keeps on kicking, even after his left leg was amputated last year.

"I have a vascular degenerative disorder that is hereditary," he explains. "My mom, in her seventies, had her right leg amputated. We wear the same size shoe, so when I buy a pair, I keep one and she gets the other."

He means *tennis* shoes, not pumps. "I haven't had a pair of heels on in over a year. I'm pretty handy with crutches, but onstage I just perch."

Viola's act was "a little more energetic" before the amputation.

"I was one of the first entertainers in Texas to hoverboard," he says, including a perfor-

mance of "Xanadu" by Olivia Newton-John during the 2017 Austin International Drag Festival. (Search "Xanadu @ Austin Drag Fest" on YouTube)

Viola has also danced in hooker heels, and worn a toilet-paper-roll 'do that made fans snatch their wigs.

"I've got moves," he says.

To Hollywood and Back

Parnell grew up in Channelview, "just a hop, skip, and a jump into Houston for 'all-you-can-drink Wednesdays' at The Copa." At that former hotspot on Richmond Avenue (known to the jaded as The Coma), Parnell was especially enthralled with drag star Tiffany Jones, who was known as the Texas Tornado and, offstage, as a handsome man in cowboy drag.

Parnell began performing "on and off" in an act called Bennie and the Jets, which included two female backup dancers and current Daddy of Montrose David James Barron as one of two male backup dancers. "I was the center of attention," says Parnell. "Back then, everybody was having fun."

In 1981 and '82, Parnell portrayed Marvel McFey (hmmm), the mascot at AstroWorld, followed by a stint as "the oldest lifeguard" at the adjacent WaterWorld park.

Next, Parnell moved to Hollywood and enrolled in the Academy of Dramatic Arts, a private performing-arts conservatory in the heart of Tinseltown. "They ate me alive," he says. "I was this little tiny goldfish in this huge pond. They didn't like me. They didn't like people from Texas, first of all, and my drawl made it worse."

After two semesters, and unable to afford another one, Parnell returned to Texas and retired in Channelview, "which was plenty for me," he says. "I came home to a different world than I left," as the AIDS epidemic struck Houston without mercy.

For one thing, "Tiffany Jones got sick while I was gone," he recalls. Jones died on April 18, 1985.

"I got out of drag and I got away from the gay community," says Parnell. "I spent a lot of time in Channelview."

In 1988, Parnell was diagnosed with HIV, and he entrusted his care to Dr. Gordon Crofoot, who remains his primary physician to this day.

In 2001, Parnell quit his job as a waiter and went on disability, as Crofoot deemed Parnell's employment to be "too stressful" for his overall health.

Later, when Parnell's partner of 12 years died of a brain aneurysm, he says, "I was already in my 40s, which is over the hill as far as the gay world is concerned. My little brother put me on a dating website, and that is how I met my partner of 10 years."

Robert Olsen, a retired accountant, is now Parnell's partner and production assistant whenever Viola appears onstage.

"He's Mr. Viola," says Parnell. "He is everything, as far as getting me dressed and to and from the venues."

Viola performed "Try" by P!nk to win the 2019 Mother of Montrose title, and will crown her successor in a pageant on Mother's Day at Michael's Outpost. In addition, Viola is hosting a benefit at 6 p.m. on Sunday, March 15 at Tony's Corner Pocket for Destiny Bass, an LGBTQ ally who served as Girl of Montrose 2015. Bass is fighting cancer.

But first, Viola will headline a "Thank You Show," benefiting Holiday Charities, at 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 25 at Tony's Corner Pocket.

"I have an all-star lineup," says Parnell. "It's been a hell of a ride."



Keep up with Viola DeGradable on Facebook at facebook.com/viola.



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**A LOOK AT
HOUSTON'S
LGBTQ WOMEN
IN BUSINESS.**

LEADING

LADIES

According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, more than 11.6 million American firms were owned by women in 2017, employing nearly 9 million people and generating \$1.7 trillion in sales each year—a little less than the annual GDP of Spain.

Women-owned businesses are growing at a steady rate of 5 percent. While this percentage might seem underwhelming at first glance, consider the fact that it is more than twice as fast

as the rate of small-business growth in general. And just as one might suspect, Houston is home to some remarkable business women who identify as LGBTQ.

This March issue of *OUTSMART* introduces you to six of these outstanding entrepreneurs.

First, we introduce you to author Jenny Block, whose latest book, *Be That Unicorn*, encourages readers to “find their magic.” Then, meet metalworker Lauren Chapman, who creates one-of-a-

kind pieces of art at Chapman Fabrication. Next, we feature chef Angelina Marie, the creative confectioner behind Dreaming Oven Bakery. Later, Miriam Lopez reveals her secrets on helping businesses succeed as the founder of SeEQmore Consulting. And don’t miss our story on Khaliah O. Guillory, the founder of Nap Bar, Texas’ first napping facility. Lastly, software specialist Kimberly Cook tells us all about designing technology solutions at Integris. →

Sharing Her Shine

Jenny Block's new book encourages readers to live their best lives.

By SAM BYRD

Photo by ASHKAN ROAYAAE

Writer Jenny Block boasts a list of published materials that would make any author proud—or at least make them grin devilishly. She is often called on as an expert on sex and women's sexuality for several high-profile media outlets ranging from the Huffington Post website to *Playboy* magazine, and she writes often for local LGBTQ publications such as *OUTSMART* magazine and the *Dallas Voice*.

Making the leap from the newspaper to the literary world, she wrote the books *O Wow: Discovering Your Ultimate Orgasm*; *Open: Love, Sex & Life in an Open Marriage*; and *The Ultimate Guide to Solo Sex: All You Need to Know about Masturbation*.

Her most recent book, *Be That Unicorn: Find Your Magic, Live Your Truth, Share Your Shine* takes a detour from the world of carnal awareness by diving into daily tips for navigating life's daily occurrences. Yet, like her previous writing, the advice is steeped in honesty and authenticity (with a dash of audacity) regarding the best way to live one's best life—unicorn style.

"In a way, it's the culmination of me as a human and as a writer. I write in many universes. I write about food, travel, art, theater, and music, and I found myself writing about female sexuality, which led to a fun, interesting segment in my life," Block says.

As a result of her previous works, Block was invited to speak at several engagements where she noticed a similar thread running through other women's questions.

"What was most fascinating to me is that there are all these setups for these intimate questions, and in the end, all of the questions were really asking if they were okay," she says. "They would ask, 'Is it okay that I want this? Is it strange that I enjoy this?' In the end, it was all about just supporting people. They were looking to be heard—and to be part of the herd. They wanted to know they fit somewhere."

The book lays out helpful hints for readers who want to find their own groove, and a wealth of that knowledge comes from Block's own experiences.

"There was a time when I wasn't good at taking on adventure. I was too scared of what would happen. For example, I hadn't been on a roller coaster until I was 40. I was standing in line at Splash Mountain, and there's a place in the line called the Point of No Return, where you can leave the line instead of getting on the roller coaster," she remembers. "I looked to my right, and there was this bench with all these women sitting on it who looked so tired. They were holding all of their children's gear while waiting for them to get off the ride. And then there was this line of people who were so excited to go on Splash Mountain."

That experience at Splash Mountain was a metaphor for how Block wants to live her life. "I didn't want to be on that bench, so I started what I call 'The Year of Yes.' I said yes to life's experiences, as long as I didn't die or end up in jail. I rode in all-terrain vehicles, ate whatever crazy dish was in front of me, scaled buildings, went on dates, and embraced wanting to have

a kid," she elaborated.

"The Year of Yes" became "The Life of Yes," and it has given Block the wisdom she wants to pass on to others in *Be That Unicorn*, a title originating from her "spirit animal."

"If you can be anything, be a unicorn. Be a badass unicorn. The unicorn is just something I started to feel very in tune with," Block observes. "It's sort of a cute character, but she has a horn and she's willing to use it if she has to. She's brave and bold, and will take you on, but she likes to prance around, too. That felt like it fit me," Block says.

The book serves as a clarion call for people to speak and live their truth—especially for women. "Equality for everyone is the point. Not more or less, or better or worse—just equal footing. [In former times,] men were bigger and stronger. And now, that's suddenly not the case anymore. This is a shift for all of us," she notes. "It's going to happen. It's just going to be a matter of how hard it's going to be when we do it. And we all must be nicer."

Be That Unicorn is also a battle cry to embrace the shortcomings in life and do the best with whatever is provided. Block says even she has moments when she's not at her best, and she hopes the book will help provide others with the inspiration she has found through her own trials in life. Perhaps it will even provide a way for others to learn how to communicate with each other in uplifting ways.

"I have these dreams of people saying, 'You're not being that unicorn today,' and I think maybe that's what we need. We need a language for something that's about changing the way we walk around in the world, and I want to walk with kindness first," she adds. "I'm not always good at it. Sometimes I'm grumpy, but I regret it when I'm not nice. We're all just doing our best, and 'doing our best' is going to look different for every person, every day."



Be That Unicorn: Find Your Magic, Live Your Truth, and Share Your Shine is available on Amazon.



For more information on Jenny Block and *Be That Unicorn*, visit thejennyblock.com.

A full-page photograph featuring a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark purple sequined dress and silver high-heeled sandals. She is standing next to a large, white, lace-covered unicorn costume with a pink mane and a silver horn. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The woman is looking up at the unicorn with a joyful expression, her hands clasped near its neck. The unicorn costume is standing on a small metal frame.

"IF YOU CAN BE ANYTHING,
BE A UNICORN. BE A BADASS
UNICORN. IT'S SORT OF A
CUTE CHARACTER, BUT SHE
HAS A HORN AND SHE'S
WILLING TO USE IT IF SHE
HAS TO. SHE'S BRAVE AND
BOLD, AND WILL TAKE YOU
ON, BUT SHE LIKES TO
PRANCE AROUND, TOO."

—JENNY BLOCK

Iron Woman

Lauren Chapman uses metal to construct custom artwork at Chapman Fabrication.

By ZACHARY MCKENZIE

Three years ago, Houston native Lauren Chapman was working as a metal fabricator's shop assistant on the outskirts of downtown Houston. Today, she holds the keys to that same building as the owner of Chapman Fabrication. In the simple metal warehouse on Hardy Street, she and her small but dedicated team design and create one-of-a-kind pieces of art.

The laid-back designer with short brunette hair and a megawatt smile considers herself a designer, first and foremost. "I always did art-related things and was into sculpting when I was growing up," Chapman reflects. "It wasn't until my junior year of undergrad at Baylor University when I was like, 'Oh, this is a good fit. I'll do this [for a living].'" She got her start running wood shops and metal shops in college, getting her feet wet in multiple design outlets. "I tried to figure out how to use what I'd learned, to make a career out of it."

After a brief stint working for a landscape-architecture company, Chapman, who identifies as a lesbian, quickly realized that additional schooling was necessary to get to the position she envisioned herself in. "I decided to go back to grad school at Houston Baptist University, and began to make art connections in Houston. I did that while I was also working at a gallery," the artist remembers.

A search on Glasstire.com led Chapman to her job as a shop assistant. Little did she know, after six short months the shop would be hers and Chapman Fabrication would be born. "I worked for the guy for six months, and he decided he didn't want to do it anymore," the charismatic designer laughs. "I bought all the tools from him and rented the space. He forwarded me his clients, and I grew my contacts through that. It's all been word-of-mouth since then."

The creative force explains her team's diverse skill set when listing the materials they regularly work with. "We have the capabilities to do all different kinds of sculpture—steel,

brass, and more. We work with different components for tables—glass, wood, and all kinds of materials."

Now in her third year of owning her own business, Chapman leans heavily on her background as a designer while also juggling the business side of Chapman Fabrication. "The biggest thing for me is that I don't see myself as a business person," Chapman explains. The artist finds motivation in knowing she is at the helm of the ship, keeping the business afloat. "It's a lot of pressure. That's the part that's exciting and terrifying at the same time," she laughs. "I can go out and get as much work as I want, or I could crash and burn. It's up to me to figure it all out."

Chapman lights up when she talks about past and future projects. "Everything is so custom that there aren't a lot of repeats," she emphasizes. "If you have an idea of what you want to do, we can figure out how to make it." That confidence has led to some big clients for Chapman and Dan Corgey, her head fabricator.

"We did some tables and a wall piece for Local Foods in the Heights," Chapman recalls. "We also did the Houston Pride booth for Lyft in 2019." The colorful structure traveled to

8th Wonder and Karbach breweries, as well as downtown during the Pride parade. The team also collaborated with Lyft for a booth during the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Looking ahead, Chapman is particularly excited about an upcoming opportunity. "I'm getting to sponsor and make a few pieces for the Milieu 2020 Designer Showhouse in Houston next month. I'm also doing a sign for 1836, a new bar that just opened. We're going to have a sign-reveal party when it's complete. Lots going on!"

Learning life's lessons, getting a good education, and camaraderie with other artists are the major keys to Chapman's success. She encourages the next generation of designers and creators to get up from behind their desks and start getting their hands dirty. "Go actually *do*—don't just study art. Don't just draw if you want to do sculpture. Learn how to use the tools, how different materials react. Experimenting is key," she says matter-of-factly. "Burn things! I made a lot of mistakes through experimenting—there were accidents, but they helped me get what I ultimately wanted."



For more information on Chapman Fabrication, visit chapmanfab.com



Eclectic designs

Lauren Chapman constructs unique pieces out of steel, brass, and more at Chapman Fabrication, a metal shop near downtown Houston.



"EVERYTHING IS SO CUSTOM
THAT THERE AREN'T A LOT
OF REPEATS. IF YOU HAVE AN
IDEA OF WHAT YOU WANT TO
DO, WE CAN FIGURE OUT HOW
TO MAKE IT."

—LAUREN CHAPMAN

Flour Power

Chef Angelina Marie is the founder of The Dreaming Oven bakery.

By LOURDES ZAVALETA

Photo by ASHKAN ROYAYEE

From caramel-apple buñuelos to Hennessy-infused butter pecan cupcakes, the sweet possibilities are endless at The Dreaming Oven bakery.

"I can make anything," says the shop's owner, Angelina Marie. "My skills are not limited—but I really love creating cakes for special occasions."

An edible turntable featuring working neon lights for a local DJ's birthday party is just one of the unique cake creations Marie has constructed since launching her Houston business in July. She opened her store just months after graduating from Houston's Culinary Institute Lenotre, the top French baking program in the United States.

Though she's always had a gift for pastry-making, Marie's journey to becoming a professional confectioner has had many layers, she admits. After coming out as transgender, she was forced to engage in survival sex work.

"I honestly didn't see a way out of that," Marie recalls. "I started my transition in a different time, when the opportunities were very limited. Not having your name changed made everything even harder."

After the late pioneering trans activist Nikki Araguz Loyd helped Marie legally change her name four years ago, "I promised I would do something good with it, because I had an opportunity to start over," Marie says. "I wanted something different for myself."

One year later, Marie was accepted into the Lenotre program, where she was embraced by all of her professors and classmates. Shortly after starting there, she was hired as the institute's librarian and continued in that position until graduation.

Now a licensed pastry chef and in-home business owner, Marie sells her treats at special pop-up events and local markets across Houston, in addition to baking custom orders in her own kitchen.

Within 24 hours, Marie can turn around a specialty cake order effortlessly. The process

begins when a customer contacts Marie, who asks questions about the cake's flavor, shape, and design. After understanding what the customer wants, Marie begins to bring that vision to life.

"That's where your creativity comes in as a pastry chef," Marie says. "You take people's ideas and create exactly what they want."

One of the most heartfelt cake creations Marie says she's worked on was for a Transgender Day of Remembrance event organized by trans activist DeeDee Watters in November. The cake was pink, white, and blue (the colors of the Trans Pride flag), and featured the names of the 22 individuals who were murdered due to anti-trans violence in 2019.

"That was a really emotional project," Marie recalls. "Although I didn't personally know any of the people who were murdered, [it hit very close to home]."

In December, Marie gave back to her community again when she partnered with trans

activist Mia Ryan for a holiday charity event. During one of Ryan's weekly Sister to Sister trans support-group meetings at the Montrose Center, Marie demonstrated how to make and pipe her buttercream frosting for cupcakes. The event was free with the donation of a new toy, and all of the toys went to the trans children who attend the Montrose Center's Hatch Youth program.

"I wish I had something like Hatch while growing up," Marie says. "The [kids who participate in the program] are just kids. They're innocent and need support from our community. I plan on continuing to advocate for them through my projects."

Marie grew up in a Mexican household in Space City with her mother, who is one of her biggest supporters. "After I started my transition, I traveled a lot to find myself," Marie says. "I did a lot of exploring, and even made it as far as New York. But I always came back to Houston. A lot of that had to do with my mother—I didn't want to be far from her."

Marie now lives with her partner of five years and their dogs. Her business is booming, thanks to the connections she's made within Houston's LGBTQ community, and she sees herself outgrowing her in-home bakery in the near future.

While Marie took a break from social media for a few years to focus on herself during culinary school, she's now back on Facebook, where she showcases her dazzling desserts.

"Now that I'm back online, I sometimes run into people in the trans community who haven't seen me in a while," Marie says. "They [congratulate] me for going to school and starting a business. My success story is an inspiration for a lot of people, both younger and older than me. Now that I have a bigger platform, I want to uplift them."



Specialty Desserts

Angelina Marie is known for her one-of-a-kind creations, like this Betty Boop cake.



For more information on The Dreaming Oven, visit facebook.com/thedreamingoven, or email thedreamingoven@gmail.com.

"I CAN MAKE ANYTHING.
MY SKILLS ARE NOT
LIMITED—BUT I REALLY
LOVE CREATING CAKES FOR
SPECIAL OCCASIONS."

—ANGELINA MARIE



Success Expert

Miriam Lopez helps businesses reach their full potential at SeEQmore Consulting.

By KIM HOGSTROM

Dynamic, vital, and creative, Miriam Lopez has proven herself to be a highly successful LGBTQ entrepreneur. She launched her Houston-based firm, SeEQmore Consulting Group, in 2019 to help clients achieve their greatest potential and fulfillment. And she's never looked back.

SeEQmore unravels and identifies the elements that hold people and businesses back. The firm enjoys clients and companies representing many professions—banking, real estate, medicine, law, the arts, and even people “between situations.”

With more than 20 years of triumphs in business transformation, human resources, and performance management in her background, Lopez launched her company to address the epidemic of disconnection she witnessed between people's dreams and their realities. She observed many who were trapped in a continuous state of discontent, with no knowledge of what to do about it. She was moved to help.

Lopez's passion today is facilitating accelerated transformations, empowering people to thrive, and developing top-performing teams to overcome the obstacles to greater success. There is no shortage of potential clients seeking her assistance.

“Working with a client's objectives and dreams, together we engineer a route and facilitate a road map to desired outcomes. It often involves challenges, changes, even transformations, but the results—be they personal or professional—can be immensely rewarding for both of us. It is a joy to watch these revolutions. I delight in them,” Lopez states, her brown eyes twinkling.

From a young age, Lopez understood the role that transformations play in fulfillment. Now 42, she was born in Mexico City and lived there until the age of 9, when she and her family moved to Texas.

Her upbringing was deeply conservative and Catholic, so it required a remarkable willingness to transform when, at the age of 13, she sat her parents down and told them she “liked girls.”

Lopez decided she could no longer be anything other than who she truly is. “My announcement didn't go well,” she recalls, but it was also the moment she began to understand the power and peace that comes with authenticity.

“So many people are consumed with trying to be someone else. They tend to choose (or get ushered into) careers or identities that are not true to themselves, creating discord and pain. Then they lose their authentic voice. It's drowned out by the demands of life and old ways of thinking. They disconnect from

themselves,” Lopez explains.

“There is a price to pay for this: depression, self-medicating, anxiety. We help unleash people from what is not working, to be free to be who they are, and to try new things. We help them create the life they want to live, and a more rewarding way of being. Authenticity of self is a critical component of personal fulfillment,” she states.

Effua McGowan is one of Lopez's enthusiastic clients. “I was a vice president at JP Morgan Chase Bank for 23 years when I started consulting with Miriam. At the time, I had a nagging restlessness and no real feeling of fulfillment in my position. Miriam was fabulous. She helped me see beyond another 20 years at Chase. She helped me understand myself, to reach for change, and to know that I was going to be OK. I had lost my sense of value, but she helped me recover it,” McGowan concluded.

And has being a woman been an obstacle to success in business? “Being a woman is a gift,” Lopez says. The world needs more of us in business. Women are so creative, so nurturing. We are natural communicators. I've always said that if we want to change the world for the better, we will empower women,” she concludes with a smile.



For more information on SeEQmore, visit seeqmore.com.



"WORKING WITH A
CLIENT'S OBJECTIVES AND
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A ROAD MAP TO DESIRED
OUTCOMES. IT OFTEN
INVOLVES CHALLENGES,
BUT THE RESULTS—BE
THEY PERSONAL OR
PROFESSIONAL—CAN BE
IMMENSELY REWARDING
FOR BOTH OF US."

—MIRIAM LOPEZ

Off the Nap

Khaliah O. Guillory runs Nap Bar,
Texas' first siesta facility.

By MARENE GUSTIN

Photo by ASHKAN ROAYAAE

Khaliah O. Guillory has a high-profile business as a diversity and inclusion consultant for major companies such as NASA, Wells Fargo, Microsoft, and Keller Williams. She's also a documentary filmmaker, and she runs the Cynthia A. Guillory Foundation in honor of her mother, who died of ALS.

And she's also obsessed with naps. "I take a 26-minute nap at least five times a week," says the 40-year-old Houstonian.

Naps have been proven to boost the immune system and improve physical stamina and memory. A NASA study found that a 26-minute power nap improves performance by 34 percent. Google has had nap pods for employees for more than a decade. Nap lounges popped up in New York City and Los Angeles a few years back, and both the lounges and pods are popular in major airports around the world.

So one day when Guillory was contemplating driving to her suburban home for a quick nap during the workday, she decided to google "Nap lounges in Houston." When she found that there weren't any, an idea began to form.

"Would Houstonians support a place to nap?" she wondered. "So I did a Facebook poll. I found that people were interested, but they also wanted add-ons like massages and organic mattresses."

Thus, Nap Bar was born. As the first

"napping center" in Texas, Nap Bar features private suites with organic mattresses from Bungaloom (an organic-mattress company in Houston's Second Ward), organic sheets, rest-inducing color schemes, juice shots, and scientifically chosen brain-wave therapy.

"We did a beta test in Rice Village, and people did drive to us to take a nap," Guillory says. Late last year, she opened a permanent Nap Bar location in The Galleria that caters to stressed shoppers and the after-work office crowd. "People will drive here after work to take a nap and rejuvenate before going out at night or to an event," she says. "We are also going into businesses to build in-suite nap centers for companies, and we plan to have mobile 'snooze units' downtown."

When she's not working—or napping—Guillory loves to travel. Although she had to postpone traveling while she was getting Nap Bar up and running last year, she's planning a trip every month this year. She started with a visit to New Orleans in January.

Guillory also enjoys listening to audio-books in her car, hanging with friends, FaceTiming her relatives, karaoke, bingo, movies, and "retail therapy"—which makes working in The Galleria convenient. "And I love '80s music," she adds. "I grew up in the '80s. My older sister was so cool, and she taught me everything about music. To this day, I listen to everything from hip hop to Wham! all the time—when getting ready for work, or relaxing and exercising."

The Port Arthur native previously lived in the Houston suburbs, but now she enjoys being closer to The Galleria and other Houston locations and events. "I can get anywhere in ten to twenty minutes," she says. "I'm spoiled now."

Guillory also enjoys eating at the city's diverse restaurants, including the South African Peli Peli, which is next door to Nap Bar in The Galleria.

"I probably eat there twice a week," Guillory says. "I go to Central Market every Sunday and buy meals for the week. I'm a really good sous chef when it comes to heating up stuff!" She's also a fan of Luby's, the iconic Texas cafeteria known for comfort food and Texas classics. "It's how I grew up," she explains.

Napping was also a part of her growing up, so Guillory is hoping that the habit will catch on not just in Houston, but globally. She's planning to expand the Nap Bar concept, which offers 20-minute naps for \$20. Memberships are available for as little as \$89 a month—and you can even pay through your Health Savings Account (HSA) or Flexible Savings Account (FSA).

A self-described extrovert, Guillory believes everyone can benefit from a little power nap during their busy days. "It rejuvenates you and gets you ready for the rest of your day," she says.

And who doesn't need that?



For more information on Nap Bar, visit napbarnow.com.



**"NAPPING REJUVENATES
YOU AND GETS YOU READY
FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAY.
WHO DOESN'T NEED THAT?"**

—KHALIAH O. GUILLORY

Software Specialist

Kimberly Cook designs technology solutions at Integris.

By CONNOR BEHRENS

Between advocating for HIV research in the LGBTQ community early in her career and starting her own technology consulting firm, Kimberly Cook has always had an undeniable passion for helping others.

"I come from the scientific-research field, and decided to join the business field later," says Cook, who identifies as lesbian. "Technology touches every bit of our lives, and if used properly, it can greatly impact our experience as human beings on this Earth. I have always enjoyed being able to operate in that space and help people."

Cook is the founder of Integris LLC, a technology consulting firm that delivers custom software solutions and training for administrative-services automation. Cook specializes in clarifying client issues and business goals, and then designing technology solutions to help meet those goals.

"We provide greater technology services to small-business clients in Houston," she said. "It is the best thing I have ever done in my career."

Cook's early career path had her focusing on scientific research—something that helped prepare her for the business world, since both fields revolve heavily around people, Cook says. "Business is about people. I love being able to interact with clients and empower them. I love making sure all the technology in

their business is working."

It is a challenging process to create your own company, and Cook notes that it's crucial to find the right people to work with.

"It is all about the people who interact with you," she says. "Along this journey, I have had the extreme good fortune to meet, work with, provide services for, and receive mentorship from some really incredible people."

The journey to build her own firm has not been easy. Cook had to learn to use the right tools to become a smart, effective business owner in order to thrive in Houston's competitive market.

"As a business owner, you create the structure and it is all up to you," she says. "It is a completely different ball game, in terms of what you are responsible for. There is just a major learning curve if you have never been involved in business before."

"There is no point in trying to do it all on your own," she says. "What I have really learned in the process is being able to ask for help." Cook has been especially grateful for the overwhelming support she has gotten from her Houston colleagues and friends.

"People really care about each other in Houston," she says. "Everyone is so interested in helping each other."

While Cook was not born in Houston, it has become the place she calls home, and Space City now holds a special place in her heart.

"I came out in Houston," she says. "I have family in Dallas, but I have gained friends who are family here. No matter what background you have or where you come from or who you love, Houston is the most diverse city in the country."

That diversity not only makes for a rich living experience, but also translates into a diverse clientele, Cook notes. "I love that. There are so many different kinds of communities in Houston."



**"BUSINESS IS ABOUT PEOPLE.
I LOVE BEING ABLE TO
INTERACT WITH CLIENTS
AND EMPOWER THEM.
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THE TECHNOLOGY IN THEIR
BUSINESS IS WORKING."**

—KIMBERLY COOK

The future of her business looks bright, and Cook is staying focused on helping local businesses and continuing to tap into Houston's diversified economy.

In particular, Cook plans to expand her consulting services. "My heart is with small business," she says. "It is just a fun space, and I love being able to provide consulting."

Anyone who is looking to start their own business must remember that being

supportive is key, and asking for guidance is okay, Cook says. "I think it is better for businesses to help each other grow, rather than being divisive and competitive. There is so much available for people. Helping each other makes us a better city. We are only as strong as [our ability to] stand united."



*For more information on Integris,
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Jason Schnegg (l), Dennis Holding, and Mark Craven.

Club Houston Undergoes Renovation

Improvements make the Midtown club a showcase bathhouse.

By **BRANDON WOLF**
Photo by **DALTON DEHART**

Club Houston has recently completed an 18-month renovation, and a celebration of the improvements was held in late January. Dennis Holding, a major investor in the club, says that Club Houston is now one of the showcase clubs in the country.

The club, which opened in 1973, has been a familiar gay social hub in Houston for nearly five decades, offering local gay men an alcohol- and drug-free alternative to the local bar scene.

The Club's Early Years

Holding says the idea for a Houston club began in Cleveland, Ohio, where he had met gay entrepreneur Jack Campbell in 1971. Campbell had purchased an old Russian bathhouse in Cleveland and converted it into Club Baths, the first bathhouse for gay men in this country.

Holding became a Club Baths investor after meeting Campbell and becoming a part of his social circle that included many other gay men from across the country. At that time, there were 14 Club Baths locations, and several men visiting from Houston for one of Campbell's parties voiced an interest in having a Houston club.

A group of Campbell's investors eventually decided on a tract of land in the 2200 block of Fannin for their new Houston venture. The investors were looking for a location near downtown, but still close to Houston's gay neighborhoods. After they leased the property for a year, with an option to buy, the building at 2205 Fannin was converted into a bathhouse. Holding says that there was sort of a cookie-cutter design that was used for gay bathhouses in those days.

The June 1973 issue of *David* magazine described the Houston grand opening: "Sunday, April 15, marked the grand opening of Club Houston. The elegantly appointed bath was the scene of a tremendous party, with more than 250 Houstonites welcoming the Club to Houston. The new Club Houston features a gigantic 8-foot square whirlpool, see-thru shower area (you've got to see it to believe it), exercise equipment, and a beautifully tiled steam room. Other facilities include large private rooms, television lounge, canteen, lockers, dormitory and outdoor patio."

The club was successful, and after a year, the investors bought the property and soon added a swimming pool in the outdoor patio area. After a privacy wall was built, the club offered nude sunbathing.

The club appealed to a variety of local customers and visitors from out of town. It was especially popular after the gay bars closed on weekend nights, and it offered an inexpensive alternative to hotels for travelers.

Involving itself in the local community, Club Houston sponsored an annual Mr. Club Houston contest, held at a local bar. They also sponsored entries in Houston's Pride parades.

On May 25, 1977, a fire broke out in the club, and the Houston Fire Department determined that the cause was arson. Fortunately no one was hurt, but the arsonist was never found, even after the club offered a reward of \$5,000 for information leading to an arrest.

Except for the front check-in area, the club was gutted by the fire and had to be rebuilt. During the construction period, the club offered free admission to the pool and patio area.

Responding to the AIDS Crisis

The 1980s were a sobering time for the club, with the onset of the AIDS crisis. The club worked with local AIDS organizations to help keep customers educated about the growing epidemic by offering free condoms and educational brochures.

When HIV tests were developed, the club partnered with local health groups to provide free testing. Safe-sex posters were visible in the club, and health workers were invited to offer safe-sex presentations. The Club Baths group also toured adult film star Sgt. Glenn Swann, who appeared as Mr. Playsafe at bathhouse safe-sex programs around the country.

Holding says that the day after Rock Hudson's death in 1985, business dropped to one-half of what it had been. The club worked to create a new image as more of a health club by building an expanded exercise area. The efforts were successful, and business picked up.

Although some critics felt that bathhouses were breeding grounds for AIDS, their educational efforts and HIV testing programs may have actually helped reduce transmission of the virus.

In the early 1990s, the club's investors bought a tract of land to the north of Club Houston, feeling that they might need that land to expand in the future. A Victorian-era house was located on the property, and was nicknamed the "The Witch's Hat House" because of its unique pointed turret roof. The investors offered the house to local preser-

vationists, but the cost was too great to move it. In 1997, the house was demolished. The witch's-hat roof structure, however, was saved, and now sits atop a gazebo in the City park at 901 Sawyer.

A New Building in 2000

By the late 1990s, Club Houston owners felt the current structure was no longer worth maintaining, with its outdated utility connections that were costing too much to upgrade for stricter City building codes. A new two-story building was then built on the empty lot to the north, just three feet from the existing structure. In 2000, the new 14,000-square-foot club opened and the old club was demolished so that a new pool could be built on the site.

The club's new facilities, which included an expanded workout area, attracted a large customer base, and the pool area continued to offer nude sunbathing. Holding says that previous privacy walls had been lost during tropical storms, so the new wall is 16 feet high, built of steel girders and concrete slabs, and can withstand winds up to 160 miles per hour.

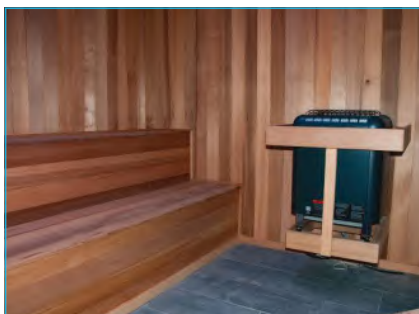
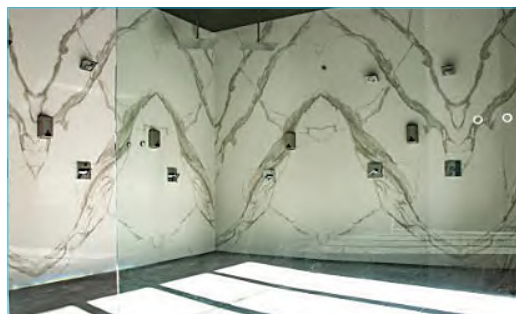
In the late 2010s, the owners felt that the building needed updating again, and construction continued for the next year and a half. Holding teamed up with Wayne Schrebe, Mark Craven, and Jason Schnegg to create the club's current look.

Upstairs, an impressive new sauna was built, plus a new bathroom and shower area. The downstairs weight room area was reduced to make room for another bathroom that includes shower facilities for the handicapped. A new television lounge with tables and chairs was built, with a windowed wall that overlooks the pool area. Club guests can choose what they want to watch on the large-screen TV.

The jacuzzi, which had been inside, was replaced with a new one that is now part of the swimming pool. Overall, the traffic flow was redesigned to make moving throughout the structure easier.

Admission to the club is still limited to men only, and transgender men are welcome. Admission is determined by the gender marker that appears on drivers' licenses.

Local psychotherapist Denis "Woodja" Flanagan believes Club Houston plays an important role in Houston's LGBTQ community. Flanagan notes that the gathering place is not centered around alcohol or drugs, and it gives closeted individuals a place where they can relieve their feelings of rejection by finding other men who are receptive to gay sex. →





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After nearly fifty years of operation, Club Houston remains a popular meeting place for Houston's gay men. HIV education and testing is still offered, and the recent improvements have made it one of the finest gay bathhouses in the country.

Dennis Holding

Dennis Holding, who has been a major investor in Club Houston since its beginning in 1973, was part of the project team that guided the club's recent renovation.

Holding was born in Santa Monica, California, and says he was a thin boy who grew up with asthma. He's always had an entrepreneurial nature, and he did well in his college accounting courses.

Holding worked for the *Los Angeles Times*, reporting on college sports and drag races. He then began working in the high-performance racing-equipment field, traveling across the country and giving seminars until his retirement in 2017.

Holding met Jack Campbell, founder of the Club Baths group, in 1971 while living in Cleveland. Holding soon became an investor, and is now a joint owner of the clubs in Houston, Orlando, and Miami.

In 1981, Campbell asked Holding to join



the executive committee of the Gay Rights National Lobby, which later became the Human Rights Campaign. Holding worked with many of the early gay-rights activists of the 1970s and '80s.

Holding now lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with his partner of 24 years, Flavio Cavalcanti. The two were married five years ago during a Christmas trip to Hawaii.

Holding says he is impressed with Houston's progressive spirit, and he has particular admiration for the Montrose Center and all of the programs they offer to the community. He visits Houston every few months in order to check on the club and stay involved with Houston's many LGBTQ organizations.



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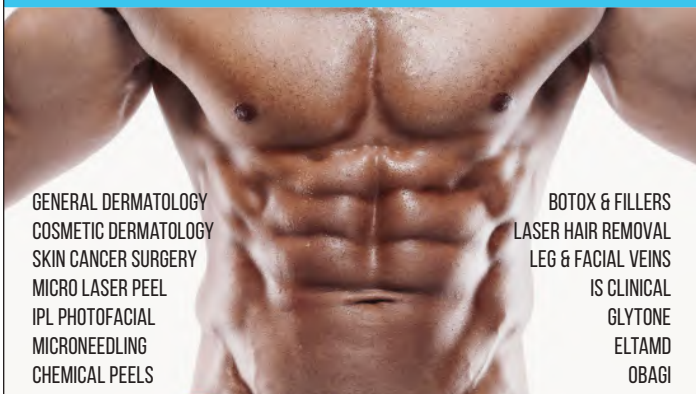
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A Hero's Journey

Robert Snellgrove's life of social work led to *The Masculine Eros*, his book on personal growth.

By BRANDON WOLF

Robert Snellgrove's life has been one of caring about others. Although he had a strong sense of social justice since childhood, it was the AIDS epidemic that precipitated a life-changing career choice.

Snellgrove was born in Atlanta in 1953. He was the youngest of three children, with an older brother and sister. His father worked in an industrial sales job, and his mother was a homemaker. In 1962, the family moved to Houston when Snellgrove was nine.

Snellgrove always loved creative things, especially art. He began to draw at an early age, and was encouraged by his art teachers and his parents. He still has a vivid memory of visiting a Rodin sculpture exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, when he was ten. "I was very moved by those sculptures," he says.

Theater also fascinated Snellgrove. He remembers the excitement he felt when he saw *Huck Finn* at the old Alley Theater. His love for theater would remain with him into adulthood.

Snellgrove continued to follow his passion for art as he moved from drawing into painting. He enrolled in numerous art classes and participated in summer art programs.

One day, Snellgrove's mother suggested that he might like architecture, and he began to explore that field. "I used to cut up the cardboard that comes in laundered shirts and build model houses," he recalls.

A Career in Architecture

Snellgrove attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock and earned a degree in architectural design. He remembers being an introverted student who didn't date.

After college, Snellgrove returned to Houston and worked for three architectural firms. He came out during his time as a draftsman at the first firm, after realizing that there were several other gay employees there.

Shortly after coming out, Snellgrove participated in the 1977 Houston protest march when anti-gay icon Anita Bryant came to town. "I've never seen anything like it since," he says. "People came out from everywhere. It was an incredible experience."

At the third firm he worked at, he was assigned to do very high-end interior-design work for the executive offices of large oil companies. He became a senior associate and continued in that field for more than a decade.

Responding to the AIDS Crisis

As the AIDS epidemic began to play out, Snellgrove saw a need to get involved. "A horrible thing was happening—people were dying, and a lot of people were hurting. People were isolated and sometimes even shunned by their own community. I saw that something was wrong, and it bothered me."

In 1984, Snellgrove joined the fledgling AIDS Foundation Houston. He attended a weekend of intensive training and volunteered with the buddy program and the crisis hotline. He eventually headed up the hotline program, training and scheduling volunteers.

Snellgrove remembers one hotline call that had a powerful impact on him. A mother from Pasadena said that her son was flying to Houston, and she didn't know how her husband would react to the news that their son had AIDS. "She was lost. She had no one to talk to. She just needed someone to listen."

On another night, Snellgrove was alone working the hotline when someone called and said he was going to come and kill him. Snellgrove hung up, but the man called back and repeated the threat. "It was very disturbing. I closed down the office and left."

The one day at his architecture firm, Snellgrove had an experience that left him even more committed to making the AIDS crisis his first priority. He was working on an executive office project, and the executive called him in to complain. "The man was on his hands and knees searching for flaws in the wood floor.

He showed me one tiny spot that hadn't been stained. I felt that something was very wrong. The AIDS organizations were held together with bandages and tape, and all around me people were dying. And here was an executive complaining about the slightest of flaws."

In 1988, Snellgrove became involved with the Bering Support Network. Although only 15 people attended on the first night, the network quickly grew. "We wanted people living with AIDS to know that we would eat with them, hug them, be with them. For them, it was a huge thing to be fully accepted at that time."

Snellgrove also began to do a lot of hospital visitation work at Park Plaza and Twelve Oaks, where people from the Bering Support Network were hospitalized. "They were becoming isolated, and many times had no families to support them. I visited and talked with them. Sometimes I would talk with partners and mothers. They all just needed someone to be there for them."

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WERE BORN TO BE, AND TO
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—ROBERT SNELLGROVE

A Re-evaluation

Snellgrove says that he has had a sense of social justice since he was young, especially after the death of the family's African-American housekeeper who had helped raise him. "Mary was given penicillin for an infection, and had an allergic reaction. She was denied treatment because she did not have health insurance. I was ten years old, and it had a traumatic effect on me."

"I'd always had an appreciation for creativ-

ity and beauty," he says, "but social issues have to be addressed. I felt it was wrong to just sit by and be quiet. I had a responsibility to respond to injustice. I began to have a distorted view of the world. All around me, people were dying. There was so much frustration. Sometimes I would attend three memorial services in a week."

Snellgrove also saw many people in the architectural design industry die of AIDS. He went to Washington, DC for AIDS marches. "It was very moving to look back down the street, and as far as I could see, there were candles."

In 1989, Snellgrove decided he wanted to make a career change, and enrolled in the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work. He attended night school for two years, and then began full-time coursework. In 1992, he received a degree in clinical social work.

Snellgrove felt very much at home in graduate school. "It was a good fit, and I liked the environment. It affirmed my sense of social justice." His first placement was working 40 hours a week for a local food bank. It was a front-line experience for him. He interviewed people seeking assistance and helped them find the most effective way to get back on their feet.

Finding Love

In 1995, Snellgrove met Tony Waguespack at the Fitness Exchange gym. A relationship quickly developed, and they moved in together in 1997. That same year, they had a commitment ceremony at First Unitarian Church with 150 friends in attendance.

In 2009, the couple got a domestic partnership in Vermont before finally getting legally married in New York City in 2014. They flew to New York, got their license, and waited the required 24 hours before getting married at City Hall.

As they were getting dressed for their wedding, they realized that Waguespack had left his tuxedo shirt studs in Houston, so they stopped at the 34th Street Macy's on their way to City Hall. There were no shirt studs on the sales floor, but the sales staff liked the couple so much that they searched everywhere and finally found a set.

Waguespack works as a physical therapist at Thomas Street Clinic, where he has been employed for the past 20 years.

"Never for one moment have I regretted the decision to love that man. It is the best thing I ever did in my life," Snellgrove says. →

A New Career in Psychotherapy

After graduation, Snellgrove did a second placement at the Montrose Center, where he spent two years as head of the chemical dependency program. He then became director of the Bering Care Center, a position he held for seven years.

Snellgrove started a small part-time psychotherapy practice in 1994. By 2003, he had built it into a full-time practice.

He says the most rewarding thing about his practice is seeing people grow. “All the time I hear people ask me how I can listen to all these stories from my clients. The wonderful thing is watching people become whole.”

Snellgrove says that he has learned over the years to help people truly embrace all of themselves as being okay, and to wrap their arms around their humanness. “We don’t need to be perfect. We are perfect in our imperfection.”

Snellgrove believes that the biggest problem for gay people is shame. “There are things we have been taught, and at an early age. Those messages have a powerful effect. It’s about more than our sexuality—it’s about our *identity*.”

He also feels that family acceptance is important. “There is a lot of emotional pain when families don’t embrace us.”

Two current issues that concern Snellgrove the most are immigration and homeless LGBTQ youth. He works to be supportive of both.

In 2017, Snellgrove began working on his book entitled *The Masculine Eros*, which was published in late 2018. The book started to develop along with classes that he offered at the Jung Center. The classes walked participants through a healing process.

It took a year to write the book, and he gave himself exactly that amount of time to complete it. He decided to write the book in order

to clarify his thoughts and create a structure for all the therapy approaches he had learned. “It gave all those thoughts a concise, logical, sequential structure. I felt that if I couldn’t communicate them in a book, then I wasn’t clear on what they were. It forced me to learn and grow. I always need to be learning and growing.”

He says the book “helps readers to heal and become their authentic selves—to be the individuals they were born to be, and to live life fully.”

Snellgrove’s life has been one of caring. He feels that in today’s political environment there is a lot of callousness toward those who are the most vulnerable. “But there are still a lot of people who do care,” he emphasizes.

At 67 years of age, Snellgrove looks back on his life and says, “We grow and change and evolve and find out what matters—and find that stuff we worried about earlier doesn’t really matter.”

READ OUT

Thriving in a Toxic World

Robert Snellgrove’s new book offers wisdom for troubled times.

By BRANDON WOLF



The Masculine Eros is a timely book by Houston therapist Robert Snellgrove, who helps read-

ers learn how to live in an increasingly toxic world without becoming toxic themselves. The author explains why it is essential to become our authentic selves even during times when society seems to be in danger of losing its soul. “People need a sense of fullness—of embracing life and living it wholly,” the author says.

Snellgrove uses ancient mythology and entertaining folk tales to present complex psychological terms in a way that makes them easier to understand. The author is particularly interested in Eros, the passionate god of love and desire, who is not merely about erotic love, but also about an incredible life force.

In the mythological world, originally there was chaos before the birth of Eros brought light and healing to the universe. It is for this



The Masculine Eros is available for purchase online at tinyurl.com/TheMasculineEros.

reason the author has chosen Eros as a symbol of what the world needs today. Snellgrove sees an alarming increase in negative masculine behavior, with some factions of society actually celebrating it.

The author reveals many of the blocks to achieving authenticity, and demonstrates how we can transcend them. Through a variety of photographs from his friend Gary Laird’s book *The Male Nude: A Personal Journey*, he illustrates a range of different feelings and asks the reader to look carefully into the photographs to view the subjects’ emotions.

While reading the book, we are challenged to think and live “outside the lines.” During a time in our nation’s history when aggression and repression have become the new normal, it is important for us to still care. To care means to suffer while also continuing to remain compassionate.



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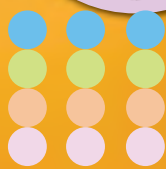
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Cadillac wants to redefine the sport utility vehicle market with its redesigned 2021 Escalade. According to Cadillac, the 2021 Escalade is the next level of luxury, with a bold new look designed to set you apart and have you arriving in style. Some of the innovative features for 2021 include a curved organic light-emitting diode (OLED) instrument cluster and infotainment screens with a panoramic 38-inch display, standard automatic emergency braking, forward-collision alert, HD surround vision, and front/rear pedestrian alert. Cadillac also introduces Super Cruise, which offers true hands-free driving assistance on compatible highways. Five distinct trim packages are available, including (for the first time) a Sport Performance Package. The Escalade is powered by either a 6.2-liter V8 or available 3.0-liter Duramax Diesel engine. The redesigned Escalade goes on sale in late 2020.

2021 CADILLAC ESCALADE

WHEEL LOVE 2020

By JAMES HURST

The automotive industry is rapidly changing before our eyes as it moves away from diesel engines (after recent scandals in Europe) and invests heavily in battery-powered vehicles. The industry is looking to not only gain the public's confidence in electric technology, but also increase the driving range of its new electric models. The amount of technology in today's automobiles will astound any buyer who has not kept up with recent developments. Our 2020 OutSMART new-car showcase features four cars from different corners of the market that are scheduled to debut in late 2020 or early 2021. We hope you enjoy them!



2021 TOYOTA SUPRA



In case you haven't heard, the 2021 Supra is part of a collaboration between Toyota and BMW to reintroduce the legendary Supra and Z4. Both share some commonalities in their technology and power trains, but each has its own distinct personality. Auto enthusiasts will certainly welcome the return of the Supra after a 15-year absence. For 2021, two different power trains are offered: the 3.0-liter inline

six-cylinder with 382 horsepower and 368 lb-ft of torque, and the 2.0-liter four-cylinder that produces 255 horsepower and 295 lb-ft of torque. Both power trains drive the rear wheels through an eight-speed automatic transmission.

The new Supra is called "condensed extreme" by chief project designer Nobuo Nakamura, who describes his goal of "pushing big, evocative ideas into a small overall package." The short wheelbase is punctuated by large-diameter wheels, bulging front fenders, and six-element LED headlights. It is a feast for your eyes as the car emerges into your sightline. →

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CHEVROLET TRAILBLAZER



The newest member of Chevrolet's SUV lineup is the all-new 2021 Trailblazer, with a starting price under \$20,000. The Trailblazer offers a sculpted modern design, bold proportions, two-tone roof, and a surprisingly roomy interior that features 40/60 rear seats and an optional fold-flat front seat to accom-

modate objects up to eight-and-a-half feet long. The SUV offers a variety of standard safety and driver-assistance features including Auto Emergency Braking, Forward Collision Alert, and Front Pedestrian Braking. Available options include Lane Change Alert, Rear Cross-Traffic Alert, and Rear Park Assist. The Trailblazer is now available at your nearest Chevrolet dealership.

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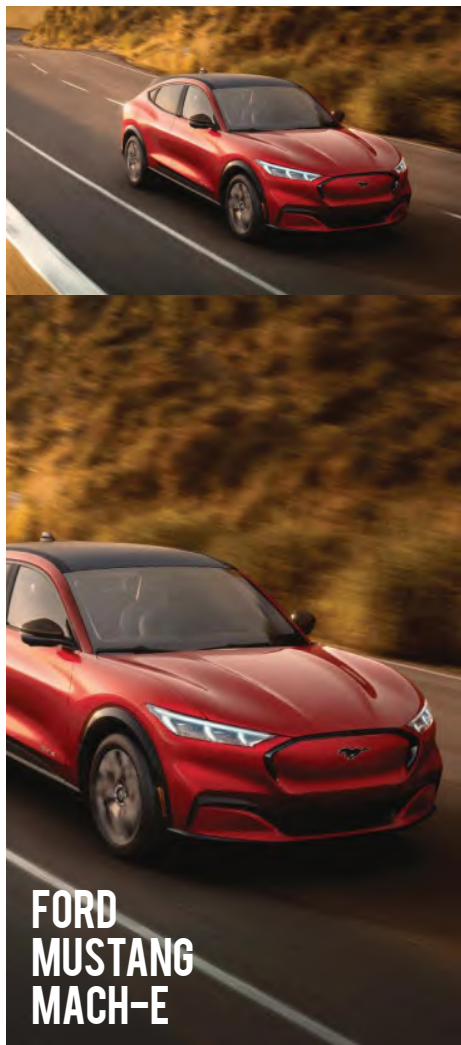
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FORD MUSTANG MACH-E



Ford will introduce the All-Electric Mustang Mach-E in the fall of 2021. It is built to compete with the Jaguar i-Pace

and the Tesla Model Y. This crossover SUV design is new to the Mustang, but shares many styling cues with its more commonly known two-door siblings. Depending on the model, it will have an estimated range of 300 miles and a starting price of \$44,495. The Mach-E will be offered in a variety of trim levels and option packages, starting with the Mustang Mach-E Select, an entry-level model with 18-inch wheels, rear-wheel drive, and a 230-mile battery range. Other models include the Mach-E Premium, the Mach-E California Route 1 edition, and (for the ultimate in performance) the Mustang Mach-E GT. This GT edition sports 20-inch wheels, permanent Electric Dual Motor All-Wheel Drive, premium seating, high-end audio, and more.

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The Wheel Deal



Tori Williams recalls Houston's first auto-repair garage run by women, for women.

By BRANDON WOLF

Left to right: Co-owners Rene Braud, Claire Baker, Sandy Scurria, Pat Corrigan and Tori Williams.

From 1982 to 1984, seven Montrose-area women took part in a very special business project. Their goal was to jointly own a car-repair business that would be run by women, for women. Although the venture has long since disbanded, each of the seven owners still has happy memories of their effort and everything that they learned in the process.

Bringing an Idea to Reality

Tori Williams is the woman who had the original inspiration for the business. After graduating with a degree in social work from the University of Wisconsin, she moved to Houston to take a position with Lutheran Refugee Services.

Early in 1982, Williams was talking with a woman in the automotive field whom she had met at a party. The woman said that more women should be training to become auto mechanics. The wages for mechanics are good,

and women have the advantage of smaller hands and arms that can allow them to more easily work on car engines.

The idea struck Williams, and she thought she would like to be a part of helping train women to become mechanics. After mulling over the idea and talking with friends about it, she received enough encouragement to pursue her dream.

Williams then came up with a list of the skills that would be needed for the business venture. She matched the required skills to friends who were all part of a Monday-night basketball group that played in Cherryhurst Park.

The group included Sandy Scurria, a doctor; Sandy Morse, a policewoman; Claire Baker, a health department inspector; Rene Braud, a pollution-control officer; Pat Corrigan, a printing company assistant manager; and Pokey Anderson, a paralegal.

Williams had inherited \$5,000 from a close friend who had died, and she felt the auto-

repair garage would be a good investment. She also asked her six friends to join her by investing \$1,000 each. This gave the group \$12,000 to start the garage.

Williams doesn't remember where the name "Moving Right Along Garage" came from, but a good guess is that it was taken from Johnny Carson's catchphrase at the end of his *Tonight Show* opening monologue, when he would make a golf swing and say, "Moving right along. . ."

Their rented garage, with an office and two service bays, was located at 4830 Pinemont, near TC Jester. Owner Allen Gebhart's auto-repair business was closed on weekends, so he offered to let the women use his building and his tools on Saturdays. He asked only for a percentage of their business income.

The garage was incorporated, and the first meeting of the board was held on March 24, 1983. Williams used her voicemail to take calls for the garage, and advertisements were placed in numerous local women-oriented publications.

The investors did not intend to be the mechanics, so they spread the word that they were hiring female mechanics by offering \$50 to anyone who could locate a female mechanic. Finally, five women were found.

An Eventful Opening Day

With everything in place, the shop's opening day was set for Saturday, May 21, 1983. The night before, there was a huge tropical storm that blew through the city—the worst storm since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Destruction was in the millions, and 11 people died.

Even though streets were difficult to navigate because of flooding and other storm damage, the garage opened on time at 8 a.m. that morning, and had a good response from prospective customers. However, when their new cashier stepped into the front office, she saw a large snake and screamed. The snake disappeared into the floodwaters and was never seen again.

The garage continued to operate every weekend, and its customer base grew. Williams says that the hours were 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but many Saturdays the crew worked late into the evening.

Each of the investors helped the effort →



All Geared Up

These photos from the Moving Right Along Garage were featured in a *Houston Post* article in 1983.

with their skills—bookkeeping, incorporation issues, finance, security, working the cash register, and public relations. Williams was the parts runner and worked as a floater, helping her mechanics with any issues that needed attention. She also brought in food for lunch or dinner.

In September 1983, the garage offered three half-day classes—“A Guided Tour Under the Hood of Your Car,” “Repacking CV Joints in a Front-Wheel-Drive Car,” and “Basic Care for Your Car.” A brochure advertising the classes used the headline “What your mother never told you about your car.”

By the end of 1983, the garage was well-known enough to attract the attention of *Houston Post* reporter Juan Palomo. On December 18, 1983, the *Post* published his feature article about the garage.

What Was Learned

In general, the garage ran smoothly in spite of a few “teachable moments.” The first customer who had a spark-plug change was billed for just one spark plug, since the cashier didn’t realize there’s more than one under the hood.

On another occasion, two mechanics were working on an oil change, and somehow each one thought that the other had put the oil cap



Tori Williams taking a break from a hectic day at her Moving Right Along Garage.

back on. Of course, the customer soon called back with an overheated engine.

One other women’s car-repair garage was located in the U.S. at the time, and they shared some of their problems with Williams. For example, men are used to dropping off their car with a mechanic and simply picking it up at the end of the day. But female customers want to learn more about how cars are fixed, so they

often come out into the bays to ask questions—and thus add to the time required to fix their cars.

Williams’ group found the same thing happening here. “We were trying to help women understand, but it took more of the mechanic’s time and became a difficulty.”

Another issue the garage had to deal with was the poor condition of some of the cars that were brought in for repairs. There were a lot of lower-income female customers, and their cars were often on the verge of falling apart.

In May 1984, William’s father died unexpectedly, and she moved back home to care for her mother, who was dealing with a severe health challenge. Williams was the glue that held the business together, so after her departure the investors decided to close the garage.

Williams says that if she had stayed, the group would probably have moved from car repairs into educational classes. A school would have far less liability, and more income from fees. It was getting difficult for an auto-repair garage to stay solvent.

Corrigan says it was worth every penny the women invested because everyone learned a great deal about business, and it was cheaper than going to business school. The women are all still good friends.



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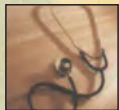
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Not Too Fabulous

Comedian Zach Zimmerman keeps it real.

By DAVID GOLDBERG

New York City stand-up Zach Zimmerman performs in Houston on March 12 as part of his *Gay, But Not Too Fabulous* tour. Before Zimmerman introduces Houston to his signature style of darkly sweet storytelling, he spoke with *OUTSMART* about opening for Alyssa Edwards, touring the country, and his plans for attending the Houston Rodeo.

You started in Chicago, and now you perform in New York. What's the difference between those audiences?

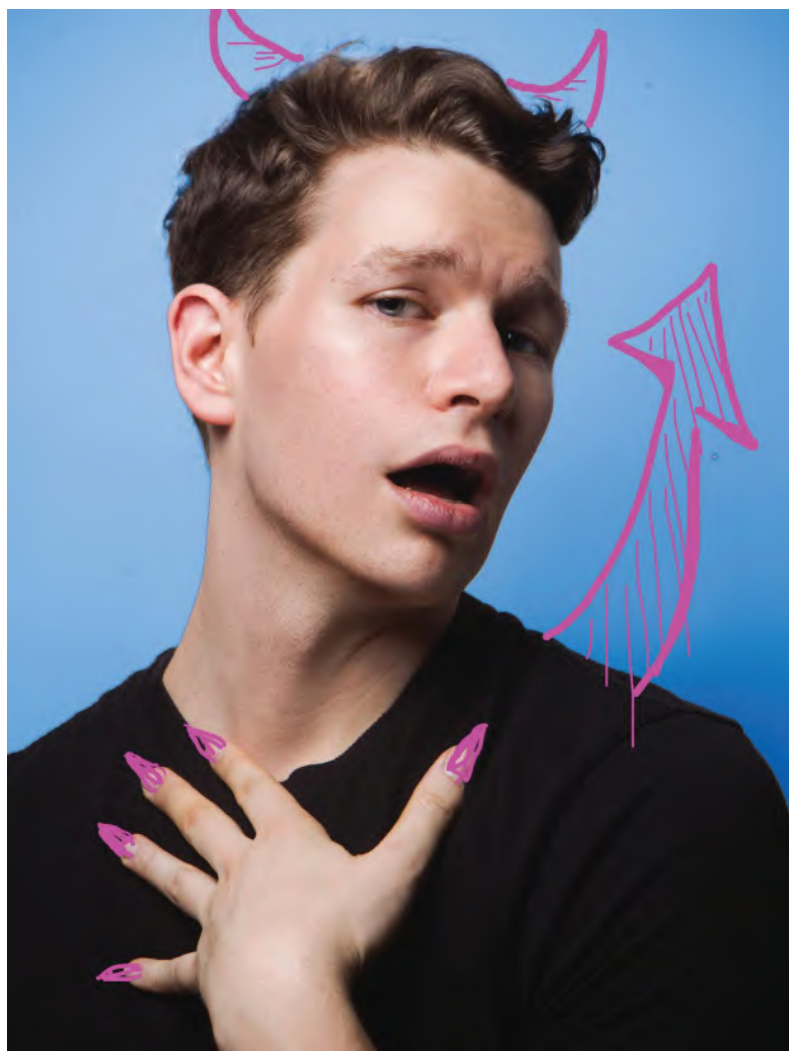
In New York, more of the audience is wearing black. Black turtlenecks fill the room, and everyone dresses the exact same way. But both cities have been spoiled by a rich tradition of live performance. And they both struggle with competition, actually. But I love the crowds in both. I think the humor that people react to is the same. I [can't really compare the two] because I did improv in Chicago (where you listen to the audience and let them guide you) and I do stand-up in New York (which is honed over time and pre-written).

What's it been like for you to take your comedy around the world?

I love performing in the U.K. I've learned that U.K. crowds love a proper joke, Chicago crowds love polish, and New York crowds like a peek behind the curtain. But every audience is different, no matter which city you're in. Everybody likes to have a couple of drinks and go on the mini-vacation that is the joke of someone sharing themselves onstage. It's this one-of-a-kind combination of people in a specific place, at a specific time, after specific news has happened.

You've performed for gay crowds, straight crowds, and everything in between. What have you learned along the way?

Gay crowds can be judgy. Straight crowds like being reprimanded for being straight. And



your ideal situation is [having a diverse] crowd across all identity markers. You want people from different experiences in terms of gender, sexuality, and race, so that everyone's coming together and you're uniting them as a performer in a way that they haven't been before. The shared experience is you onstage. I focus a lot on autobiographical stuff, and then it becomes more universally relatable. I talk about being out to my parents. I think anyone with a parent kind of grapples with what their identity is like, and how, as they grow and morph and change, to send love home to their parents. And anyone who has ever dated, the woes of that feel universal. Even if I'm talking about the hyper-specific experience of a Grindr DM, a straight person can still connect on the higher-order level of just wanting some human connection. I like straight crowds, I like gay crowds, I like crowds of all kinds.

You took your Clean Comedy show and album to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe last year. What's the plan for this new tour you're embarking on?

It is about sharing that final product with parts of the U.S. that I don't frequent as often. If you live in New York, you can catch me any week,

but for some people who don't live in New York but have heard the album or follow me on Twitter, hopefully it's a treat for them to get to see the live show. I love performing live and going to towns I've never been to. Houston came about, interestingly, because a good friend from Chicago moved to Houston two years ago. I visited him once, and he has been begging me to come to the rodeo, which he describes as the most exciting thing in the world. So we got tickets to see Lizzo at the rodeo, and I figure that while I'm in town, I might as well put up a damn show.

Do you know what the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is?

I've been told it's like a state-fair sheep-riding and bull-wrangling event that quickly turns into a concert.

Very good!

I want funnel cake, I want to feel uncomfortable for the animals, and then I want to see Lizzo throw down.

What have been some of your most gratifying and most mortifying encounters with fans?

It's always gratifying when someone shares my

experience and feels seen by the shows. If they grew up with evangelical parents, or are from the South, those always mean more. Mortifying is being hit on by someone I'm not interested in. There's always the bait-and-switch in the DMs, where they say "Great show!" and I say "Thank you!" and then they're like, "Let's..." And it's like, Oh, *that's* what this is about.

Have you ever had the opposite happen, in which you've crushed after an audience member?

I usually address it onstage, if that's happening. At Edinburgh two years ago, I did two bits: I'd flirt with a random audience member, then I'd ask the audience which one of us they thought had had the most recent sex. There was a nice instance where a guy came to two shows; he was the object of my flirting the first night, and then on the second night he was the person who had most recently had sex, and it was with me—and I got to interview him about it!

How did the interview go?

It was good. He was open to it, and enjoyed the little moment in the spotlight. He didn't have any notes for me, which is always my goal.

Last year, you opened for Alyssa Edwards. What was that like?

It was fabulous. I got the email on Wednesday, and I had my first show on Thursday. I don't watch *RuPaul's Drag Race*, so I didn't know who she was—which I know is gay blasphemy. So I honestly asked you who Alyssa Edwards is, and you gave me the lowdown on one of the most famous drag queens in the world. The experience was fun. The title of my tour comes from that experience, because when I asked the booker why they picked me, she said Alyssa wanted someone "gay, but not too fabulous." That has become my brand. I kiss boys, but wear T-shirts and blue jeans I haven't washed in a year, which my mom reprimanded me for. She was like, "You have to wash your jeans every time you wear them!"

What should your Houston audience expect from your show?

They're in for a fun, festive, gay night of Southern storytelling, and hearing my origin myth of how I went from a Southern Baptist evangelical conservative to a gay atheist. There's sad stuff, so it's not just one-liners. Be prepared for the full range of human emotions. You'll laugh, but you might cry.

What: Zach Zimmerman's comedy tour

Gay, But Not Too Fabulous

When: March 12 at 8:00 p.m.

Where: The Secret Group, 2101 Polk St.

Info: tinyurl.com/ZachZimmerman



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African Cosmologies

FotoFest 2020 shines
a queer light on
the continent.

By BILL ARNING

"I make my pictures homosexual on purpose. Black men from the Third World have not previously revealed either to their own peoples or to the West a certain shocking fact: they can desire each other."

—Rotimi Fami-Kayode, quoted in
Charlotte Baker's *Expressions of
the Body: Representations in African
Text and Image*

FotoFest's biennial exhibition is one of Houston's most internationally beloved and respected art events. Its city-wide exhibition venues will once again welcome over 200,000 visitors, including thousands of out-of-town photographic art mavens—so keep your Scruff apps open, and promise me you will show our photography-loving guests some of Texas' charms. For those of us who live here, the announcement of this mobile museum's grand themes are always eagerly awaited, as they tend to focus on image makers from far-flung parts of the world. Since its founding in 1983, FotoFest has brought photographic surveys from Latin America, China, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, Korea, Japan, England, Germany, France, and the Middle East.

FotoFest hires expert guest curators with deep knowledge in particular global practices. The 2018 iteration, with its focus on India, was overwhelming and highly educational. Sunil Gupta, an Indian artist, gay activist, curator, and writer, presented a mind-blowing and challenging lecture on the featured Indian photographers.

I hazard a guess that 90 percent of FotoFest's featured artists are totally new names for even well-informed visitors. Although many of their names tend to be dif-

ficult and "foreign-sounding," the universal real-world nature of their photographic images requires no translation, even for audiences that know little about the arts and culture of the featured countries.

This year's FotoFest theme is African Cosmologies, and it is a vast endeavor. The African continent contains so many countries, cultures, and perspectives that inform its many art-making traditions. And with FotoFest's inclusion of artists from African traditions who were raised in Europe or America, issues of cultural identity get even thicker. I am advising friends to allow days, not hours, to wrestle with the content.

The African Cosmologies exhibition is being curated by Mark Sealy, director of the world-famous London-based Autograph ABP arts agency dedicated to Black photographers. His 2020 Houston show will examine the relationships between contemporary life in Africa, the African diaspora, and global histories of colonialism, photography, and representation.

Alternative sexualities can be a very fraught topic for experts in African arts, as even progressive thinkers sometimes repeat

the false idea that homosexuality was imported from Europe. Thankfully, the younger generation of scholars now understands that what was imported from Europe was its negative attitude toward same-sex relations. While many African cultures were historically neutral regarding homosexuality, the introduction of European homophobia made previously unremarkable sex acts noteworthy.

There are four significant queer artists in this FotoFest: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Eric Gyamfi, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Zanele Muholi. While not gay-identified, Samuel Fosso employs cross-dressing and gender play in his work. In fact, Fosso (along with Muholi, early Lyle Ashton Harris, and the late Fani-Kayode) are masters of theatrical self-presentation in front of the camera. They create visually stunning fictions to fully manifest collective mythologies, such as when Fosso uses his own body to mimic the iconic 1968 *Esquire* magazine cover image of Muhammad Ali as the martyred Saint Sebastian. (Africans often witnessed the fate of African-Americans in a racist America through the lens of Muhammad Ali's triumphs in the boxing ring, followed by



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. STEVENSON, CAPE TOWN AND JOHANNESBURG, AND YANCEY RICHARDSON, NEW YORK

Zanele Muholi's self portrait *hulani II*, Parktown, 2015.
Vinyl wallpaper.

the horror of having his title taken from him for refusing to be drafted into the Army—an event that happened in Houston.) Fosso incorporates that history, while adding layers of rich meaning into his visually memorable work.

Muholi, who identifies as non-binary, rose to fame a decade ago for their startlingly assertive portraits of butch women and trans folk in Capetown, some of whom had survived “corrective rape” (in which families hire men to rape the daughters they fear are gay in order to change their sexuality). Today, Muholi is best known for startlingly quirky self-portraits with their hair bedecked with poetic objects. In one archetypal image, we see a shocked Muholi wearing a miner’s hat and goggles, with skin artificially blackened as if covered in coal dust. That self-portrait commemorates the Marikana massacre in 2012, in which 34 striking miners were killed by police.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode died from AIDS when he was only 34, so his most important works were produced in less than seven wildly productive years. Even though he left Nigeria to escape a civil war when he was only eleven

and studied in the United States before settling in England, his work looks conspicuously “African.” Coming from a prominent Yoruba family, his iconography is based on that tribe’s religious ceremonies—what Yoruba priests call “techniques of ecstasy”—and the result is an unforgettably mystical and highly erotic body of works. Despite his early death, Fani-Kayode’s impact as an artist and activist was huge, and he was the founding chair of Autograph ABD that British curator Sealy runs today.

If Fani-Kayode (along with Fosso and Muholi) make constructed images that exist out of the flow of time, the remaining two featured photographers have chosen to embrace the magical quality of documentary photography to capture moments that, in their youthful and joyful exuberance, are evanescent experiences made all the sweeter for their fleeting nature.

Lyle Ashton Harris went back to the pictures of his formative period after college—the period when he stopped trying to “pass” as straight and allowed himself to live as a gay Black man, artist, scholar, and activist. Harris



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JEAN-MARC PATRAS, PARIS

Samuel Fosso's
Autoportrait L_002853 (Muhammad Ali)
from the series *African Spirits*, 2008

worked in Ghana for a period as a way to fully engage his African origins—an experience that should remind any gay man of the first time he found a loving, supportive, and intellectually stimulating community.

While these four featured artists are widely exhibited in North America and Europe, the great surprise for audiences will be the youthful Eric Gyamfi, who was born in 1990 and is still based in Ghana. Although he is rarely at home in Accra, his creative well-spring remains Ghanaian culture. His series *Just Like Us* 2016–2019 lovingly documents the daily lives of his queer community, from monogamous long-term couples to his gay and straight friendships—including a look at how Grindr functions in young men’s lives in Africa. In interviews, he speaks about seeing the dominant African culture wanting to make gay lives invisible, so he is determined to prove through photographic evidence that their lives happened, their lives and loves matter, and they deserve to be preserved for posterity.

Indeed, FotoFest should be congratulated for affirming the lives of queer Africans who have made crucial contributions to the continent’s rich culture. For any visitor willing to take the time to learn from the hundreds of FotoFest images, that statement will come through loud and clear.



What: African Cosmologies

When: March 8–April 19

Where: Silver Street and Winter Street Studios as well as other venues citywide.

Info: Fotofest.org



COURTESY OF AUTOGRAPH ABP, LONDON

Rotimi Fani-Kayode
Untitled, 1987–88
Inkjet print.

Shedding Expectations

Country singer Katie Pruitt uses music to heal past wounds and explore queer romance.

By ALYS GARCIA CARRERA

Photo by ALYSSE GAFKJEN



Nashville-based singer-songwriter Katie Pruitt is made of the tougher stuff. Growing up religiously conservative in Georgia, the openly gay 25-year-old did not have the easiest coming-of-age experience. Yet, ever the artist, Pruitt took her real-life struggles and weaved them into lyrical narratives, such as in her songs “Loving Her” and “Wishful Thinking.”

Pruitt’s debut album, *Expectations*, which is set to release later this year, delves even deeper into religion, mental health, toxic relationships, overcoming internalized homophobia, with a few old-fashioned love songs thrown in for good measure.

Now on tour through May, Pruitt performs at Houston’s White Oak Music Hall on March 21. Prior to her Houston visit, she sat down with OUTSMART and opened up about the road to this album, highlights of her career, and what we can look forward to at this month’s concert.

Alys Garcia Carrera: The album is named *Expectations*, and you’ve mentioned a bit about liking the irony of it. Can you talk more about the expectations that were placed on you?

Katie Pruitt: In general, it’s kind of like *shedding* other people’s expectations of you—this expectation to succeed, and to never f--k up. But it’s so important to embrace your failures, because success isn’t one linear line. It’s about giving yourself time to grow. Really, [*Expectations*] is more of a mantra—what to care about, and what *not* to care about. It’s the classic mental struggle: knowing what you want to prioritize, and not worrying about things that are out of your control. In the song “Expectations,” there’s a line that says “you’re way too generous with all the f--ks you give.” That’s what I’m trying to convey with all of this: sometimes you just need to remember to not care about what others might think, or what you “should” be doing.

You talk about religion in several of your tracks. Are religious expectations among the things you hope to shed? Do you find it difficult to reconcile faith with an LGBTQ identity?

Yeah, definitely. Growing up in the South, you have to appear and act a certain way, or you’ll be judged and ostracized in a very public way. It causes a lot of shame about something you really can’t help.

It took a while to be okay with myself and say ‘yeah, I’m gay’ and not care about what people might think, because it’s not something I can change and I’m not going to hide it anymore.

In “Loving Her,” you mention overcoming the shame of writing love songs about women, and now it’s one of your most-viewed videos and listened-to songs. What has that been like for you?

It feels really good. If 18-year-old Katie could see 25-year-old Katie, she’d feel empowered and proud of how far she’s come, being able to write songs like this. I mean, I started writing at 18, and when I would write love songs I would change the pronouns so that nobody would know I was talking about a girl. Now it’s very clear who I’m talking about, and it’s been really liberating.

Since releasing the song, I’ve been celebrated for being honest and I see there’s a lot of support now from people. Of course, there’s always going to be those who are against you, but seeing so much more positivity out there was really great. It gives me faith in people, and for the future.

Did you find it difficult to write about such personal topics for your debut, or is it liberating to hear your story told in the way you want it told?

It was a hard road to acceptance, but it’s always served me to be open and honest about things. Like when I first came out, my parents didn’t react well, and for a while it was really strained between us. We had to have a lot of very difficult conversations, and it was hard at first, but I’m glad they happened. It’s also about timing. I know it’s not the same for everyone, but this was how my timeline happened and I’m really glad I was honest and had those difficult conversations. Now I feel better understood, and my parents are now inviting my girlfriend to family events, and things like that.

So even though I know it’s not the same for everyone, I’m glad I was able to be open and honest about myself, because it’s led to me feeling better understood and supported by those around me.

It's also [more than] just my story. Growing up and feeling different from others, you think you're alone. But I want to show that you're not. When you tap into those similarities, that shared narrative, it's a lot easier. I don't feel like it's just about myself, but that I'm telling this common story and giving a voice to so many others who can't tell it themselves, or at least not at the moment.

You performed "Thoughts and Prayers" at the Nashville March for Our Lives. What was that experience like?

It was . . . emotional. There were a lot of speakers from across the country who were all tackling such important topics. It was just such a rewarding experience, and also so different from anything I've done before as a performer. That song is not necessarily for me, or about my life or my story. When I wrote the song, I wanted to represent others—the coming-of-age restrictions on yourself, and what it's like to be politically active in this era. The song, and the event, deal with how we're constantly trying to fight against those who see differences as something controversial, and who continue to hold others down. Gun violence is such a big issue, particularly in the South. It's crazy that there's so many people out there

talking about gun restrictions, [yet we can't] figure out why we don't have them yet.

What's been your most rewarding experience as a performer so far?

Oh, wow—so many!

That's good!

You know, I'm glad you brought up March for Our Lives, because that was one of my favorites—being part of a social movement like that.

Something bigger than yourself.

Yeah, being a small part of a movement that is helping make a change. That's been really rewarding. Another special moment was at the Unrig Summit, a conference where artists, activists, and so many other people came together to eliminate lobbyists and improve our democratic process. It was just so amazing. So those events, and having the opportunity to work with artists like Taylor Goldsmith, or going on tour with The Wood Brothers, has also been really rewarding. As a young artist, getting to perform with these other talented artists that I've admired for so long, it's an honor.

What's your favorite track of the new album, and can you tease a bit of it for our readers?

I think my favorite track is probably "My Mind's a Ship That's Going Down." Despite the really sad title, it's more about always remembering to be grateful for family and friends and all the things around us, especially when things are getting to be too much. So this song is a bit of a mantra as well, but it's more about gratitude and caring for the things that really matter, and dropping what isn't vital or is damaging your mental health. To always remember to come back to the positives when you're having a hard time mentally—or any other time, really.

Sometimes you just need to go out in nature and take a breather, recover from everything that's happening, and come back to that place of balance and gratitude and care.

Well, thank you, Katie. I'm looking forward to your concert here in Houston on March 21.

Yeah! I'm so excited to come to Houston. I'll be there; there's gonna be a band with me. It's gonna be a party!



What: Katie Pruitt's Expectations Tour

When: March 21 at 8 p.m.

Where: White Oak Music Hall

Info: tinyurl.com/KatiePruitt.

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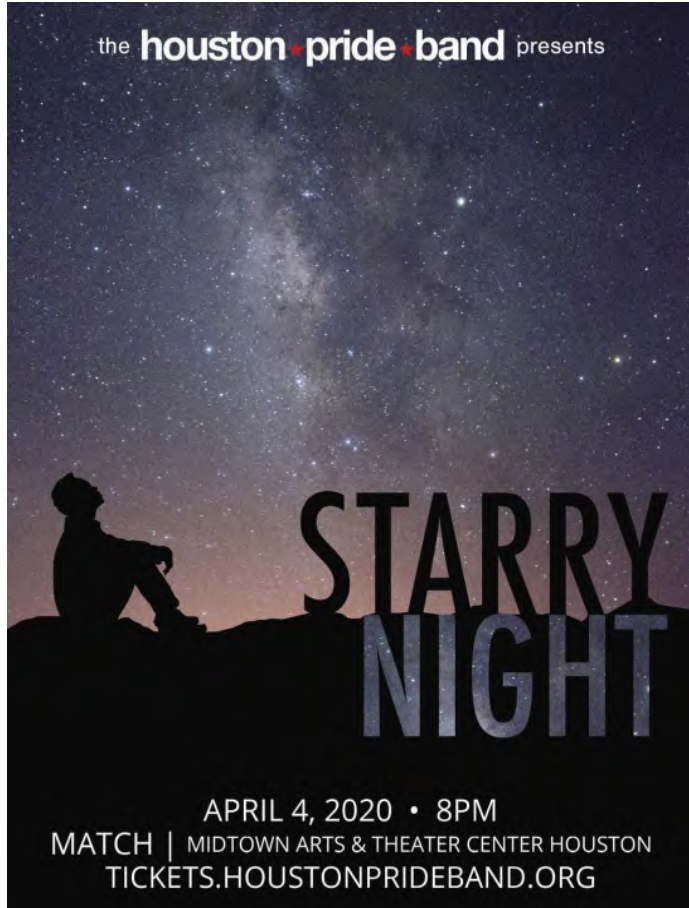
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Marsha's Plate Serves it Up

Local podcast gives transgender people of color a seat at the table.

By RYAN M. LEACH

In the podcast universe, where there are as many shows as there are stars in the sky, it can be challenging to find one that is truly unique. But *Marsha's Plate* succeeds where other shows may stumble—by serving up the voices and perspectives of the transgender community with stories that are vitally important, but too rarely showcased.

"We are *Marsha's Plate*, a progressive podcast hosted by three trans people of color," says the show's creator and producer, Diamond Stylz. "We wanted to create a show named after the pioneering Black trans-baddie Marsha P. Johnson, who shared [not only] the pressing disparities of the trans community, but also the victories and joys of our lives."

Marsha P. Johnson is one of the most important figures in modern LGBTQ history, and is widely regarded as the woman who helped ignite the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City. That summer rebellion is now commemorated with the annual LGBTQ Pride parades held in cities large and small throughout the country. In 2019, it was announced that Johnson and fellow trans-activist Sylvia Rivera would be immortalized with statues in Greenwich Village near the Stonewall Inn.

Stylz is joined weekly by Mia Mix and Zahir "Zee" Raye. The show launched in October of 2017 in response to the 2016 election, Stylz notes. During that time, the trio did not like how the media was portraying the trans narrative, nor its tendency to focus only on "bathroom bills" and the incessant fear-mongering around trans lives. The stories that were being told *about* trans people, but not *by* trans people,

failed to acknowledge the very real and dynamic life experiences of their community.

"As poor, Black, trans people, we stand at the intersection of racial oppression, gender inequality, and the consequences of phobias of all of our identities. Our voices are often silenced in just as many intersectional ways," Stylz says. "Podcasting gives us access to a global audience by bypassing the gatekeepers of traditional media who would otherwise shut us out of the social conversation—or, like in the 2016 presidential race, relegate us to dehumanizing [discussions about] bathroom bills or our body parts."

The three podcast hosts are all millennials who represent the feminine and masculine sides of the trans experience. Stylz is a 25-year veteran Black trans activist who honed her activism as the first openly trans woman to attend Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. She is also the executive director of Black Transwomen, Inc., and a board member of Transfaith, a trans-led organization with a focus on supporting transgender spiritual and cultural leadership in the community.

The two other co-hosts of *Marsha's Plate* are unique in their own right, according to Stylz. "Mia Mix is a biracial Houston socialite and model. Zee is an Afro-Latinx transman and working-class laborer and activist. We discuss pop culture, current events, sex, relationships, and gender every week," Stylz notes.

One issue that the podcast hopes to address is the exhausting work involved in explaining and justifying the trans experience to well-intentioned (and sometimes not-so-well-intentioned) inquisitors. Trans people and people of

color have to endure this kind of questioning on a regular basis.

"We know that everybody is not invited to the cookout, [so this podcast] is *for* us and *by* us," Stylz says. "People can use our show as a resource to learn passively. It's so easy and non-invasive—you just tune in, listen, and learn. Boom! That's easy."

Recent episodes have included a wide range of discussions such as dating, toxic femininity, or the effects of testosterone on the body. The show also offers lighter fare like entertainment reviews of shows like the popular FX series *Pose*. Listeners will not leave disappointed, and can count on learning something they didn't know before tuning in.

"This is important work because it archives the current trans movement, spotlights activists doing amazing work, and highlights the news that impacts trans people's lives around the globe—a narrative ignored by mainstream news outlets," Stylz says.

Marsha's Plate posts new episodes every Thursday to all of the main podcast streaming outlets, including iTunes, Stitcher, and SoundCloud. Doing a simple search for the title will connect you to the show, where you can also subscribe to get notified when new shows are uploaded.

"Come join the conversation," Stylz encourages. "Once you're there, you can find out how to donate and support our growth and the grassroots activist work we do around the country."



For more information on *Marsha's Plate*, visit linktr.ee/MarshasPlate.



Marsha's Plate podcast hosts Diamond Stylz (l), Mia Mix, and Zahir "Zee" Raye.

Forever Young

An interview with Grammy Award winner Tracy Young.

By GREGG SHAPIRO

Photo by PHIL MCCARTEN/CBS



If you've been dancing in a club any time in the last 20 or so years, chances are very good that you've hit a crowded dance floor to a remix by Grammy Award-winning lesbian DJ and producer Tracy Young. The mid-Atlantic native and Miami resident has left her distinctive mark on songs by Pet Shop Boys, Cyndi Lauper, P!nk, Shakira, Lady Gaga, Gloria Estefan, Cher, Beyoncé, Demi Lovato, Stevie Nicks, Katy Perry, Chaka Khan, Christina Aguilera, and, most significantly, Madonna. In fact, it was Madonna's tune "I Rise" from 2019's *Madame X* that earned Young her Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical Grammy Award at the January awards show, making her the first female producer to ever win the category. Busier than ever, Young was gracious enough to chat with *OUTSMART* shortly after her win.

Gregg Shapiro: Tracy, I'd like to begin by congratulating you on your Grammy Award win for Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical. What does that award mean to you?

Tracy Young: Thank you so much, Gregg! I am still on a cloud from last Sunday's historic Grammy win. I was just starting to feel comfortable with being nominated after 25 years in the business, and then I won! It means everything to me.

Tracy Young is pictured here at her red-carpet arrival to the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards. The out producer didn't know that she would later make history by being the first woman to win a Grammy for Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical for Madonna's tune "I Rise" (inset).

Please say something about the significance of being the first woman to win the Grammy Award for Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical.

The Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical category was just introduced to the Academy in 1998. Despite women being eligible in previous years, it's taken this long for a woman to be nominated. Now in 2020, both the industry and my peers are starting to see the hard work that goes into this business, regardless of gender. My hope is that my Grammy win will create a dialogue and platform in the industry to recognize more female producers who have been overlooked for so long.

Do you have a special spot picked out at home to display your Grammy Award?

I do, but it's top-secret and only my dog, Lucca, knows. [Laughs]

Did you hear from Madonna, whose song "I Rise" was the one you remixed, after you won?

Well, of course I texted Madonna, because she's been somebody that I've aspired to be like as an artist—always pushing the envelope and growing and learning. She texted back right away, saying "Congratulations!" with a bunch

CONTINUED ON PAGE 93

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CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2020

Ryan White Planning Council

February 13	May 14	August 13	November 12
March 12	June 11	September 10	December 10
April 9	July 9	October 8	

Meetings are open to the general public and although only Council members are allowed to vote, public comment is 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 on Westheimer and 32 on San Felipe).

You are also welcome to attend committee meetings. Committees include Affected Community, Comprehensive HIV Planning, Priority and Allocations and Quality Improvement. Public comment is welcomed at the beginning of each committee meeting.

Call the office for the date/location of meetings, to request a calendar, membership application or more information -- or check our online calendar. Meeting materials are posted on the calendar about one week prior to each meeting.

ⓧ Attend a Meeting ⓧ Apply for Membership ⓧ Be a Participant ⓧ

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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of emojis. She's happy. She's super proud. She's been an amazing support, and has given me a lot of opportunities over many years.

I first interviewed you in 2000 for *Next* magazine. The title of the piece was "If Madonna Calls. . ." Here we are 20 years later, and you still have a significant working relationship with Madonna. What makes it such a long-lasting creative partnership?

Trust is paramount whenever you are collaborating, and that is the one thing that Madonna has always given me. She trusts the creative process and is very instrumental in guiding me forward. Our "I Rise" collaboration marks a high point in our long working relationship, and I couldn't be prouder to share this award with Madonna.

From the very early days of disco to the present day, dance music has been a central component of LGBTQ+ culture. As an out person, can you please say something about how you see your place in LGBTQ+ history?

Beyond the music that I've either produced or created, I hope to be remembered for my philanthropic support and fundraising efforts that give back to various LGBTQ+ charities such as GLAAD, GMHC, Elton John AIDS Foundation, National LGBTQ Task Force, The Trevor Project, It Gets Better, Diversity Honors, and amfAR.

With the 2020 election front and center on everyone's minds, if you are asked to spin at a candidate's fundraiser, or ultimately a candidate's victory celebration, is that something you would do? Or do you prefer to stay out of politics?

I don't like to discuss politics, but I did remix the campaign song for Hillary Clinton's run for president. The song, titled "Stronger Together," features recording artist Jessica Sanchez. I also had the opportunity to play at Hillary's fundraising rallies in Washington, DC.

You are known for being incredibly busy with DJ and remix projects. Are there any current projects that you are particularly excited about and want to share with the readers?

My focus is always "music first," whether it's original productions for my own label, Ferosh Records, or expanding my discography with fresh remixes for other artists and labels. I am currently in development with a fun new project, but I won't reveal any details until the time is right.



For more information about Tracy Young, visit tracyyoung.com.

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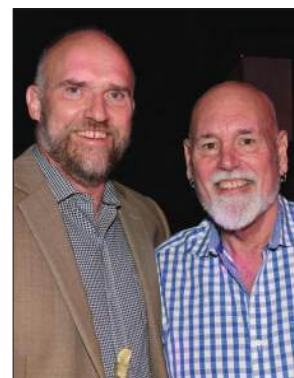
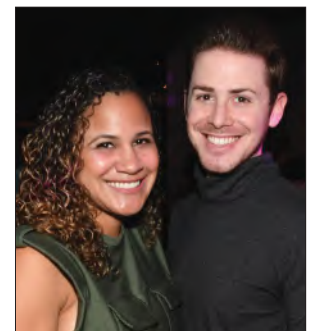
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February 5, 2020
The Montrose Center kicked off its upcoming **Spring Gayla: TV Land** with a party at the Color Factory. The interactive art exhibit informed attendees what to look forward to at the Center's April 25 event, which benefits LGBTQ homeless youth in Houston.



February 16, 2020
The Houston GLBT Political Caucus hosted its annual fundraiser, **Politics Doesn't Have to Be a Drag**, at ReBar. The brunch event featured performances by local drag artists, food, drinks, and more.



February 1, 2020
Krewe of Olympus'
 2020 ball theme
 was Illusions of a
 Future Past.
 Their 50th-anniversary
 Mardi Gras celebration
 was held at the
 NRG Center.



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February 15, 2020

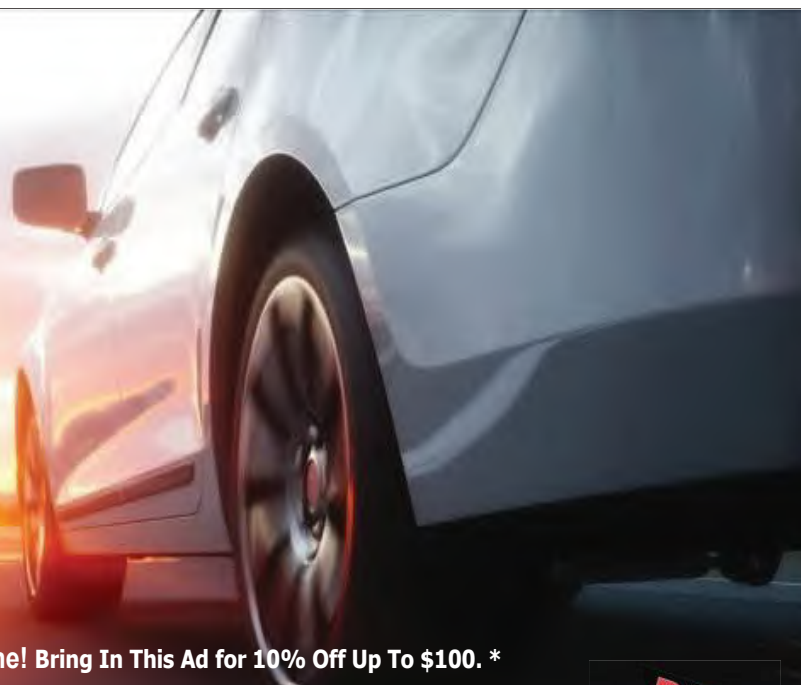
The Mystery and Fantasy Mardi Gras Party 2020 was held on February 15 at Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon. This year's theme was "The Wizard of Oz."



February 23, 2020

This year's **Decadent Desserts & Dancing** took place at Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon. The LGBTQ community's most delicious event benefited AssistHers, providing resources to vulnerable women in the community.

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WEDDING GUIDE

By JENNY BLOCK | Photos by CHASE PEDIGO

A Modern Romance

Alan York and Frank Lozano fell in love after meeting online.

Alan York and Frank Lozano met online, got engaged at sea, and got married in a ceremony that included ballroom dancers and a pair of Mickey Mouse ears. You might say this love story is anything but boring. Alan, 55, is an attorney and partner at Reed Smith LLP and a native of Pasadena, Texas, with both BBA and JD degrees from the University of Houston. Frank Lozano, 37, is a Realtor-Associate at Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty. The El Paso, Texas, native earned his BBA, BFA, and MBA degrees at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The couple now lives in Somerset Green in Houston's Design District. →

Frank
Lozano (l)
and Alan
York



After their online meeting, the two met in person for the first time on August 1, 2015, when Alan visited Frank in San Antonio. The pair saw their love bloom in a natural, gradual progression. In fact, Alan says he can't really think of a specific moment when he decided that Frank was the one. "Our relationship grew at a very nice pace, and one day I realized I was in love with my best friend," Alan recalls. "What could be better?" As for Frank, he just knew that "I was my best with him. We laugh constantly. He is my best friend, and we have the best time together; there was never going to be a moment where I didn't want to be with him."

Alan proposed to Frank on a Baltic cruise on June 28, 2018. "I think he had almost given up on me," Alan admits. "We were in Stockholm, Sweden, which is where my paternal ancestors originated. I told him Sweden was where I was from, but *he* was where I was going. Then I asked him to marry me." But Frank laughs at the suggestion that he had given up on Alan. "I knew I wanted to marry Alan for several years at that point," he explains, "and on many occasions I felt he was going to ask—or rather, I felt he *could* have asked. Since those times came and went, I started thinking that maybe we aren't the marrying kind."

But to Frank's complete shock and surprise, Alan proposed that day on the cruise. Or at least he tried to. Frank was so excited that he actually answered Alan's question before he even asked it—an experience that Frank says was quite comical to the pair as well as to onlookers. "Once the tears subsided and I regained my composure, I said, 'Now, get on your knee and ask me properly!'" Once again, everyone around them had a good laugh. Luckily, Alan is a planner at heart, so he had a photographer on hand who was able to document the entire crazy experience.

The two were married on February 2, 2020, at the Omni Riverway in Houston. They picked the date because 02.02.2020 is a palindromic number. They didn't realize at the time that it was also Super Bowl Sunday, but that didn't deter them from their choice. One of their dearest

friends and the mother to their godchildren, Judge Tanya Garrison, officiated their wedding. "I was lucky to have my other best friend, Steve Clifton, stand as my Best Man," Alan says. And, Frank adds, "I was lucky to have my best friend, Melody Sandoval, stand as my Maid of Honor. Plus, we had our two godchildren, Grace and Grant, as our ring bearers. So we were surrounded by people we loved."

Alan says his most treasured moment of the evening was their first dance to Linda Eder's "Someone Like You." "I surprised Frankie by having professional ballroom dancers join us on the dance floor during the song. It was just beautiful," Alan says.

"I would say that my absolute favorite moment of our ceremony was during our declarations to each other," Frank recalls. "If you know me, you know that I am an avid and rather crazy Disney fan. During his declaration, Alan said, 'I know that there has always been another in our relationship,' and then placed Mickey Mouse ears on his head. It was the sweetest, silliest moment that just melted my heart." The ceremony was fairly traditional in most other ways, with several personal touches, including their processional music, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," performed by Bob Luna.

The couple used a number of LGBTQ community vendors, including wedding coordinator Dewayne Ross from Wedding Bliss Events, wedding designers David Rexroat and Sean Raspberry from Rexberry Luxury Weddings and Events, and DJ Brad Janacek from Bradley David Entertainment. "They helped make our wedding day comfortable and wonderful, and David and Sean's wedding design took our breath away. We think members of the LGBT+ community have a special appreciation for the importance of same-gender wedding ceremonies, and that came through with all of these vendors," the couple explains.

The newlyweds will honeymoon on a Mediterranean cruise this summer, with a few



days before in Barcelona and a few days after in Venice. They'll be joined by another couple whose friendship holds special meaning for them. "We met the most amazing couple from London, Ian and Audrey, on the cruise when we got engaged. They came over for the wedding, and are also joining us for our honeymoon cruise!"

And if the two could shout out their love for one another from a mountaintop, what they would say is crystal-clear to them both: "It is amazing to marry your best friend," Alan says. "There is no one I would rather spend time with than Frankie. When you find someone who can make you smile on your worst days, grab him and hold on to him!" As for Frank's words to the world, he says, "Alan's selflessness and willingness to help others is one of the greatest qualities he has and that I admire."



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'Shameless'

(1/26/20, Showtime)

Re: Following an older son's marriage to another man, Frank Gallagher talks to his youngest son, Liam, about a former sex partner, Suzanna, who might have given their family the impression that she is antigay.

Frank: Suzanna doesn't hate gays. It's her husband, Rudy. Turns out Rudy's gayer than Liberace. She found boxes of mano-on-mano porn after he died. The old Polish bastard was a raging gay homophobe.

Liam: Aren't all homophobes gay?

Frank: Probably so, son. Probably so.



Homophobes?

Liam Gallagher (Christian Isaiah, r) has an interesting question for Frank Gallagher, his dad (William H. Macy).

25 YEARS AGO

William Barr

(The New Yorker, 1/20/20, David Rohde)

In 1995, [William Barr] wrote an article for a journal called *The Catholic Lawyer*. Two years earlier, the FBI had mounted a disastrous raid on a compound inhabited by a cult in Waco, Texas. In his article, Barr complained that journalists had made "subtle efforts" to liken the cult to the [Catholic] Church. "We live in an increasingly militant, secular age," he wrote. "As part of this philosophy, we see a growing hostility toward religion, particularly Catholicism." He argued that religious Americans were increasingly victimized: "It is no accident that the homosexual movement, at one or two percent

of the population, gets treated with such solicitude, while the Catholic population, which is over a quarter of the country, is given the back of the hand."



Below-par Barr

U.S. Attorney General William Barr: has he been given "the back of the hand"?

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Dwyane Wade

(Good Morning America, 2/18/20, Robin Roberts)



This Is Not a Game
Dwyane Wade, who talked to Ellen DeGeneres (pictured) about his daughter coming out as trans, also talked to Robin Roberts on Good Morning America.

Re: former NBA star Dwyane Wade talking to Good Morning America's Robin Roberts about his 12-year-old daughter Zaya coming out as trans. Wade is married to actress Gabrielle Union.

This is [Zaya's] life every day. This is no game to us. We're all about protecting her heart, we're about protecting her joy, and to do that, we have to support her."

Wade recalled Zaya saying, "I don't think I'm gay. This is how I identify myself.

This is my gender identity. I identify as a young lady. I think I'm a straight trans [girl] because I like boys."

Wade talked about his learning process: "I've been a person in a locker room that has been a part of the conversation [where I've used] the wrong phrases and the wrong words myself. And as I got older and as I watched my daughter grow, I had to go and look at myself in the mirror and say, 'Who are you? What are you going to do if your child comes home and says, "Dad, I'm

not a boy—I'm a trans girl.'" What are you going to do?' That was my moment of real.

"We know there's other families out there dealing with their kid finding themselves and learning who they are. I'm not going to sit here and act like before our child came home and sat us down, that we [had all the answers] when it comes to the world. When I say we're learning from our 12-year-old, we're literally learning from our child."

Dave Chappelle

(NewYorker.com,
2/20/20,
Charles Bethea)



Bathroom Humor?
Dave Chappelle (seen here at the 40th Annual Kennedy Center Honors): no note-taking.

Re: Dave Chappelle has been criticized for telling transphobic and homophobic jokes. [At a campaign event for Andrew Yang in South Carolina], members of the audience, including press, placed their phones and recording devices in locked pouches as they entered the auditorium. Then,

just before Chappelle's set began, a man told the half-dozen reporters near the stage, "Put your notebooks away." He added, "No notes. No note-taking. I'm only telling you this once." Perhaps the campaign or the comedian—or both—was concerned that an offensive joke would get written down

and end up in a headline. In his hour-long set, Chappelle defended his jokes about gay people ("I have no problem with gay people, but these millennial gays are getting on my fucking nerves") and trans people ("I never said that trans people were wrong and I never said that trans people were bad. . . . I just

think it's funny"), and told many jokes at the expense of many other groups. He also mocked transphobia, finishing one bit with the memorable line, "No American should have to present a birth certificate to take a shit in Walmart in Greensboro," a reference to North Carolina's infamous bathroom bill.

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Since 1972, Mary has served up amazing food and stellar shows! With the best drag talent in the city, it's been voted "Best Drag Show Bar," "Most Supportive of the LGBTQ Community," "Best Hamburger," "Best Brunch," "Friendliest Staff," and "Best Place to Celebrate" by our readers. Be sure to try the famous Mac & Cheese Balls, or grab a leg glass (as seen on RuPaul's Drag Race)! Reservations recommended for shows. 2409 Grant St., 713.677.0674 • hamburgermarys.com

EAGLE

Part of the Eagle worldwide family, it's the

definitive home to the man's man. Leather, Bear or Jock, you'll find them here. Voted "Best Community Bar," "Best Men's Bar," "Best Place to Show Your Leather," "Best Happy Hour," and "Best Place to Buy Erotic Playthings" by our readers. Eagle has multiple levels and patios, along with DJs and male dancers—and it's the place to watch sports. Noon-2am every day, 611 Hyde Park Blvd., 713.523.BIRD houstoneagle.com

JR'S BAR & GRILL

This Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables and male dancers. 808 Pacific St. • 713.521.2519 jrbarandgrill.com

LA GRANJA DISCO Y CANTINA

Houston's newest gay disco. Great drink prices, house DJs nightly. Open at 3pm until 4am on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Mondays. 5505 Pinemont • 713.518.6753 lagranjadisco.com

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

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

NEON BOOTS DANCEHALL & SALOON

Houston's only LGBTQ country dancehall opens Wednesday-Sunday. Wednesday features Steak Night and Bingo. Free dance classes on Thursdays, and karaoke. 11410 Hempstead Hwy • 713.677.0828 neonbootsclub.com

PEARL BAR

This LGBT-friendly lounge in the Washington corridor features daily highlights like open mic night, steak night, and drink specials. 4216 Washington • pearlhouston.com

ReBar

A haute nightclub with a celebrated patio that features renowned DJs and entertainers. Opening early October.

THE RIPCROD

This multi-roomed leather bar boasts a busy patio, especially on the weekends. The Forge shop located inside the club. Saturday nights with DJ Tad Dvorak. 715 Fairview • 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. • 713.521.0521 • rudyardspub.com

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town. Amateur dance contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas • 713.571.7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com



BEHIND THE BAR

CRYSTAL MURLEY

JR's Bar & Grill

Shifts: Thursdays-Saturdays 8pm-2am;
Sundays Noon-8pm

What is your favorite shot to make? To drink?

Favorite to make: "The Shocker"—it's a secret recipe, so you will have to come see Crystal to find out the ingredients!
Favorite to drink: I don't drink. I've been sober for almost five years!

Where is your favorite place to be when not on-duty?

In my art studio painting!

What is a current bar drink trend you'd like to see end?

I'll go with any trend my

customers are into—that's how I build up a clientele that follows me.

What are you best known for?

I've been at this for 20 years. I've invented a few drinks like the "Chupacabra" at Vue, and also the original "Blue Ball" at Crocker.

What is the best and worst holiday to work? Why?

The best has to be Christmas, when everyone is in a good mood. Pride is usually the

worst, as folks come in too messed up to be served.

Biggest tip from one customer?
\$1,000—from a great customer!

Who are the hardest customers to please?

The hardest are those who don't know what they want. But after a couple of quick questions, I can figure out something they'd like!

If you weren't a bartender, what career would you choose?

By day I am an artist, and it's great that my customers also support my art.

Do you have any pets?

I kind of have a zoo at home—a koi pond for rescues, and also two rescue cats and three rescue dogs.

What is the best part about working at this bar?

I grew up here—started on the floor at age 21, graduated to barback, then bartender. I can call Charles (the owner) and talk about anything. This is home!

VIVIANA'S

Happening weekend-only gay dance club with Latin DJs, singers, talent shows, and Sunday strippers. 4624 Dacoma • 713.681.4104

BEAUMONT

RUMORS BEAUMONT

Now open in the old Orleans Street Pub location. Drag shows with Dessie Love-Blake, Lady Shamu, Kara Dion and more. 650 Orleans • 713.539.5183 rumorsbeaumont.com

BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only LGBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. smack in the middle of Aggieland. 121 North Main • 979.823.6174 • halobcs.com

GALVESTON

23RD ST. STATION

The bar features daily drink specials and the weekend is filled with pulsing music, hot dancers, drag shows, and a Sunday Tea Dance. 1706 23rd St. • 409.621.1808

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

The Island institution features a private patio with swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409.765.9092

RUMORS BEACH BAR

Drink specials every night and daily day-drinking specials starting at noon. Great drag shows Fri. - Sun. and karaoke Sun. - Thurs. at 8pm. Sunday Drag Bingo. 3102 Seawall Blvd. 409.497.4617 • rumorsbeachbar.com

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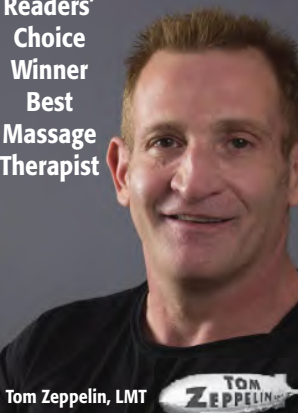


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SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Finances and creativity take the lead this month. You are in a very good place to re-examine your financial goals and reassess your current debt. After the 15th, it can be a much better time for investments—if you stay on a conservative path. Later in March is also good for starting a new business or improving the quality of services you already provide. You need more time to yourself in the evenings to recharge. This can also be a great time to get away to a nature retreat or a spa so you can let most of your problems go. Family can be demanding, but your boundaries are working better so you are not overdoing it as much. In relationships, you may need more time to yourself in order to avoid the drama that your partner generates. In the latter part of the month, it's a great time to get away, spend time with your children, or indulge in your favorite things!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

This is certainly a very busy month for you with Mars (the planet of taking action right now) moving through your sign until March 30. Your confidence will be stronger, and you are ready to take the lead on any project. The first half of the month is better for working on plans rather than putting them into action—even though it will be hard to curb your enthusiasm with Mars being so strong. After the 15th, it's go time! This is a

great month to focus on what makes you the best person you can be. Now is the time to get back into a health or exercise program, find a good life coach, and step up to express your views. You will be focusing more and more on your finances over the next two years as you get rid of debt and make your overall life plan more workable. This is a big time of change for Capricorns. We haven't seen this planetary lineup since 1518, which is why there is so much change going on worldwide.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

With Saturn (planet of career, long-term security, social judgment, and boundaries) entering the sign of Aquarius for a 28-month visit, you are doing a huge rethinking of your life and the direction it's going. The last time Saturn was in your sign was in 1991, and decisions that you made during that time are being tested and reexamined. This can mean a shift in your career route, starting something on your own, or improving on what you have been doing. Saturn often makes us very conscious about what others think. With Saturn being so strong, it is very important that you choose a good mentor who is not a critic. You are currently considering how to improve your skills and talents so you can make better use of your natural abilities. After Mercury is direct on the 15th, it is time to put your plans into action!

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**DON'T YOU WANT
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By LILLY RODDY
Illustration by ANGEL ALBARRAN

Start Anew . . .

before April 29.

With the Mercury retrograde finally direct on March 15, it will be a good time to begin any new projects or initiate new contacts. Try to get all of that done before Venus goes retrograde on April 29. Venus retrogrades influence relationships and your money! • March gets especially busy after the 15th. It will be a time of decision-making, especially regarding business, emotional and financial security, and career directions. Tensions could be especially high during the weekend of the 21st. • Saturn, our career director and social judge, enters Aquarius, the sign of the ideal society, until July 1. Then she re-enters Capricorn, the worker bee. Saturn's need to rework your boundaries and priorities will have the strongest impact on the fixed signs of Aquarius, Taurus, Leo, and Scorpio. • The sun begins the month in Pisces, but eventually enters Aries on March 19, the first day of spring. Venus begins the month in Aries, but soon enters Taurus on the 3rd. Mercury starts in Aquarius retrograde, goes direct on the 15th, and enters Pisces on the 16th. Mars continues his journey through Capricorn, along with Pluto. Uranus remains in Taurus, and Neptune continues sailing through Pisces.

ARIES (Mar. 21-Apr. 19)

Career activity is at the top of your list this month. You are looking to make some major changes by controlling more of this aspect of your life. Some of you will be starting something on your own, while others will be taking a leadership role within their current organization. Some Arians will seriously consider retiring. For all of you, this is your annual birthday cycle when you look back at what you have accomplished last year and look ahead to the new objectives you are planning to tackle this year. Pay attention to your boundaries this month, as many people will want your time and attention. Friends can be very supportive of your aspirations, but you'll need to ask them for help. Your self-confidence builds through the end of the month and well into April.

TAURUS (Apr. 20-May 20)

As the month begins, you are in a creative and mentally expansive time. This is also

a very good month for team building and focusing on new directions in your life. You will also be looking more at your career direction. This year will see you taking a greater leadership role at work or within your community. This could also be a time when you want to start something on your own. After March 15 is the best time to push forward with your dreams. Relationships are a bit more tense as you seek to redefine what you are looking for in a partnership. Existing relationships need an upgrade. If you are single, you are taking your time and being cautious about any commitments.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Creativity and career combine this month. Mercury retrograde is having a strong impact on you, causing you to rethink the overall direction of your life. You will be ready to move forward with your ideas after the 15th. Friends and business groups can be very helpful in reaching your goals. This is also a time when you may find it's easier to borrow money for a business expansion or a home purchase. Be careful not to push yourself too hard—this is a month when it's easy to overstress yourself with difficult deadlines. Relationships can be demanding as well. Pay attention to your boundaries!

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Relationships are one of your main priorities this month. If you are in a partnership, this is a great time for renewal, setting new goals, and creating a stronger emotional bond. If you are single, after the 15th is an excellent time for you to meet new people for romance or business opportunities. If you are having a difficult time, your issues will come to the surface so you can both fix the problems at hand. Don't go it alone—other people have great ideas to help you, including your partner! You will also be more energetic this month. This is also a great time to restart any exercise or health program. You will need some physical activity to help you sleep better at night. This is also a good month to promote your services or your company to new clients after the 15th.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You are taking a much harder look at your life in general this month. You could be making big plans for a career shift, relocating, or reestablishing a strong bond with your mate. This activity gets even stronger by the end of the month. You are looking for something that stimulates you at work and relieves the



PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20)

With Mercury retrograde in your sign until the 15th, you are taking some time to be alone with yourself and your thoughts. This continues to be a great time to reconnect with your past and with past associates. With business, the first half of the month is a great time to connect with existing clients or customers. After the 15th, the time is right to create new connections, both professionally and personally. You continue to be active in your community, and you may even be taking a leadership role there. You are still letting go of people from your past who don't fit into your new environment. During the last part of the month, you are more focused on your finances and on freeing yourself from debt or past restrictions. By the end of the month, your family needs some attention. Be sure to take your boundaries with you when you visit them!

boredom with your current job. This could be a radical shift, and you could even be considering retirement or unplugging from our overly high-tech society. It would help if you could find some time to get away and clear your mind before the 15th so you can have time to really consider which direction you want to take with your life. You do have the illusion of being more in control this month, so take advantage of that!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

This should be a creative month of continuing fun for you! You are open to new ideas and new ways of using what you have. With your ruling planet, Mercury, going direct on the 15th, it is important to delay making any commitments until after that time. Nevertheless, it continues to be a great time to reconnect with old friends or clients from your past. The energies this month are good for writing, publishing, and even taking some time off. This should also be a great month to spend time with your children, who will be a source of inspiration for you! You will be paying a lot more attention to your health over the next couple of years. Adopt a proactive course, and don't wait for things to get bad before you address them. It's easy to avoid things we don't want to do. Continue to focus on improving your financial health by reducing debt. That will help you feel freer!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

As with last month, you are continuing to focus on home, family, your health, and improving your career. With your home, this can be the time for remodeling or

relocating. You are finally getting serious about fixing some of the problems you have been avoiding. With family, you are setting some boundaries because you are always the person they call when there is trouble. You will be more direct with them, but your anger will show up as well! With your health, you react more to the environment around you, including coworkers and clients. If you can, get rid of the people who create those problems. It is not your job to adjust to their drama just because you can. You are ready to express your needs within your relationship.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

This is a big month of changes for you on several levels. Your relationship sector is going through a major overhaul. For your relationships that are working, this is a time to set new goals and look for other ways to enjoy time with your partners. If you are having a problem, this is the time to bring that issue to the surface so it can be dealt with once and for all! If you are single, you may want to stay that way unless someone really special and unique comes into your life. Home, family, and career are the other areas to focus on this month. With family, you are setting boundaries and witnessing a "passing of the old guard" as you take on a more dominant family role. With your career, you are examining the best way to use your resources to create a safe and stable financial and emotional life. You'll naturally want to wait until after the 15th to launch those new projects that will ensure future success.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 109

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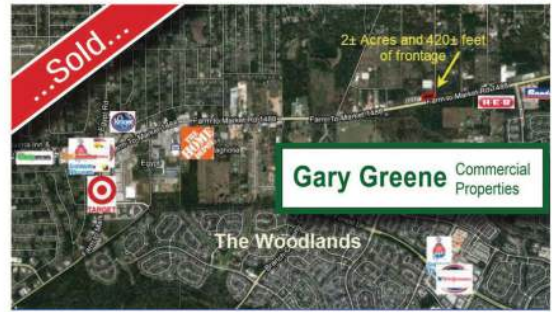
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SCENE OUT

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On January 24, the Montrose Center held its 2020 Leadership Dinner at Max's Wine Bar. Pictured are Daryl Shorter, Sash Cavin, Paul Iademarco, Kennedy Loftin, Aaron Masterson, and Ai Tran.



On January 25, James Dick performed a piano concert at Festival Hill in Round Top. Pictured are James Dick, Kevin Pope, and Hugh Shannonhouse.



On January 30, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber held an event at Regions Bank. Pictured are chamber members and Regions Bank staff.



The Krewe of Olympus held its 50th-anniversary ball at NRG Center on February 1. Pictured are King Olympus L Michael Parks, and Queen Olympus L Debbie Helweg.



The Montrose Center held its spring gala kickoff at the Color Factory on February 5. Pictured are Marcus Hooks, Charles Caliva, Anthony Forte, Brad Jacobson, Randy Murry, and Daryl Shorter.



On February 12, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber held its Brewing Up Business at SignatureCare ER Montrose. Pictured are Tiffany Tosh, Tammi Wallace, Corey Allen, Jack Berger, Dr. Samar Yusuf, Roy Alvarez Jr., Dr. Billy Miller, and Jason Rocha.



On February 13, Dr. Gordon Crofoot held a grand opening of the first LGBTQ-focused in-office specialty pharmacy with Walgreens. Pictured is Dr. Crofoot cutting the ribbon as the two teams look on.



On February 13, Legacy Community Health held a meet-and-greet at La Griglia for Legacy's new chief medical officer, Dr. Vian Nguyen. Pictured are Dr. Nguyen, Katy Caldwell, Keith Rudy, and Chree Boydston.



On February 13, the Harris County Democratic Party held the Johnson, Rayburn, Richards Dinner at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Pictured are State Representative Senfronia Thompson and Cecile Richards, former president of Planned Parenthood.



On February 14, Christina Wells and Magical Chef Natosha "Tae" Barber presented Love+Libations at a Sharespace venue. Pictured are Edward Racicot, Christina Wells, Robin Racicot, and Chef NaTosha "Tae" Barber.



On February 18, EPAH held its dinner meeting at Indika. Pictured are Mike Di Girolamo, Michael Morreale, Bobby Banay, Marcus DeGuzman, and Jeremy Fain.



On February 23, the Montrose Center held Decadent Desserts and Dancing at Neon Boots Dance Hall & Saloon. Pictured are Marcus Hooks, Anita Das, Louis Ray, and Chris Valk.

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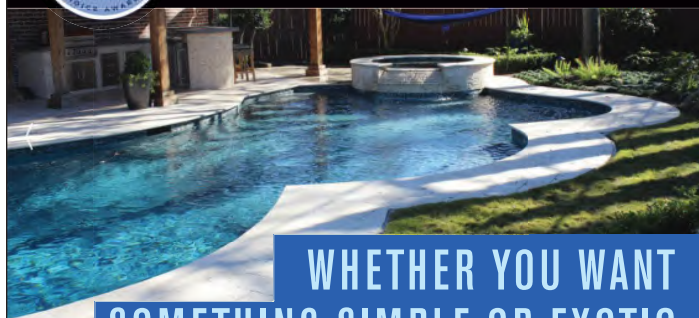
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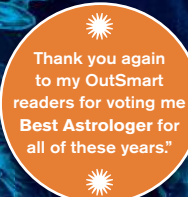
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GETTING SILLY with WILLIE

By SAM BYRD



It's a man's world, at least for **Willie Haught Dandy**, and he intends on living it to the max. The entertainer is relatively new to the art form, but he picked it up quickly and proved he knows how to stand and deliver. The budding performer can sock it to 'em with the swagger of a stud and a gentleman's charm that leaves crowds clamoring for more.

Pronouns?

He/him in drag, she/her out of drag.

Hometown?

Sugar Land

Drag birth date?

June 2019

Inspirations?

I draw from my everyday life. I am always watching for little things to spark my creativity. I ask how I can take this thing that makes me happy and share it with everyone else.

How does drag play into your gender identity?

I've always been a tomboy with a flair for dressing up. Drag gave me a platform to express all the parts of my personality. I can go from girly-girl to Mr. Steal-Yo-Girl in a snap.

Challenges as a drag king?

I had to learn to stop focusing on avoiding being too feminine or too pretty, and realize that I can express my drag in whatever way makes me happy.

What is the drag-king community like?

A family, a community, a brotherhood. We are a group of humans who always have each other's backs, no matter what. We understand and support each other, in and out of drag. It's a great feeling knowing you have an army of brothers on your team.

How would you describe your drag persona?

A 'Haught' mess, but always a good time.

What's the inspiration behind your name?

I grew up on good country music, and my hair happened to look super-cool in braided pigtails and a bandana, so Willie Nelson was my original inspiration. Then Nicole Haught (from the *Wynonna Earp* TV series, one of my favorite shows) gave me the perfect finish to my name—until I was adopted by Hugh Dandy, where my current last name comes from.



Any contest titles?

I am the winner of Houston's first drag-king race, Game of Kings.

Who are you best known for imitating?

Boy-band Justin Timberlake, in the denim suit with bleached-blond hair. I hand-made a wig out of ramen noodles. Yes, ramen noodles. I learned the choreo from *It's Gonna Be Me* and performed it during Game of Kings. I was living my best life.

Where does Willie shop for clothes?

Thrift stores, and my boyfriend's closet. I am always shopping. I add my own flair to things I find, usually in the form of rhinestones.

Where can we catch Willie hanging out when he's not performing?

Two-stepping at a dive bar, or movie night at home with the love of my life and our fur babies.

Thoughts about the H-Town Kings winning a "Houston's Best Drag Show" title?

It's well-deserved. The cast and show director work tirelessly to bring Houston a show like no other. Ian Syder created a safe space for all performers and audience members. Pearl Bar feels like home when you walk in the door.

Any thoughts on Women's History Month?

The first drag king, Annie Hindle, started in 1867, before women had the right to vote. As of 2019, an AFAB [assigned female at birth] performer won a televised drag competition, and 217 women hold elected executive government positions. These leaders are paving the way, one generation at a time. The world is starting to listen, but women still aren't getting paid the same as men.

What actions do you appreciate from your fans?

The best compliment is when someone asks you to step on them.

Favorite contestant from *The Boulet Brothers' Dragula* reality show?

Landon Cider

What do we not yet know about Willie?

My favorite packer is a pair of Deadpool socks.

Houston's best-kept drag secret?

Drag husbands or wives. God bless them. I'm referring to that partner who may or may not do drag, but is always there to carry your bags, stone your suits at 2 a.m., and wipe the makeup off your face when you pass out. We couldn't do it without you. ▼



Keep up with Willie
on Instagram @willie_hot_d

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