

Dallas' fittest gay couples

Jacqui Bliss and Renee Reed work it!
They make relationship work as business partners *and* moms

■ FITNESS, Page 28



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Even though Hope Rivera and Denise Jayroe are no longer partners, they are still working together to raise their son Zayn. Their story is just one of the profiles on how the LGBT community is reinventing 'family' featured this week in our Family LIFE section, beginning on page 14.

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Denise Jayroe, Hope Rivera and their son Zayn. Photography by Arnold Wayne Jones. Design by Kevin Thomas.



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TABC settlements bring 'closure'

Fairness Fort Worth president says payments to Gibson, Armstrong fair; TABC spokeswoman says agency is happy with mediated settlements

JOHN WRIGHT | Online Editor
wright@dallasvoice.com

Two years and one month after the Rainbow Lounge raid, Fort Worth's LGBT community finally has some closure, according to the president of an advocacy group formed in response to the incident.

Last week it was reported that the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission had reached monetary settlements with two patrons injured in the June 2009 raid of the gay bar, which occurred on the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Chad Gibson, who suffered a serious head injury in the raid, will receive \$210,000 from TABC. George Armstrong, who suffered a torn rotator cuff, will receive \$15,000.

The city of Fort Worth, whose police officers conducted the raid along with TABC agents, previously settled with Gibson for \$400,000 and with Armstrong for \$40,000.

"It closes all the legal issues, and the damage issues," Fairness Fort Worth President Tom Anable

said this week of the TABC settlement. "It's closure in regards to the Rainbow Lounge incident.

"It's all done and closed," Anable added. "We have closure and we're moving forward with other issues."

TABC fired two agents and a supervisor after the raid, and FWPD suspended three officers.

"Fort Worth ran the operation. Fort Worth was in charge of the operation," Anable said. "TABC fired employees, and Fort Worth gave some wrist slaps, so I think it was appropriate they [Fort Worth] paid more money."

TABC spokeswoman Carolyn Beck said her agency's settlements with Gibson and Armstrong were agreed to during mediation in March, but had to be signed off on by the offices of the attorney general and the governor.

"Those approvals came through in June, and so here we are now," said Beck, who was named the agency's liaison to the LGBT community follow-



Tom Anable



Carolyn Beck

ing the raid. "We are happy that we were able to come to an agreement with mediation, and I personally feel like our relationship with the LGBT community is a lot different than it was two years ago. And I hope that it continues to stay positive."

After the raid, TABC became the first state agency in Texas to conduct comprehensive LGBT diversity training for its employees.

Don Tittle, the Dallas attorney who represented both Armstrong and Gibson, didn't respond to a phone message from Dallas Voice this week.

But Tittle told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram: "It is done. They are very relieved. I think they feel that they received a level of justice, although it was slow. The monetary compensation was fair, but I think it was important to both of them that there be change within both organizations. As a result of the incident, both Fort Worth and TABC have taken affirmative steps to improve relations and to be more sensitive to diversity." ■

instantTEA

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Grand marshals named



Round-Up Saloon owners — and life partners — Alan Pierce and Gary Miller will share male grand marshal honors for the 2011 Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade on Sept. 18, and longtime Caven Enterprises employee and community volunteer Chris Bengston will be female grand marshal, according to the Dallas Tavern Guild, the organization of local LGBT nightclubs that puts on the parade each year.

Gay Fort Worth City Councilman Joel Burns, who made national headlines last year with his emotional speech during a council meeting to tell LGBT teens considering suicide that life does get better, will be honorary grand marshal. The theme for this year's parade is "It Only Gets Better."

The Tavern Guild is dedicating its annual Pride Guide — the magazine published at the first of September each year to detail Dallas Pride activities — to the North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce. And British rugby star Ben Cohen, who has campaigned against homophobia and bullying, will be the Tavern Guild's special VIP guest at the parade this year.

— Tammye Nash

Caven helps AIN beat heat

As temperatures rose to 106 in Dallas on Monday and topped 100 for the 25th consecutive day on Tuesday, AIDS Interfaith Network's Travis Gaspar put out a call to local businesses. He said that within an hour, Caven Enterprises responded with a donation of 600 bottles of water to hydrate clients in the extreme heat.

The end of the month is AIN's busiest time because clients line up to get their DART passes.

"These passes provide access to life-saving medical care, meals and social services," said AIN Associate Director Edgar Carmona. "Our staff distributes passes as quickly as possible, but it's not unusual to have lines outside AIN throughout most of the day. We knew we had to do something to help them survive in this heat."

Gaspar said that within an hour of sending out an email with the urgent request, longtime Caven employee and director of events Chris Bengston replied that Caven would donate 25 cases of water. (Earlier this week, Bengston was named the female grand marshal of the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade.)

On Wednesday morning, AIN staff picked up the water from one of Caven's Cedar Springs Road clubs. They will distribute the bottles to clients receiving bus passes at AIN on Thursday and Friday.

— David Taffet

AIDS Arms taps Voskuhl as agency's new medical director

HIV specialist says he is leaving private practice to follow his passion

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Dr. Gene Voskuhl will become the new medical director of AIDS Arms effective Aug. 22, a job change Voskuhl said this week is "one heck of an opportunity."

AIDS Arms' former medical director, Dr. Keith Rawlings, is moving to San Francisco to take a job in private industry. Rawlings helped develop AIDS Arms' medical program and opened its Peabody Health Center in South Dallas in 2001.

Voskuhl will join the organization as it expands its health services with a second clinic set to open in Oak Cliff in September. He is an internist specializing in infectious diseases, and was clinical director at the University of Oklahoma's College of Medicine in Oklahoma City where he worked with underserved populations affected by HIV.

Voskuhl said that his Oklahoma clinic was also a Ryan White-funded facility.

Currently, Voskuhl is a doctor with Uptown Physicians Group, one of the largest private practices with an HIV specialty in Dallas, and he was an infectious disease consultant at Baylor University Medical Center. Preparing for his departure, Uptown is currently placing his patients with other physicians within the practice.

In addition to seeing patients at the AIDS Arms clinic, Voskuhl is excited about the research program already underway at Peabody. Current clinical care and prevention strategies are two areas in of focus in the agency's research work.

One upcoming study includes using pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, therapy.

"No one knows how well it will work," Voskuhl said.

But he said it was one approach to prevention for discordant couples trying to prevent the negative partner from contracting HIV. He said that for high-risk people not practicing safe sex, it might

■ VOSKUHL, Page 9



Dr. Gene Voskuhl

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Stonewall holding voter registration drive

Stonewall Democrats of Dallas will be at JR's Bar & Grill, 3923 Cedar Springs Road, on Sunday, July 30, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to register new voters. The registration table will be next to the Cedar Springs entrance.

Those registering to vote only have to fill out a short form that asks for name, address and some form of identification, such as a driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

LSR hosting Casino Night

Lone Star Ride Fighting AIDS hosts its fourth annual Casino Night on Thursday Aug. 4, from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. The event is hosted by Audi Dallas, 5033 Lemmon Ave., and tickets are \$50 in advance and \$65 at the door. The ticket price includes cocktails and appetizers as well as enough chips to get started at the tables.

Players can spend their winnings on silent auction items when the tables close.

For more information, call 214-460-4887.

LGBT bereavement support group starting

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care in Fort Worth will offer its next grief support group, intended

specifically to meet the needs of LGBT people who have lost a loved one, beginning Wednesday, Aug. 1, at Agape Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 East California Parkway.

The group, to be led by the Rev. Teri Lubbers, will continue to meet each Wednesday in August.

To register or for more information, call the VITAS Bereavement Department at 817-870-7070.

Marine to speak at RCD

Justin Elzie, the first U.S. Marine discharged under "don't ask, don't tell" in 1993 after coming out as gay on ABC's *World News Tonight*, will appear at a book signing and meet-and-greet event Saturday, July 30, at 2 p.m. at Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St.



Justin Elzie

Elzie was the first Marine to challenge DADT in federal court and after winning his lawsuit, he was reinstated and went on to serve four years as an openly gay Marine.

After coming out, he was recommended for promotion and served as platoon sergeant.

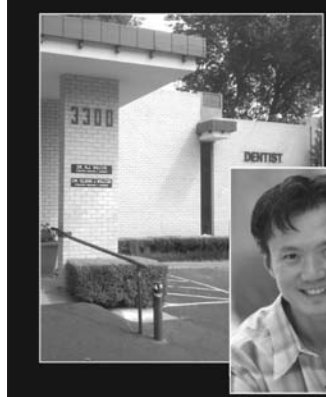
Elzie will be signing copies of his memoir, *Playing by the Rules*, on Saturday at RCD. The event is open to the public, and a limited number of copies of Elzie's book will be available for purchase.

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A family affair on bikes



TWO GENERATIONS | Regina Watson, left, and her son Ivan formed Team Mother and Son to participate in the Lone Star Ride. (Photo Courtesy of Regina Waston)

Regina Watson and her son Ivan are looking forward to their first year together as Lone Star Ride cyclists

Regina Watson rides a mountain/road hybrid; so does her son, Ivan. Where their individual tastes in bicycles are concerned, the apple clearly does not fall far from the tree.

This year, the pair are joining forces to participate in the Lone Star Ride Fighting AIDS as Team Mother & Son.

Regina lives in Weatherford and manages the toy section at a department store. Ivan lives in Fort Worth and works as a Wells Fargo banker.

Ivan was the first to volunteer for the LSR in 2002. He signed on to do route marking, the duty he carried out for several years after.

"I wanted to give back to the community and

get involved in something worthwhile," he says of his reason for volunteering.

Regina joined to support her son, who also happens to be HIV-positive. The first time she volunteered was in 2005. But as luck and foul weather would have it, she and Ivan both pulled out of the ride that year because of Hurricane Rita and the delays it caused.

Six years later, mother and son have come together again to participate in LSR, only this time

as cyclists. It will be a year of firsts for both: Regina will finally have a chance to take part in the event from which she withdrew in 2005 and Ivan will take to his bicycle, a silver carbon copy of the gold-colored one his mother owns.

Mother and son eagerly await taking to the streets on their bikes for this year's ride. But Ivan does have fond memories of the time he spent on the route crew and the friendships he formed with people he worked with then, largely under cover of darkness.

"We didn't really get to participate much in the actual ride because we were out there on the job [hanging up signs, marking turns and highlighting road hazards] most of the night," says Ivan. "But on the last day of the ride, we got to enjoy some of the event and I got to see the way riders come together. I was really impressed."

Rider camaraderie was in fact the very reason Ivan decided to pedal — rather than spray-chalk — his way through another Lone Star Ride.

"They're high-energy, caring and compassionate people," he observes, "who are just fun to be around."

And who don't lack for any sense of humor.

"They give you stickers to pee" when you stop at pit stop, says Ivan, beginning to chuckle.

His mother is immediately infected by her son's laughter.

"It's a reward for peeing," she giggles. "You're staying hydrated, so you're getting rewarded with stickers."

Regina pauses to catch her breath.

"I think it's the goal for some people to get covered in stickers from all the different pit stops," she adds with a grin.

The Watsons are more than aware that as cyclists riding in the hot Texas sun, they will experience not only thirst, but also the muscle aches and pains that so often come with a rigorous physical workout. But both — and especially Regina — are looking forward to the massages that will be available at every pit stop and to all riders who want them.

"They sound really nice," she says dreamily. "So do the people who give them to you." ■

Lone Star Ride Fighting AIDS takes place Sept. 24-25. For details or to donate to a specific rider or team or to the ride in general, go online to LoneStarRide.org.



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GEAR is a program of Resource Center Dallas




Deaths

The Rev. Terence Keane, 51, died July 20 at Methodist Medical Center of heart failure.

Keane was instrumental in keeping Sanctuary of Love Church open and operational after the founding pastor suddenly left in 2006. He will be very missed by the Christian gay community.

Keane is survived by his partner of 11 years, Tony Hurst; his mother, Rita Keane; his siblings, Anne Van Lone, Martin Keane and Jimmy Keane; and nephew, John Keane. He is also sur-



vived by his church family at Sanctuary of Love as well as the members of sister churches Promise MCC and Living Faith Covenant Church.

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, Aug. 6, at 2 p.m. at the Promise Worship and Community Center, 2527 W. Colorado Blvd. in Dallas.

HERO OF HOPE



A HERO'S WELCOME | The Rev. Jo Hudson presents Dallas architect Gary M. Cunningham, FAIA, with the Cathedral of Hope Hero of Hope Award during July 24 services at the church. Cunningham was honored for his role as co-architect of the Philip Johnson-designed Interfaith Peace Chapel. The Hero of Hope award is presented annually in recognition of those who have taken courageous stands for the rights of all people without regard to gender, race or sexual orientation. (Phoebe Sexton/Cathedral of Hope)

Voskuhl

From Page 4

also be useful.

Voskuhl said that AIDS Arms Executive Director Raeline Nobles is an important part of the reason he decided to take the new position, and he praised her commitment to helping people with HIV.

"It's an important job in the community," he said. "When the opportunity came up, I said, 'I have to do this.'"

Voskuhl said he is glad the position will give him an opportunity to focus on HIV care, because "That's truly my passion."

The new Oak Cliff clinic is expected to provide medical care to 2,500 patients in addition to several thousand already served at Peabody. Dallas

County Health and Human Services estimates 6,000 HIV-positive people in Dallas County do not receive any medical care.

Voskuhl said the clinic was a real safety net. Many of the clients don't qualify for Medicare or Medicaid and have no insurance.

"The only other option is Amelia Court," the HIV clinic at county hospital Parkland Memorial, he said.

The AIDS Arms clinic, however, will also serve patients with insurance who decide to access AIDS Arms' variety of services and receive their medical care in one location. In addition to new, state-of-the-art facilities, a variety of social services that AIDS Arms offers and other programs will be available at the Oak Cliff clinic.

Although work on the multi-million dollar clinic is nearing completion, fundraising continues in the agency's Call to Arms campaign. ■

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Gay fathers face an empty nest



FATHERS KNOW BEST | When Lucas Grape-Krueger, center, attends Austin College in the fall, his dads Roger Grape, left, and Steve Krueger will suddenly have plenty of time on their hands. They plan to have date nights, travel and even turn their son's room into a media center. (David Taffet/Dallas Voice)

The Grape-Krueger family looks forward to a new chapter as son goes off to college

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Roger Grape and Steve Krueger met in Houston 21 years ago, and were only a few years into their life together as a couple when they became pioneers, of a sort, by adopting a child.

Now, more than 20 years later, the two are again on the leading edge of the “gayby boom,” as they face the prospect of soon becoming “empty nesters.”

Krueger remembers his husband bringing up the idea of children on their third date. Grape doesn't remember it that way.

But just a few years later, they adopted Lucas through a San Antonio-based agency.

Grape said that it never occurred to him that he couldn't have children.

“Just because I'm gay doesn't mean I can't be

a parent,” he said, adding that he always knew he didn't want to be a single parent.

For Krueger, it was a different story. “I hadn't really thought of it as a possibility,” he said.

Once the couple was together, Krueger said he realized that parenting was something he could do.

“Neither of us were party boys,” Krueger said, so the couple decided to have a family.

But in 1993, adoptions by gay couples were rare. So Grape approached it like a research project.

He said they had their home study done first before approaching agencies. Then they sent the home study to agencies and asked, “Would you work with a family like ours?” Grape said.

They bought a stack of baby books and then five weeks after they found the San Antonio agency, Lucas Krueger-Grape was born. He went home with his new parents when he was three days old.

Grape said his parents were thrilled when they heard they were going to be grandparents.

■ **EMPTY NEST**, Page 23



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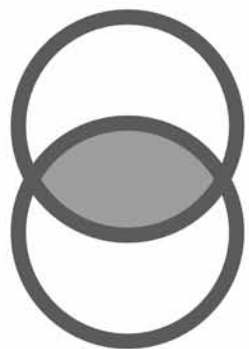
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MY FAMILY, YOUR FAMILY,
OUR FAMILY.



LGBT parents share one thing in common - our commitment to ensure our children grow strong and healthy and that our families prosper. As a gay dad, I understand that families like ours sometimes have to work harder. Your family deserves a strong advocate to ensure that lawmakers, employers, schools and hospitals provide us the same rights, benefits and protections as other Americans. The Family Equality Council has been working on behalf of families like ours for close to 30 years. I hope you'll join the family of 1 million LGBT parents raising 2 million children.

— Bryan Carr, Family Equality Council board member, Dallas Texas



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The adoption options

For same-sex couples who want a family, CPS may be a more affordable route than private agency placements

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
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Adoption has become a common option for gay and lesbian couples that want to have a family. But there's a lot to know before becoming an adoptive parent.

"In Texas, unmarried couples cannot adopt as a couple," said Leslie Clay, chief development officer at Hope Cottage, the oldest non-sectarian adoption center in Dallas. But that applies equally to straight and gay couples.

Many couples have opted to go outside of Texas, especially when they are using a surrogate and they want the second parent to adopt and be added to the birth certificate.

But Texas does have laws that are favorable to the adoptive parents.

Texas law is silent on the issue of second-parent adoptions by same-sex couples, according to Jenny L. Womack, an adoption attorney in private practice.

"The only place Texas gets into it is on the birth certificate," she said.

Texas only allows one man and one woman to appear on the birth certificate. An adopted child's name, however, may reflect both parents', and will normally be granted during the original single-parent adoption.

Traditionally, Dallas couples have traveled to San Antonio to get their second-parent adoption completed. Bexar County will allow an attorney to direct a case into a particular court and attorneys know exactly which judges will approve a second-parent adoption by same-sex parents.

But Womack said she has had luck recently in Dallas.

"When we had the Democratic sweep, it brought judges in who will do a second-parent adoption," she said.

While she files adoptions by opposite-sex parents in juvenile court, Womack files same-sex-parent adoptions at the George Allen Courts Building and has been successful there.

Her advice to couples who want to adopt is to visit an adoption attorney first.

Hope Cottage Executive Director Sonyia Hartwell explained that there are two types of adoptions — private and through Child Protective Services.

Hope Cottage is located on McKinney Avenue in Uptown and welcomes same-sex couples. The minimum age for adoptive parents at that agency is 26 and same-sex couples must be in a stable relationship of at least two years.

Hartwell said that the mother placing her child in an adoptive home often participates in choos-



Sonyia Hartwell

ing the parents. She said CPS works well with same-sex couples.

Most adoptions are done through an agency. Private adoptions are legal in Texas but may not be arranged by individuals. Attorneys and doctors cannot act as adoption agents. Only licensed agencies may.

However, if a private adoption is arranged through a contact, the adopting parents are legally allowed to pay only medical, legal and counseling expenses. Rent, maternity clothes or grocery assistance may only be paid for through a licensed agency. Paying those expenses directly is classified as paying a fee for a child, and is a felony in Texas under laws that prevent baby selling.

Agencies may pay those expenses but are also prevented from helping a birth mother in some ways. The agency can pay rent or utilities but not a rent or utility deposit.

A home study is required by all agencies. CPS assigns its own caseworkers but a couple may choose anyone approved to do home studies. That includes a number of people in the LGBT community.

"I tell my clients to be open and honest and don't freak out," Womack said.

Hartwell said same-sex couples who successfully adopt are completely out about their relationship and who they are.

"You have to hold yourself out as a couple," she said.

That means being out to family members and co-workers.

She said that couples that aren't out won't have the support of family, friends and co-workers necessary for successful adoptions.

Hartwell said that CPS adoptions are a good, lower-cost alternative to private adoptions.

She suggested couples should be as open-minded as possible.

Older couples aren't likely to get infants. Younger couples who want infants and are adopting through CPS are more likely to get a placement if they'll take an older sibling as well.

Hartwell said that the state doesn't like to break up families.

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Family Life Briefs

Child ID event at Fruit Bowl

Brian Walker, an agent with New York Life will be conducting a Child ID event at the HRC Disco Fruit Bowl fundraiser Sunday, Aug. 7, with bowling sessions starting at noon and 3 p.m. Organizers have said the session starting at noon is being especially geared for couples with children, although children are welcome to attend both sessions.

Disco Fruit Bowl is being held at 300 Dallas, located at 3805 Beltline Road in Addison. For information on registering, go online to Facebook.com/dfwhrc.

Walker explained that the Child ID program is designed to help LGBT children and children with LGBT parents "stay same in the home, at play or wherever they happen to be."

Child ID cards will be printed, free of charge, for each parent or guardian of a child in only three to five minutes. Each card includes the child's photo, fingerprints, contact information and other important information police might need in case of an emergency.

For more information or to schedule a Child ID event, contact Walker by calling 214-629-8558.

Program offered on keeping love alive

Licensed professional counselor Randy Martin will be facilitating an eight-session group in September and October for long-term couples who want to learn how to keep their romantic love alive through the years.

The program is based on the theory and practice of Emotionally Focused Couples, using information laid out in Sue Johnson's book, *Hold Me Tight*.

The series of eight two-hour sessions will be held each Wednesday in September and October, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Cost is \$500 per couple.

Martin, who has worked as a therapist in the LGBT community for 10 years and who has been in private practice in the Oak Lawn area for the last five years, stressed that participation is limited, and that the sessions are an education program, not couples' therapy. The program, he said, is not appropriate for all couples.

For more information, contact Martin at 214-520-7575.

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Hartwell encouraged couples thinking of adopting to schedule an appointment to discuss the possibility. She said most will interview several agencies before settling on one.

An attorney is necessary to file the adoption by the first parent and later by the second.

CPS needs homes to place the thousands of children without parents in Texas.

Clay summed up what they're looking for.

"We're looking for good parents," she said. ■

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Together. Apart.

How one couple turned the drama of divorce into a nurturing environment for their son

RICH LOPEZ | Staff Writer
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After nine years together, Hope Rivera and Denise Jayroe came to a tough decision — a decision couples never want to be faced with. The two agreed not to be together anymore.

But this wasn't just a separation. After getting officially married in Victoria, Canada six years into their relationship, this was a divorce. But they would say that this was not about them at all.

"There's always drama and it wasn't easy," Jayroe said. "We could have stayed together and been unhappy or be split and be happy."

"Once you get past the relationship ending, there's a child there. That didn't change when we separated," Rivera added.

After Jayroe gave birth to Zayn almost five years ago, the couple planned for a second-parent adoption so Rivera could have legal parental responsibility. It may have bonded the relationship between the two women more solidly, but more importantly, it benefited their son.

The two strongly suggest this plan of action for same-sex couples having a child.

"That was the No. 1 thing I knew we needed to do and Hope wanted it, too," Jayroe said. "It's one of first things a gay couple should do. It helps protect relationships, but really, it protects Zayn. That adoption solidifies the responsibility, and so Hope is now also legally and financially responsible for him."

Although things didn't work out for the couple, they both are proud about how much they agree on almost everything — especially when it comes



ZAYN HAS TWO MOMMIES | Despite their divorce, Denise, left, Hope and Zayn remain a family. (Arnold Wayne Jones/ Dallas Voice)

to Zayn. There are no snippy tales of what one does with him that annoys the other. In fact, the family is quite happy — just in a different fashion.

"We've split everything 50/50, but he knows that we are both his parents and that's not going to change," Rivera said. "Denise and I have a good sense of each other. That made it easy to agree on how we were raising Zayn regarding his education, his sleep time, going to church, all that stuff."

out in the open," Rivera said.

What Rivera and Jayroe have done is changing the definition of family, as gay couples have been doing for a while. Instead of letting divorce rule as a detriment, they've created a successful, happy family — just in two different households.

"Being a child of divorce, I'm aware of how it affects a child," Rivera said. "We didn't plan to split up, obviously. But we did. It's not that parents divorce, but how they handle it. He has two families now, and we do as much as we can to convey that sense of security."

Even when there might be contentious issues between the two adults, they make a distinct effort to step back and refocus on Zayn. They never discuss the other parent in front of him or argue when he's around. This is their reality.

"Hope is also the mother of my child and I'm careful in the communication I have with her and our relationship now," Jayroe said. "The way I treat Hope and my life models to him that this is how you are a human being in this world."

Knowing the situation could be far worse, Rivera and Jayroe have created and maintained a smooth and even happy system. Holidays and birthdays are split and vacations are still taken. They make it a point to live within five miles of each other just to be close, and both make all the functions they can at his Montessori school.

Their lives reflect something more than just making it work. Although redefining family, they both bring up what parenting means for same-sex couples and the rights that do and don't come with that. Rivera and Jayroe have seemingly taken all the steps as lesbian parents to protect their child. They hope others do the same.

"I sit here and think we want equal rights, but some people don't want to do this stuff for each other," Rivera said. "It disturbs me when I hear how biological mothers can be with their children and use them as pawns. And I seem to see that happen more in our community. If we're going to ask for equal rights, what are people doing to help or hinder that?"

Jayroe added, "Gay and lesbian couples are under a magnifying glass right now with the marriage issue on the forefront. My hope is that couples doing this and having to make this transition will focus on their children and strive to be a model family. Even in different houses." ■

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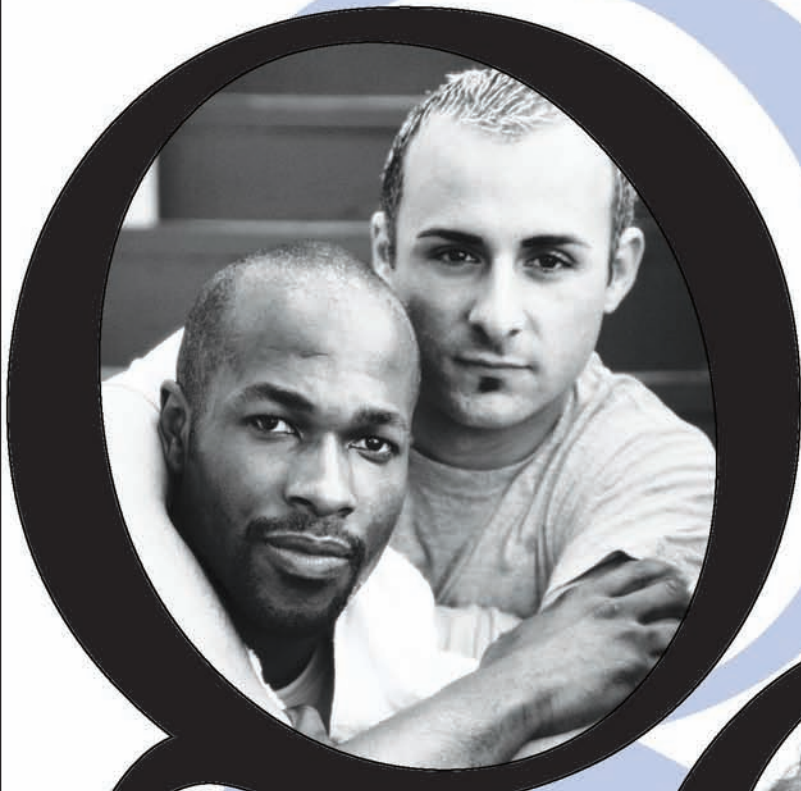
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Planning for the worst

Using a parent facilitator to develop a parenting plan can save couples time, money and heartache

TAMMYE NASH | Senior Editor
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When two people pledge themselves to a committed relationship, whether the “I do’s” are legally recognized or not, they intend the relationship to last ‘til death do them part. That’s the romantic side of things.

But the fact is, cold, hard reality can and does win out over romance in many relationships, and couples split up.

For same-sex couples, especially those with children, those break-ups, when they happen, can be especially difficult. Whereas legally married straight couples have the law to settle at least some of their most contentious break-up boggles, same-sex couples are on their own — from debates over who gets the house to potentially more damaging arguments over child custody.

The best time to settle those matters, says licensed professional counselor Brenda Lee Roberts, is before they happen — way before, like back in the “honeymoon” period when everyone is still in love and happy with each other.

Roberts, who also has a master’s degree in education, is a therapist in private practice who specializes in helping same-sex couples with children develop the best possible co-parenting plans following a break-up.

“The main thing that gets in the way [when it comes to settling custody disputes] is emotion. And the easiest time to do that without emotions getting in the way is when everybody is still happy,” Roberts said.

“When two people break up and they have children, everyone needs to understand that just because the parents are splitting up, that doesn’t mean the children are breaking up with either parent,” she added. “The parents have to look at things going forward as a business relationship. Even though their personal relationship with each other is over, they are still in the business of raising their child and they need to be in it together.”

Roberts offers two services for couples in this situation. One is parent facilitation, the other is parent coordination. The two are basically the same, she explained, except that parent coordination is “100 percent confidential,” and she, as the therapist, can never be called to testify in court about what happened during the coordination process.

In parent facilitation, however, the process is not confidential and the therapist can be called to testify in court should the need arise. Parent facilitation also requires a higher level of education — 40 extra hours of mediation training.

The object of both processes, though, is the same: to help couples who are broken up develop a comprehensive parenting plan that addresses every aspect of how they will raise their child or children

in the future.

The process starts, Roberts says, with her “looking for flaws in their communications,” or in other words, finding out what communication problems may exist between the parents and how those problems are detrimental to their common cause of parenting.

“We talk about communication at all levels — how they communicate with each other in person or on the phone, in emails, in texts — everything,” she said.

Then the conversation moves on to other issues, like how the couple will raise their child between two homes, who has access to the child and when, where and how the child will be educated, where they agree and where they disagree on child-rearing issues like discipline.

And, Roberts said, they talk about “the damage that is done to the child if access to one of the parents is just terminated.” And that damage, she said, can be drastic and long-lasting.

“Many children don’t ever fully recover from the trauma of having access to one of their parents cut off,” Roberts said. “It impacts their ability to ever form deep, lasting relationships in the future, whether it’s peer relationships, significant other relationships or family relationships.”

“For one parent to just cut off a child’s access to another parent — it is a totally selfish act. It breaks that child’s heart, and it does irreversible damage.”

Roberts said her job is to help keep that from happening by helping parents develop and implement a parenting plan — one that regulates every aspect of the child’s life through age 18, from how much time they spend with each parent, to where they spend holidays and vacations, to where they go to school, to when they can date.

The plans also spell out things like who teaches the child to drive when the time comes, who buys the child’s first car and who pays for insurance and gasoline for the car, not to mention who gets what privileges when it comes to those “milestone moments” in a child’s life, such as the first date and prom night.

The finished product, Roberts said, “is a contract. We sit down and create it together, and then the parents can give it to their attorneys, who can then submit it to the court” so that it becomes part of the legal settlement.

Creating such a plan and having it become part of the legal settlement in dissolving a relationship, Roberts said, can save the parents thousands of dollars in the long run, especially in contentious splits.

“Instead of going back to court again and again to argue over all these things, and paying thousands of dollars in attorney’s fees and court costs,” Roberts said, “you can go to a parent facilitator or parent coordinator and get it all settled. I charge \$175 an hour, and in the easy cases, we can get a parenting plan in place in three hours; more contentious cases, maybe 10 hours. But that’s a lot cheaper than paying an attorney for all those trips to court.”

Crossing your T's and dotting your legal I's

Without benefit of legal marriage, same-sex couples in Texas have to take extra steps to protect themselves and their children

DRACONIS VON TRAPP | Staff Writer
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Even as the LGBT community around the country celebrated this weekend with same-sex couples who were able to legally marry in New York state for the first time, and even though six states plus the District of Columbia now legally recognize same-sex marriage, the battle for equality is still a long way from over.

When American opposite-gender couples legally marry anywhere, they automatically receive a long list of rights, benefits and responsibilities. But same-sex couples, even those married in a jurisdiction where such marriages are legal, still have to jump through any number of legal hoops to ensure that their unions — and their families — are legally protected.

Same-sex couples

On July 20, Ron Wallen of California lost his partner of 58 years — and almost everything else at the same time.

The two had been legally married for almost three years when Wallen's partner, Tom Carrollo, passed away, leaving Wallen with no monthly pension, no Social Security benefits and no home — all because of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, DOMA for short.

Signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996, DOMA, according to the Human Rights Campaign, requires that, "Regardless of the Social Security Administration's position, the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996...established the legal definition of 'marriage' as only a legal union between one man and one woman..."

The law is currently under appeal.

Section 3 of DOMA, which prevents the federal government from recognizing the validity of same-sex marriages, has been found unconstitutional in two Massachusetts court cases. The Department of Justice, under President Obama's administration, has even declined to defend the law in court because the DOJ has said that at least parts of DOMA are unconstitutional.

And in many states — including Texas — not only is same-sex marriage not legally recognized, such legal recognition has been expressly prohibited through statute or constitutional amendment.

"We have no rights in Texas," said Dallas attorney Rebecca Covell. "[LGBT couples] are single

Hospital Visitation

In the event that your same-sex partner is hospitalized, getting the visitation rights can be difficult, but it is doable.

To get in and see your honey, you need two documents to pass Go: A HIPAA release (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and a medical power of attorney.

A HIPAA release is a form that gives the doctor the right to release to you medical information on your partner. A legal spouse gets these rights automatically, but because a same-sex marriage is not recognized as valid in Texas, the doctor can't tell you anything unless this is signed.

A medical power of attorney designates an agent to act on your behalf in case you're incapacitated and can't make medical decisions for yourself. Make sure you and your partner listed in each other's powers of attorney so, in the event that one of you are incapable of making medical decisions, that the other can make sure you're taken care of.

If you show these two documents to the doctor, you shouldn't have any problems.

— Draconis von Trapp

in the eyes of the laws of Texas, so you have to create your rights by contract."

In order to imitate the same rights a legally married opposite-sex couple gets with a marriage license, Covell said, same-sex couples need six documents: A medical power of attorney, a statutory durable power of attorney, a declaration of guardianship, a directive to physicians, an appointment of agent to control disposition of remains and a will.

Covell said Texas has one of the easiest probate systems in the country, and the "easy track" for same-sex couples here is to make with a will. It is, she said, possibly one of the most important documents a same-sex couple needs.

"If you don't have a will, the state of Texas makes all the decisions for you, and everything goes to your next of kin," Covell said. "What you can do with a will includes designating who the beneficiary is; designating who you leave in charge; making special provisions if you have children, someone with a special need, things of that nature; and designating when certain people will receive assets.

"None of that happens if you don't take the time and trouble of doing a valid Texas will," she reiterated. "The state of Texas will make all those decisions for you — and Texas is not a gay-friendly state."

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"We have been written out of the laws in Texas," says Covell. "That's why having these documents is imperative for non-traditional couples."

Even with all these documents in place, same-sex couples are still denied certain benefits and advantages — such as Social Security survivor benefits, tax benefits and an unlimited marital deduction in your will — thanks to DOMA. Some 1,138 federal rights are attached to a marriage license, and it's impossible to mimic all of these rights otherwise.

Though a gay couple can't get Social Security benefits from their partner, they can still appoint their partner as a beneficiary for a 401K plan or an IRA.

With pensions, it is a case-by-case basis. If one partner works for a corporation outside Texas whose company policy would recognize the other partner for spousal benefits, you might be in luck. It does, however, depend on the company policy, and this is not consistent among all out-of-state businesses.

"We get no automatic protections under the laws," Covell says in closing, "and you owe it to yourself and your partner to protect your relationship."

Same-sex couples with children

When children are involved, the stakes can be higher. If one of the partners in a same-sex relationship dies, keeping children with their surviving parent entails a lot of paperwork.

Attorney Stephanie Hall says that same-sex couples have three options for protecting the custodial rights of the non-biological parent — or, in legal terms, the non-parent — assuming there's not a second biological parent outside the same-sex relationship: a joint managing conservatorship; a same-sex, second-parent adoption, and a will with a declaration of guardianship.

With a joint managing conservatorship, non-married straight couples and same-sex couples can, for about \$1,200, avail themselves of some of the same statutory laws that apply to married couples when it comes to child custody, such as the right to consent to medical treatment, the right to make educational decisions and right to repre-

sent a child in legal proceedings.

In a same-sex, second-parent adoption, which costs around about \$3,500, non-biological parents can become the legal second parent to their children. Due to a law in the Health and Safety Code, the birth certificate can't be reprinted with the same-sex parent's name on it due to the "one male, one female parent" requirement, but adoptive parents do get a few more benefits than those with just a joint managing conservatorship, such as tax return exemptions.

"Same-sex, second-parent adoptions are done by agreement between the parent and the non-parent," says Attorney at Law Michelle May O'Neil.

With adoption, there is a very small chance of the adoption being considered void, though this almost never happens, O'Neil said.

Hall said that many of her clients have chosen to do both a joint managing conservatorship and a legal adoption to make sure their children are protected.

There is "no distinction" between an adoptive and biological parent, according to O'Neil.

A will is once again supremely important, as it designates who gets custody of any child or children, and the children's estate, in the event of a parent's death.

In an advance declaration of guardianship, Hall said, a biological parent designates, in advance of any illness or injury, who will be guardian of their child.

Hall said it is a "very strong document" that is a parent's way of saying, in effect, "Hey judge, if anyone starts to fight over custody of my kid after I'm dead, while I'm competent, here's my first choice, my second choice, my third choice. ..."

In a same-sex family, if there is another living biological parent outside of the relationship — such as, in the case of a divorce — the non-biological parent's only means of protection are to have a same-sex, second-parent adoption.

"There is no automatic assumption that the other parent has any legal relationship with the child," says attorney Susan McKay.

In the event that the non-biological parent dies, it is essential that person have a will citing what their partner and children will receive. Otherwise, everything goes to the deceased partner's next of kin.

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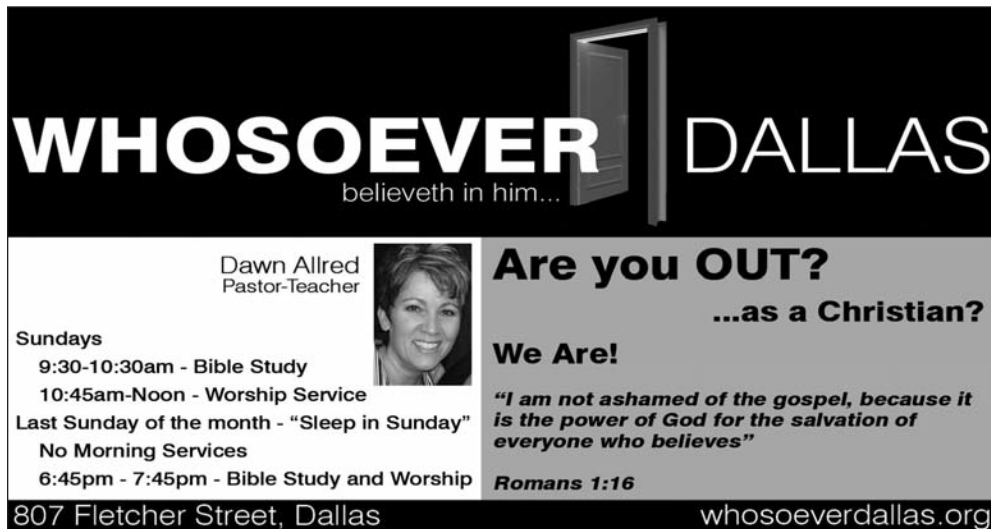
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Compare that to a legally recognized marriage where, if the deceased didn't leave a will, everything automatically goes to the legal spouse.

"If a straight person dies without a will, it's set up that way by default," said Hall. "For an LGBT person, you have to take that precaution" of making a will and designating who gets what.

"The safest thing to do would be for the non-parent to adopt the children and have a will," said O'Neil. "Short of having a will, then the non-parent needs to basically adopt the children and become a parent. I can't stress enough to people in the community that having that legal document relationship is essential to secure the relationship of the non-parent and the children."

Due to the lack of legal standing a gay couple has in the eyes of the law, there isn't a whole lot that can be done in terms of child custody if a gay couple decides to separate.

If no other precautions have been taken, such as a joint managing conservatorship, then the non-biological parent has 90 days from the day they were living with and sharing "care, control and possession" of the child to file a suit, assuming they had been caring for that child for at least six months prior to their separation.

Hall noted that the exact meaning of "care, control and possession" has been debated in the courts in several recent court cases — involving grandparents, longtime boy/girlfriends in opposite-sex relationships and same-sex relationships — and results so far have been inconsistent.

O'Neil and her law firm recently litigated such a case involving a lesbian couple, and although O'Neil's client did win the right to sue for custody following several appeals, the client eventually chose not to start over in trial court with the actual custody case to avoid putting the child through the trauma of an even-more extended legal battle.

If a couple has a joint managing conservatorship already in place, then legally there should be a level playing field in the battle over custody of the children if a same-sex couple splits.

However, if the non-biological parent didn't adopt the children or get a conservatorship, then aside from asking for periods of possession, the non-biological parent is likely to end up with limited rights and have less time with the child than the biological parent. The judge would still, however, determine what was in the best interest of the child and either parent could end up with primary custody.

Senior same-sex couples

With a heterosexual marriage, couples only have to be married 10 years for one to get a deceased partner's Social Security benefits as a spouse. In an LGBT relationship, surviving partners get nothing.

Retirement isn't the only problem facing older same-sex couples. In a nursing home or assisted living situation, some same-sex couples are faced with prejudice at their most vulnerable and are forced to go "back in the closet."

According to the website for SAGE, a national organization providing programs and services for



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older LGBT people, LGBT older adults may be as much as five times less likely to access needed health and social services because of their fear of discrimination from the very people who should be helping them.

Older LGBT adults are twice as likely to live alone as heterosexual older adults and more than four times as likely to have no children. Because of that, the informal caregiving support system people assume is in place for older adults may not be there for LGBT elders.

According to the "We Give a Damn" campaign's website, older LGBT people are at greater risk for depression, substance abuse, mental and physical health complications, unnecessary institutionalization and premature death.

Ultimately, 1 in 5 say they would have no one to call in a crisis, a rate 10 times greater than for the rest of the senior population, the website notes.

According to one survey of agencies serving seniors in the U.S., half of all respondents reported that if the sexual orientation of gay older adults were known, they would not be welcomed at senior centers. Even when providers mean well, they often lack the training to offer culturally sensitive services that meet the needs of gay and transgender older adults, the survey said.

"...Even when providers are supportive, fear of discrimination keeps many LGBT elders in the closet and prevents them from seeking the care they need," said Michael Adams, executive director of SAGE.

While legal resources and options for addressing these issues are relatively scarce, advocates said older LGBT people, whether they are single or part of a couple, need to take advantage of as many options as they can to plan ahead and hopefully avoid future problems.

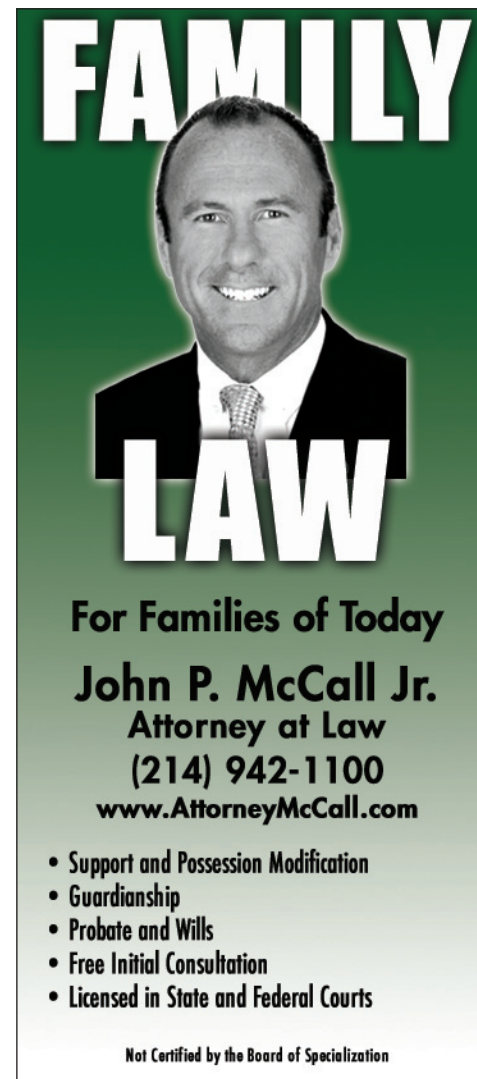
For same-sex couples in their retirement years, planning is paramount.

In Texas, the law does not default to protect LGBT couples. Since a gay marriage isn't federally recognized and Social Security benefits cannot be passed onto a same-sex spouse, it is once again urgent to for same-sex couples to have a will designating their partner as their heir. Without it, again, the deceased partner's legal next of kin gets everything.


A same-sex partner can be designated as beneficiaries in 401K plan as well as IRAs. Since a 401K is provided by an employer, it's more structured. IRAs are designed for those without 401Ks, so they're a bit less structured.

The key to retiring with a same-sex partner is planning, said attorney Christopher Farish.

But, Farish added, "Failure to plan is not only an issue in the LGBT community. Failure to plan for retirement or death of a spouse is universal. Still, failure to plan in an LGBT relationship can be catastrophic." ■



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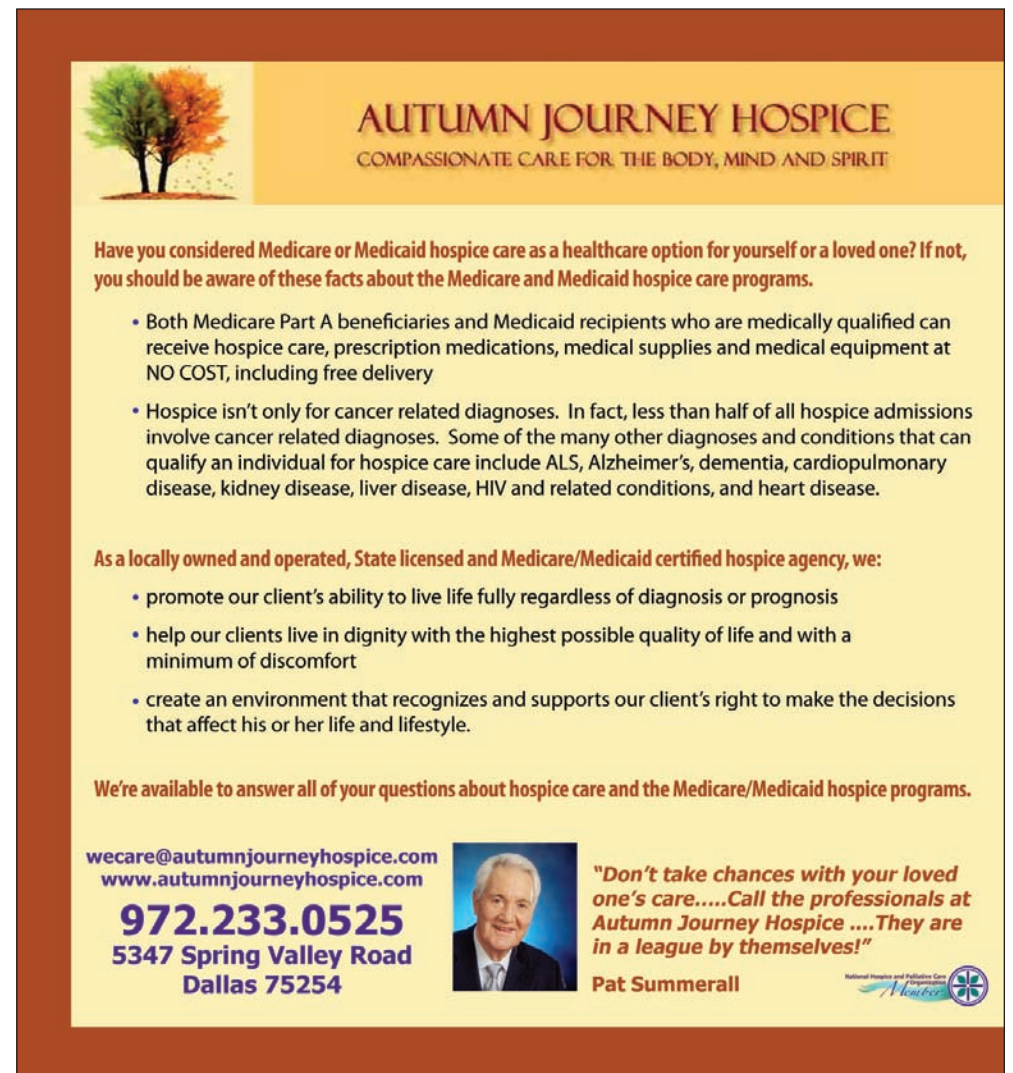
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Living the power of love

Life as a lesbian couple where one partner is trans can be tough, but Constance and Josie Siegel, and their children, prove that love makes a family

DAKOTA SHAIN BYRD | Contributing Writer
editor@dallasvoice.com

Constance and Josie Siegel first met in March 2007, when Jo, a transgender woman, was performing in a production of *The Vagina Monologues*. The two were introduced by Jo's then-wife, an old high school classmate of Constance.

But as soon as Constance and Jo were introduced, they turned their noses up at each other and promptly walked in opposite directions.

For Constance, the problem was twofold: Jo is transgender and for one thing, Constance explains now, she previously had "less than stellar interactions with the trans community." And to top it off, Constance didn't think that trans women should be performing in *The Vagina Monologues*.

And after that first meeting, Constance spent the next year traveling around the country, speaking against the trans community. It was, she says now, "where I was at the time."

The two women say it "took a couple of years" for them to move from that first meeting to where they are now — a committed couple raising a family together.

Constance says that at the time, she had been married for 22 years and it was "a very turbulent relationship. ... a very emotionally and financially abusive relationship."

Jo was still married, too.

Two years later, when Constance and Jo were



HAPPY COUPLE | Josie, left, and Constance Siegel got off to a rough start, but a few years later, they were happily married. (Dakota S. Byrd/ Dallas Voice)

both in the midst of divorcing their spouses, the two met again, at another production of *The Vagina Monologues*.

Both were going through divorces. They had both auditioned for parts in the production, although at different times, and had both won roles in the show.

When they saw each other again at rehearsals,

Jo thought Constance was flirting. But, Constance says now, "I was just being nice, because you gotta be nice."

Still, the two made a connection. "I guess Jo's winning and warm personality won me over," Constance says.

Jo laughs. "Come on now, tell the truth," she says. "Constance was being nice and I was too dumb to realize it. So I was persistent."

Then, during a "Vagina Monologues Day" event at Casa Mañana, Jo signed up to take a class on Native American Talking Sticks, not realizing that Constance was the teacher. When she got to the class, she says, she happened to sit next to Constance's best friend, a woman "who doesn't like trans [people], mind you."

As the class proceeded, the participants passed around the talking stick, taking turns expressing themselves to the class. When the stick came to Jo, she talked about the hurt and pain of her divorce.

Constance's best friend then took her turn with the stick, speaking about her experience being widowed.

After the class, the three women went to lunch together, and things seemed to go well, the couple recalled, even after Constance's friend realized that Jo is transgender. Then they returned to the Casa Mañana event and walked around together for a while before Constance told Jo, rather bluntly, "Don't you have somewhere else to be? Isn't your daughter around here? You need to go find your daughter. You need to go do some other stuff."

A few hours later they ran into each other again, but after talking for a few minutes, Constance shooed Jo off again. But as performers in the show, Constance and Jo were sharing a dressing room — with 15 other women — and that's where Jo met

Constance remembered Jo, but Jo didn't remember Constance. "That's how much of an impression we made on each other," they joke now.

Jo wanted to be friends with Constance, so she kept sitting next to her in rehearsals. When Constance would change seats, Jo would follow. It was a pattern that persisted throughout the run of the show.

■ **LOVE** Next Page

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ALL FOR ONE | Hadassah, Seth and Chavah say they are always ready to defend their family to those who might disparage it.

■ **LOVE** From Previous Page

Constance's oldest daughter, Channah.

As it turned out, Jo's three daughters were also at the performance, along with their dates, and after the performance the whole group ended up going to out for a late dinner together. As they talked, the time passed, and before they knew it, it was 2:30 in the morning.

Jo and Constance exchanged numbers, just on a "just friends" basis.

Jo went home that morning and called her brother, who worked nights. When she told him where she had been and about Constance, he asked, "Why couldn't this be more than a friendship?" Jo asked herself the same question.

But it was still a complicated situation for Constance. She was dating a teacher who insisted on staying deeply closeted, something that eventually ended the relationship.

Jo and Constance continued to talk to each other through texts, but Constance still kept her new friend at arm's length.

Finally, Jo invited Constance and her daughters to dinner at Jo's home. Constance declined, saying she wasn't ready to "bring [her daughters] into this just yet."

But Jo was as persistent as ever, saying, "Okay. Well, what about you?" Constance, with a sigh of resignation, agreed.

Then comes marriage

Josie Siegel was born Jewish, and Constance had been practicing Judaism for several years. So when they decided to get married Constance decided to formally convert.

Converting meant having to sit before a board of three rabbis. One of the three was the rabbi at Congregation Beth El where Constance and Jo attended; another was the rabbi of a nearby Conservative congregation from whom Constance had previously taken a class.

The rabbi from Constance and Jo's synagogue didn't mince words in introducing her to the other rabbis: "Constance is about to enter into a relation-

ship with another woman, marrying another woman of my congregation," he said.

When the Conservative rabbi asked why Constance hadn't come to his synagogue, she explained that she and her partner had ruled out that choice because his synagogue was conservative. She was worried what he might say in response.

He asked her, "You're marrying a woman?" She replied, "Yes, rabbi."

At this point, her rabbi, hoping to soften his colleague's stance, interjected, "But she's already been married, and already had children, and fulfilled all the Jewish requirements that you've got to fulfill."

The Conservative rabbi shushed him, then turned to Constance, saying, "I remember you, and I remember you well. I knew something was wrong. I have one question for you: Are you happy?"

Constance answered, "Rabbi, I'm deliriously happy. I have never been this happy."

The rabbi's response touched her heart. "It's taken a long time for me to get here," he told her. "Our community is struggling with this right now. But we have come to realize that not all marriages last. ... The most important thing is to be happy. God did not put us here to be miserable, but to be happy. And if you are honest to yourself, and you are happy with whom you're with, then you have my blessing."

Not only did the Conservative rabbi approve Constance's conversion and her decision to marry Josie, he gave her his own personal blessing.

Even now, more than a year later, Constance cries tears of gratitude and appreciation as she remembers.

Constance and Josie were married on March 21, 2010, in a formal Jewish ceremony at their synagogue. The youngest three of their combined brood of children live with them, and the two women were worried when they first started dating about how they would explain their situation, and Josie's transgender status, to the children.

■ **LOVE**, Page 22

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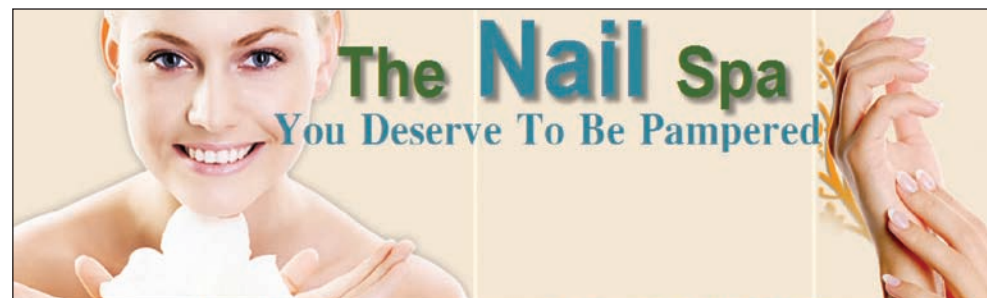


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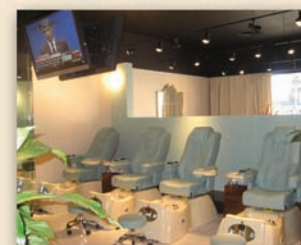
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LOVE

From Page 21

As it turned out, Constance said, it was “truly a nonevent. We told them, and the 14-year-old, our boy, said, ‘Duh.’”

When the children asked how someone could change from being a man to being a woman, Josie explained with, “Well, you take some medicine and then there’s a surgery or two that you have to undergo.”

Constance says, “After that they were like, ‘Okay. So can we go play Skee-ball now?’”

Then she continues, “It was a nonevent, until the next day when our youngest girl ran out onto the playground and said, ‘Hey! Did you know that boys can become girls, and girls can become boys?’ I found this out when I went to pick the kids up from school that day and the teacher told me what happened. I braced myself and asked what happened next. She told me, ‘They [the other children] asked how, and then were like, ‘Cool, okay!’ and went right back on to playing.’”

And when asked their opinion, the three children confirm, in a respectful and courteous way, that it’s not that big of a deal to have two moms.

“I like it,” says Seth, the oldest of the three. “My two moms are more accepting of who I am than a straight family would be if I were gay.”

Chavah, 10, responds with a simple, “Pretty awesome,” while Hadassah, also 10, explains, “There is nothing different than having a mom and a dad, except for waking up and saying ‘Hi, Ema, and Hi, Mom.’”

(“Ema” is Hebrew for “mom,” and it’s what the children call Josie.)

Having gay parents, the children all say, doesn’t make their family really all that different from any other family?

“Just because our parents are gay, they still love us. They are not rude or mean and they do have fun with us. And even though they are lesbians, they are not that different from everyone else,” Hadassah says.

Chavah adds, “I have a good family. My moms are fun. My brother’s funny, and my sister is cool. My older siblings are grown up.”

Seth keeps his assessment short and sweet: “We are a wonderful family, and I love being in it.”

But what happens if the children are confronted with someone who might disparage their family?

Seth offers a diplomatic answer. “[It] depends on if they are saying it in a positive or negative way,” he says. “I make sure that what they are saying is meant to be negative before I respond. If it is, then I confront them and ask them, ‘What if your little sister turned out to be gay; would you say the same thing?’”

The two girls say they would be a bit more straightforward and frank.

“Excuse me, that was kinda rude,” Hadassah says she would tell the offender. “Why do you say something like that? There is nothing wrong with being LGBT.”

Chavah, too, says she would keep it short and to the point, telling the person, “I’m sorry to interrupt, but that is a mean thing to say. I have

two moms.”

Constance and Josie, who say they are proud of their children for being so vocal, opinionated and honest, add that as parents, they were worried not just about facing discrimination because they are lesbian, but also because Josie is transgender.

Instead, they say, they have encountered more discrimination based on their religion than anything else. Still, the women say, they feel a calling to educate people on issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. To that end, Constance founded DFW Eclectic Women’s Services and DFW Eclectic Women’s Services Too. The couple have spoken at Texas Christian University, Wesleyan College and, most recently, at the University of Texas at Arlington.

They say they talk to many people about being out and about coming to terms with yourself or with somebody else who is LGBTQ. They believe such efforts are vital because so much discrimination still exists and because so many people—even those who are targets of discrimination—don’t really know how pervasive it is.

Constance says, “My favorite story is about Martin Luther King Jr. when he was in the jail in Montgomery. He wrote a letter that said, ‘The nations of the world are racing to rocket speed towards equality, and we’re moving at horse and buggy speed to get a cup of coffee at a lunch counter.’”

“Most people don’t realize that today we are fighting for our cup of coffee at a lunch counter,” she continued. “They don’t realize that we can still be denied that cup of coffee at a lunch counter, and it happens regularly. We can be denied that job, that house, that raise—based on our sexual orientation. That’s why it’s important for this nation to stop passing judgment on other nations until we have no more discrimination in our own nation. That’s why we must educate people.”

It’s not just about educating the non-LGBT community, either. Constance and Josie also have a message for other LGBT people.

“We need to show them that being gay is more than a gay Pride parade, or [hanging out in] the gayborhood,” Constance declares. “If that’s all society thinks of when they think about the LGBTQ community, then it’s no wonder we won’t be taken seriously. That’s why we need to educate not only the straight community, but also ourselves, the gay community, about all of this.”

“It’s important for them to see us as normal, to see us at the PTA meetings, at soccer meets, at the mall shopping with our kids and in the grocery line,” she says. “They need to see that we’re normal, that we are families with love. This is slowly beginning to happen, and the more people see this, the closer we’ll be to ending discrimination in America, or at least stopping the illegal discrimination that goes on.”

And Constance and Josie hope their family is helping lead the way. ■

For information on having Constance and Josie Siegel speak for a group or at an event, contact them via email at dfwelecticone2@yahoo.com, or go online to their Yahoo Group page at, Groups.Yahoo.com/Group/DFWEclecticWomensServices/.

EMPTY NEST

From Page 10

But again, it was different for Krueger, who was raised in a conservative family.

Krueger said he told his parents the week before Lucas was born. He said the announcement was greeted with tolerance, but he knew they had problems with the idea. Still, once Lucas was born, "he was a grandkid," Krueger said.

He said that since bringing Lucas into their family, his parents have even warmed to Grape.

And on both sides of the family, Lucas said he was the only grandchild to carry on the family name.

In 1995, Krueger's employer, Texas Instruments, transferred him from Houston to Dallas. Grape, who had recently earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Houston, became a counselor at Oak Lawn Community Services.

On moving day, Lucas learned to crawl. Keeping him strapped in a car seat presented a challenge they hadn't planned.

Krueger remembers one of the most stressful parts of the move as finding a new pediatrician.

"I came out 12 times today," he said, remembering how he came home and told his partner, "I'm so tired."

Krueger interviewed a number of pediatricians who turned them down, saying they "couldn't work with a family like ours," he said.

Over the next few years, both came out to strangers many times.

"Just walking around the [NorthPark] mall," Krueger said, where babies were a magnet, they would have to explain they were both the dads.

Lucas Grape-Krueger knows his family is different than most of his friends' families: Unlike many of his classmates' families, his parents are still together.

The teen shrugged off the idea of having two dads. That's all he's ever known since he was adopted at birth and noted that he has never had problems in school.

"In sixth grade, people would ask, 'Where's your mom?' I gave stupid comments back," he said.

Lucas wasn't a child to be bullied. He has a football player's build and played sports. To make sure he could protect himself, his dads enrolled him in Tae Kwon Do.

"He worked up to almost black belt," Krueger said.

Krueger said that Lucas was on all of the school teams. They spent evenings and weekends rooting for their son and got to know all of the other parents.

When Lucas wanted to play more sports, they decided to join the YMCA.

"We got a letter on Christmas eve," Krueger said.

"The bottom of the letterhead said, 'Where everyone belongs,'" Grape said. "Evidently not."

Their membership was turned down.

Instead they joined the Jewish Community Center, which welcomed them.

Grape said over the years they thought of adopting a second child. When Lucas was young, they hosted a Walt Whitman student for a year. Whitman was a school for LGBT students that operated in Dallas in the late 1990s.

But Lucas said he didn't miss having siblings. "My girlfriend and her brother always fight," he said.

Krueger said that being a parent always gave him more to talk about with his colleagues at work.

Becoming gay parents in 1993, Grape said, set them apart. Gay men would ask them why they would do that. Others told them how much they disliked children.

"Our parenting roles didn't end up the way we expected," Krueger said.

They thought Krueger would be the disciplinarian. He said he surprised himself with how much empathy he had.

Lucas sees it differently. He said among his friends, he has the strictest parents. But, he said, he knows how to play one against the other to get what he wants.

In June, Lucas graduated from the Winston School in North Dallas. In the fall, he'll attend Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

Like many of their straight friends, Grape and Krueger are facing an empty nest.

"He's preparing us," Krueger said.

"He's giving us as hard a time as possible," Grape said.

"It's working," Krueger said.

"I can't remember the last time he met his curfew," Grape said.

Lucas has a different perspective: "They were perfect," he said wryly.

To prepare for their new, quieter life, Krueger and Grape have adopted two "empty nest" dogs. Grape is going back to school to work on a masters in library science. He currently teaches.

The couple also hopes to travel more. After a family reunion in New Jersey this fall, they said they might go to New York and get legally married. They've already had a ceremony at First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

Grape has become a youth advisor at First Unitarian. Both men are politically active and plan to become more so in the 2012 election. Krueger joined the board of Dallas Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

And they may do some work on their house.

"They're threatening to turn my room into a media center," Lucas said.

But he takes that as an idle threat.

"Nice TV? Sound system?" he said. "Cool."

He wondered if his parents were trying to get him to come home for visits more frequently.

Although they'll miss him, his fathers are encouraging Lucas to spend weekends on campus, making friends and enjoying campus life.

"I know we'll get through it fine," Krueger said.

"We're having date nights again," Grape said. ■



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• **THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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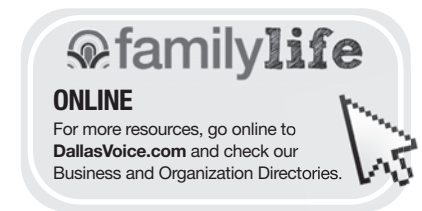
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viewpoints

The changing face of 'family'

Today's LGBT youth have options available that the gays and lesbians of yore would not have dreamed possible

What a difference a few decades and the evolution of new generations can make in society, particularly when it comes to the development of a new community.

When I first moved to Dallas in the summer of 1969 — just a few months short of my 21st birthday — I found a community of people



David Webb
The Rare Reporter

that heretofore I had only read about in literature. It was by accident that I landed in Oak Lawn, because I just as easily could have rented my first apartment in any other area of the city.

As I started navigating the neighborhood, going to the grocery store and going about the other mundane aspects of my life, I began noticing some very interesting people. It wasn't long before I realized that I had stumbled upon something new and exciting.

The LGBT community as we know it today was in its infancy. There were a few gay men's bars, at least one lesbian hangout, some drag shows, cliques of gay people working at downtown department stores and hippy festivals in Lee Park where LGBT people celebrated openly with young, liberal straight people.

In those days, I didn't see a lot of same-sex couples living together. I occasionally became aware of older same-sex couples who had lived together for long times in homes. But for the most part I only met other single people like myself, living in apartments.

There were a lot of people living together as roommates, but from what I could tell there were few commitments in these arrangements.

It was the days of indiscriminate sexual activity, practiced by gays and straights alike.

I quickly found a place for myself in the community, and I became a part of a family of gay and straight people who socialized together. There were a couple of married straight people in the group, a divorced woman with a child, several gay and straight men and other people who drifted in and out of the network over the years.

This was a time when people realizing they were gay often chose not to reveal it to their



birth families. Many people who felt isolated developed relationships with groups of people who gave them the support they needed to recognize and accept who and what they were.

Many other groups of people that I encountered seemed to consist primarily of families of gay men or lesbians. It seemed to me that lesbians tended to be more likely to couple than gay men at that time. I was unaware of any same-sex couples raising children in the early 1970s.

That early model of friends-as-family was one that served me well, and for some reason I've never much wanted to become involved in a committed relationship with a partner. Despite a couple of half-hearted tries over the years, that still holds true for me today.

But it has changed drastically for many other people since the launch of the gay rights movement with the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City in 1969.

Legal challenges to state laws restricting marriage to heterosexuals began in the early 1970s and the fight for marriage equality has progressed to the point that same-sex marriage is legal in six states in the country now, plus the District of Columbia.

Information gleaned in part from the 2000 U.S. Census and published by the Williams Institute in "Census Snapshot" in December 2007, reveals that an estimated 8.8 million LGBTs lived in the U.S. in 2005. In 2005, there were 776,943 same-sex couples in the U.S., compared to 594,391 in 2000, according to the report.

The census information makes it clear that LGBT people live in every county in the U.S., whereas in the early years openly gay people seemed to be mostly a big-city phenomenon.

Of these same-sex couples living in the U.S. in 2005, 20 percent were raising children under the age of 18, and an estimated 270,313 of the U.S.'s children were living in households headed by same-sex-couple, according to the report.

An estimated 65,000 of the U.S.'s adopted children reportedly lived with a lesbian or gay parent.

Clearly, in the 40-plus years since the start of the gay rights movement, all of the characteristics of LGBT life have changed dramatically. Young people are often quicker to acknowl-

edge and accept their sexual orientation, and there is a whole array of options that were unavailable to previous generations of LGBT people.

When young LGBT people think about their lives and relationships today, it's probably in terms of dating, finding the right person, living together, getting married and even raising children. If anyone had told me 40 years ago that I would see such developments in my lifetime, I would have thought they were crazy.

But that's how it is today, and it makes me wonder what sort of decisions I might have made about my life if so much had been available to me when I was young. ■

David Webb is a veteran journalist who has covered LGBT issues for the mainstream and alternative media for three decades. E-mail him at davidwaynewebb@yahoo.com.

The constancy of change

Everything changes but the dedication of the Turtle Creek Chorale members, TCC president says

In the song "Change," Melissa Etheridge sings, "The only thing that stays the same is change." As president of the Turtle Creek Chorale, I am here to tell you, that quote applies to all of us.

The Turtle Creek Chorale is not immune to change, and we have certainly experienced our share over the past 31 years.

Honestly, though, five artistic directors in 31 years? That's a pretty good track record for leadership when compared with senior management trends in the non-profit and artistic communities.

Change came to us last week in the form of news that Dr. Jonathan Palant was leaving the chorale. Jonathan has been my friend as well as the chorus' artistic director. His departure is a tremendous loss for so many of us.

I know my fellow chorale members well

■ **CONSISTANCY**, Next Page

■ **CONSISTANCY**, From Previous Page



Sean Baugh
Special Contributor

enough to say that we'll weather this change, just as we have weathered many a difficult time. We have survived the AIDS crisis; we can survive anything.

It is our daily challenges that make the Turtle Creek Chorale what we are today: a strong, resilient

and dedicated community of singers, friends and brothers.

With comings and goings also come growth and an incredible journey. The chorale will continue to sing with an even stronger voice as we rally to support our new artistic leadership.

In the coming weeks we will begin a nationwide search for the next artistic director, and you can rest assured that he (or she!) will meet a vibrant and dedicated group of men that recognizes its history and lives up to its reputation

as one of the finest choirs in the world.

As Melissa's lyrics coax us:

"And so it goes
This too shall pass away
It cuts so strange
The only thing that stays the same
Is change."

In the coming weeks, the Turtle Creek

Chorale kicks off its 32nd season with auditions for new members and rehearsals starting Aug. 23. I invite you to join us either by purchasing season subscriptions, giving to the chorale or singing with the TCC.

We, the Turtle Creek Chorale — the decorated Dallas, Texas men's chorus — will continue on our mission to entertain, educate,

unite and uplift our community. We are, and will be, an organization that you can be proud of.

This — I can assure you Miss Etheridge — will never change. ■

Sean Baugh is president of Turtle Creek Chorale. For more information on the chorale, go online to TurtleCreekChorale.org

Feedback

Perry OK with NY marriage

Rick Perry is simply WRONG in suggesting that marriage is a "states' rights" issue.

As someone who believes very strongly in marriage equality for gay couples, I need to point out that the federal government has complicated the issue more than anyone. While it is true that the Constitution says nothing about marriage, there are 1,138 legal benefits, protections, and responsibilities (according to the Government Accounting Office) that the federal government automatically bestows on married couples. Some of this has to do with tax law and Social Security. So it simply

wouldn't do for a gay couple that is legally married in Iowa to suddenly become UN-married if they move someplace else.

Straight couples have never had to jump through these kinds of hoops. Thanks to the "Full Faith and Credit" clause, if any straight couple flies off to Las Vegas for a drunken weekend and gets married by an Elvis impersonator, that marriage is automatically honored in all 50 states. Gay couples, however, are held to a different (and hence unconstitutional) legal standard.

The only way marriage can be a "states' rights" issue is for the federal government to get out of the marriage business completely, and do away with the 1,138 benefits it grants to married couples, including tax breaks and survivor benefits under Social Security. Tell me how thrilled most married couples would be with THAT.

Chuck Anziulewicz, via Instant Tea

Changes for Turtle Creek Chorale

It doesn't seem that financial stability of the group is the concern, although that is what the board chair seems to be stressing.

When both key staff are resigning, it begs one to wonder about the stability of the leadership of the organization. The TCC is a great asset to the community.

Hopefully the new leaders will be able to continue the good work of those that have come before them.

Matthew Stupak, via Instant Tea

My resignation was given to the TCC board of directors mid-April with more than 90 days notice in order that a solid replacement could be found as the new executive director.

I solely left my position due to a wonderful professional opportunity offered by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney.

I plan on continuing to be a patron and major donor of TCC. My leaving TCC is no reflection in anyway on the organization. I simply had a truly wonderful opportunity to work in the financial services sector supporting the LGBT, non-profit and foundation community in Dallas.

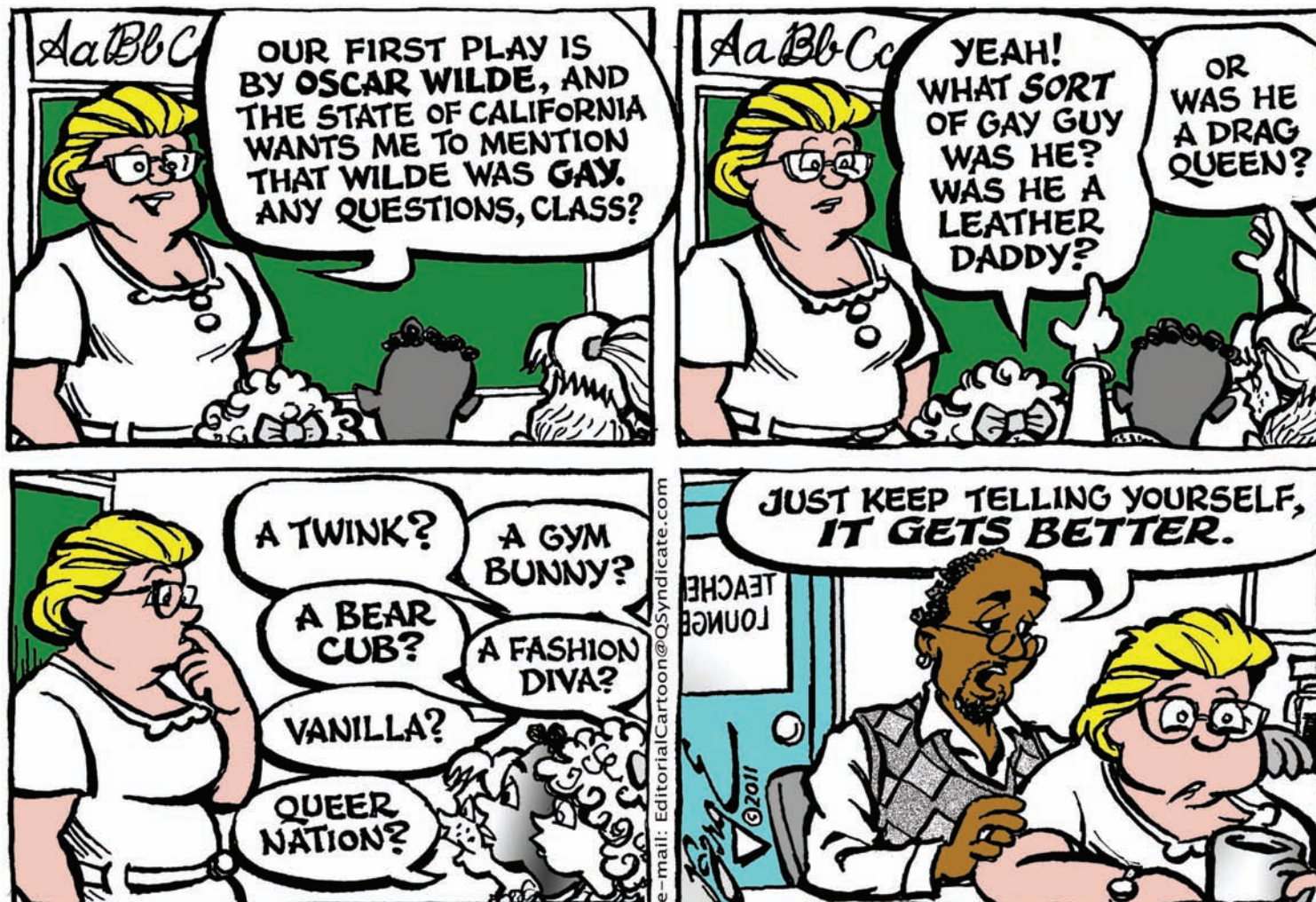
Stephen Tosha, via Instant Tea

The board of the TCC has never been one that deals with "truth" in a way that one could call literal. And having a reverend at the helm as the board chair, telling what are very obviously half truths and full-on lies only serves to kill not only my almost non-existent faith in the clergy but also whatever good memories I had of the TCC.

I don't know what happened with the "resignations" of the leadership but I am sure that it's not what is being handed to the public. You can smell the lies all the way out on the west coast.

Shawn Northcutt, via Instant Tea

TO SEND A LETTER | We welcome letters from readers. Shorter letters and those addressing a single issue are more likely to be printed. Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, but we attempt to maintain the writer's substance and tone. Include your home address and a daytime telephone number for verification. Send letters to the senior editor, preferably by e-mail (nash@dallasvoice.com). Letters also may be faxed (214-969-7271) or sent via the U.S. Postal Service (Dallas Voice, 4145 Travis St., Third Floor, Dallas TX 75204). All letters become the property of Dallas Voice.



Speak Out poll

CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE AT DALLASVOICE.COM

Does Gov. Perry's association with Day of Prayer violate separation of church and state?

RESULTS FROM LAST WEEK'S POLL:

Will support for repealing DOMA help or hurt Obama's re-election campaign?

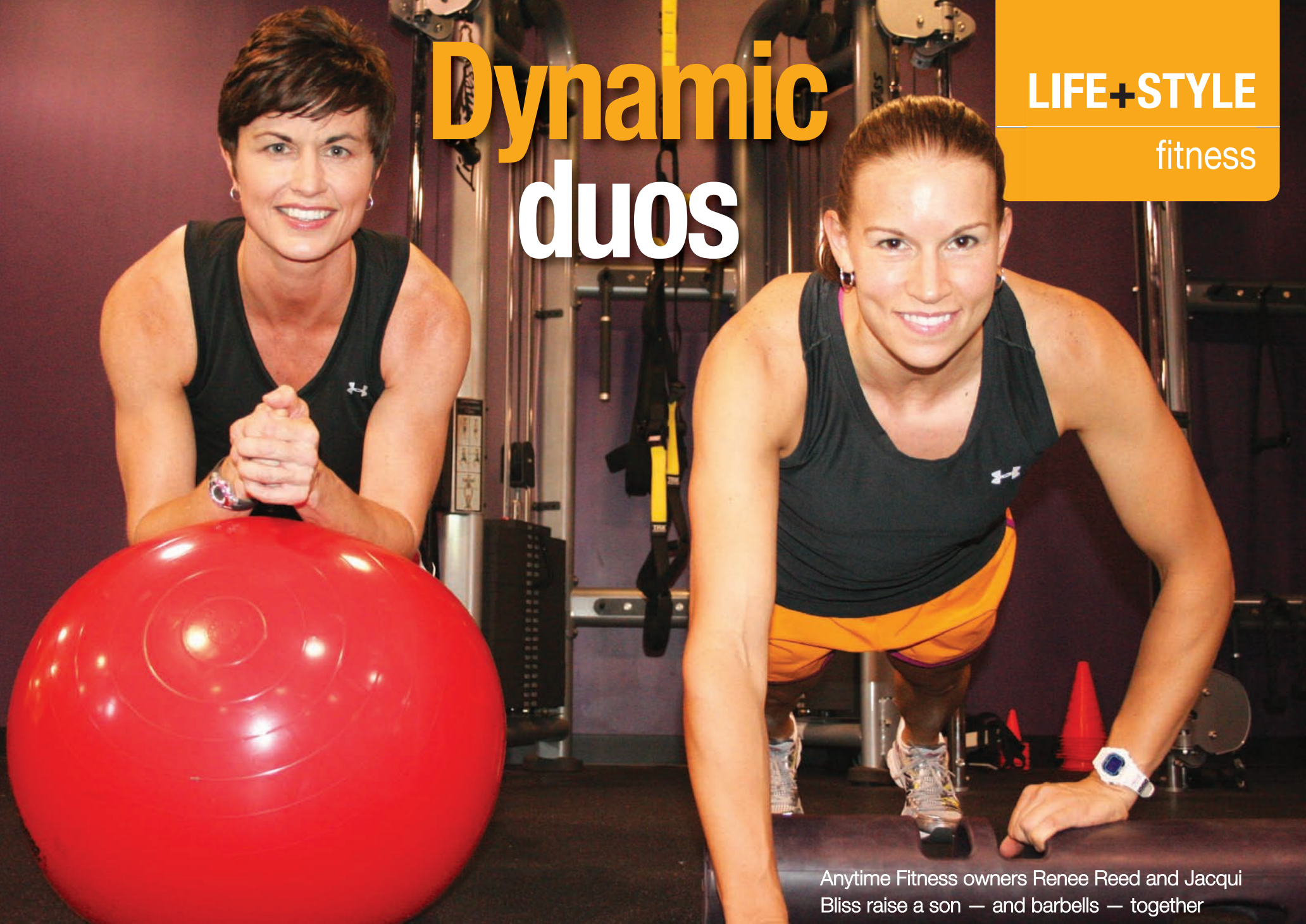
- Help: 44 percent
- Hurt: 17 percent
- Neither: 22 percent
- Unsure: 17 percent

118 Votes cast

Dynamic duos

LIFE+STYLE

fitness



Anytime Fitness owners Renee Reed and Jacqui Bliss raise a son — and barbells — together

As part of our recurring feature on Dynamic Duos, we talk with out couples in the community who might not work together, but who do *workout* together.

But in the case of Jacqui Bliss and Renee Reed, they actually do work together, as co-owners of Anytime Fitness in the Bishop Arts District. But in addition to running a gym, they also occupy themselves raising a child.

familylife

— *Jef Tingley*

WORKIN' IT | Reed, left, and Bliss stay fit and happy at their gym in Oak Cliff. (Arnold Wayne Jones/Dallas Voice)

Names and ages: Jacqui Bliss, 34; and Renee Reed, 40.

Occupations: Co-owners, Anytime Fitness Club and personal trainers

Years together: 9

Exercise regimen: Bliss: It varies. I mix it up with cycling, running, bodyweight intervals, kettle bell work, ViPR lifts and free weights. On an average week, I exercise six days and the time ranges from 30 minutes to two hours or more (if cycling).

Reed: I do strength training two to three times a week, mostly with free weights and cable machines. I like to run at least once a week and use cardio machines a couple of times, too. At home I do my own short, intense boot camp-style workouts, which were born out of the need to do a time-efficient workout while our son was napping.

Do you play sports or are you on any leagues? Reed: I don't play any team sports now, although I played college basketball and rugby at Dartmouth and ran track and played basketball in high school.

Most memorable athletic goal accomplished: Bliss: Competing in the USARA Championships in San Diego. Adventure racing is like no other sport and quite possibly is the most physically and mentally challenging en-

deavor I've participated in.

Reed: Crossing the finish line of the San Diego marathon with Jacqui was awesome (even if I made her slow down the last two miles so we could finish together). As an assistant basketball coach at the University of Illinois, we took an underdog team to the NCAA Sweet 16 against all the odds. We had a group of hardworking Midwest ladies that just played their hearts out. It was an amazing experience. And as a player, I remember hitting a 10-foot jumper for the win over Columbia.

Upcoming fitness goals: Bliss: To keep challenging myself and applying what I learn to my profession.

Reed: During this upcoming decade, I have to become a better swimmer and work swimming and yoga into my routine. I have to accept that in my 40s, my body has some different needs.

Workouts — mornings or evenings: Bliss: Whenever I can fit it in. Most of the time, it's around lunchtime as I'm with clients in the mornings and evenings.

Reed: Morning.

Least favorite exercise or piece of gym equipment:

Reed: There's nothing in a gym that I actually *dislike*, but I'm not fond of swimming. As I mentioned, I need to learn to love it!

Favorite spot in North Texas to exercise outdoors:

Bliss: White Rock Lake and my backyard.

Reed: I like to run around Kessler Park and North Oak Cliff, going north of Colorado if I'm game for some hills. I love the trees and looking at all the different architecture.

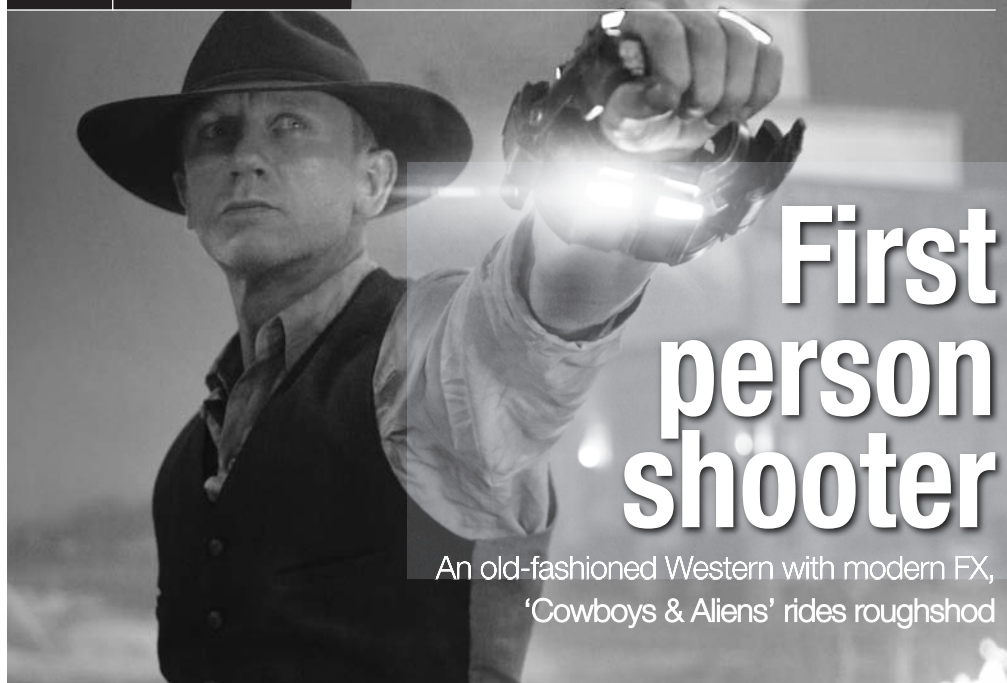
Favorite spot in North Texas to exercise indoors: Anytime Fitness in the Bishop Arts District, of course!

If you could become an Olympian in any sport, what would it be and why: Bliss: Track and field. I still get goose bumps watching track meets. The nervous energy is unbelievable. Knowing you are going out and giving your all and that your body is on the line to perform.

Reed: Basketball. I love being part of a small team that performs together as a unit. With the seating down close to the court (as opposed to an open field), the energy of the crowd is electrifying!

How do you reward yourself after a great workout or an accomplished fitness goal: Bliss: I need to work on that. I don't give myself a reward *per se*. I would say my greatest reward is in how I feel after a great workout: Unstoppable, and filled with positive energy.

Reed: After a good run or cardio workout, the endorphins are enough of a reward, so is a compliment from someone in the gym. But I believe in celebrating victories, whether big or small. When we were approaching a milestone with our membership base, I kept a bottle of champagne on ice.



First person shooter

An old-fashioned Western with modern FX, 'Cowboys & Aliens' rides roughshod

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

Movie adaptations used to be based on literature and theater and even magazine articles. Nowadays, they are based on cartoons, video games, toys (the "Hasbro Presents" credit still gets a laugh during the opening credits of *Transformers* movies) and comic books. Such movies usually feel so pre-fab: Meta-cultural, with Hollywood navelgazing into a state of catatonia. (The games and comics are often inspired by trashy action movies, perpetuating the Mobius strip assembly line of dreck.)

But while *Cowboys & Aliens*' source material is, sadly, a graphic novel about settlers and scalawags in 1873 New Mexico, its real progenitor is the movie Western of yore: Black hats versus white hats. Lassies and scoundrels in saloons. Gunslingers and cattlemen.

And extra-terrestrials. Yeah, it still is a sci-fi film.

The sci-fi, though, doesn't overwhelm the tale, which has the plainspoken good-and-bad dichotomy of the genre, anchored by a humanity

lacking in movies like *Transformers*. Daniel Craig (looking ripped, god bless him) plays an amnesiac bandit who apparently has successfully fought off the aliens with their own weapon, a metal wrist corsage that shoots laser blasts (but only when it needs to). He's posse'd up with the local oligarch (played brutally at first by Harrison Ford, later cuddly as a kitten) to hunt down the aliens who are stealin' our gold and rapin' our women. (Actually, it's not clear why they take people — one of many plot holes best ignored if you wanna get through the film.)

Director Jon Favreau added much-needed humor into the *Iron Man* movies, an element all but absent here, but cinematographer Matthew Libatique more than makes up for it with gorgeous landscapes and moodily underlit tableaux. Craig is well-suited to the craggy, silent loner: He's brimming with testosterone swagger ... at least until the clusterfuck finale, a convoluted mess that overwhelms everyone involved, including any sense of logic in the storytelling.

Until then, though, it's a kick-ass summer film with excellent production values — *War of the Worlds* with six-shooters and arrows. ■

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Small-town gay life



JESUS CHAIREZ | Special Contributor
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SAN LUIS DE LA PAZ, Guanajuato, México — No rainbow flags, no gay bars, no Pride parade, but for ex-Dallasites Ron Austin and Lamar Strickland, this small Mexican town has plenty of gay life in it.

Austin and Strickland sold most everything and packed up what they could, moving to San Luis de La Paz four years ago. Austin says that he first discovered San Luis years ago when accompanied his best friend Manolo Arrendondo, also from Dallas, back home to visit his family for Christmas one year. When Arrendondo moved back to México to care for his ailing mother, Austin and Strickland soon followed.

Austin used to work for AIDS Arms for many years before retiring from the Baylor Geriatric Center. Strickland still works but telecommutes to his job in the U.S.

Though most people think that it is not safe — and even dangerous — for LGBT people to vacation much less live in México, Austin says that

he and his partner feel safe.

“In general I have not found much homophobia here and for most people it seems like a non-issue. But yes, there are homophobic people in San Luis and Mexico. We get called names now and then, but then we sometimes got called names in Dallas, too.”

Things have changed in San Luis, says the

couple, who have spoken to their trans friends Carlos, now known as Karla and Adry Pardo Garcia, known by his nickname, la Mosca (“the Fly”) about the changes: Harassment is basically verbal today and not physical like in the past.

Though there are no gay bars in San Luis, a town of about 49,000, gay people do go out and dance. It is sort of a don’t ask, don’t tell situation where gays blend into the crowd; two men dancing together is something gay men just don’t do.

Though Austin and Strickland say they don’t feel much homophobia in San Luis, “Only the drag queens get by with gay behavior, like dancing together or displays of affection,” says Austin.

Though there are no official gay events in San

GAY MICROCOSM | With fewer than 50,000 residents, San Luis de la Paz doesn’t even have a gay bar, but that hasn’t stopped queer Dallasites from calling it home. (Photos by Jesus Chairez)





RURAL DRAG | Clockwise from above: Karla aka Carlos and 'La Mosca' aka Adry staged a successful drag pageant this month in the new hometown of Dallas transplants Lamar Strickland and Ron Austin.

Luis, five years ago Karla and Adry Pardo Garcia, leaders in the trans and drag queen community, and several of their friends got together to have a Ms. San Luis de la Paz annual pageant called Nuestra Belleza Gay (Our Gay Beauty). Carlos and Garcia say their pageant does give pride to San Luis' growing LGBT community.

In the U.S., drag queens and transsexuals are often at the forefront of the LGBT movement; it is no different here in México, especially in San Luis. For example, earlier this month the girls got into a Blazer and put loud speakers on the roof of the automobile that blared out announcements for their Ms. San Luis Gay 2011 event held at Bar One, a club almost in the center of town.

As the Blazer drove down San Luis' narrow streets, the girls — in full makeup and outfits — handed out flyers as they approached anyone on the street. Everyone seemed to be fine with all the glitter and glamour. The Nuestra Belleza Gay marketing worked; it was a sold-out crowd at

Bar One. Austin was a judge for this year's event, as he was last year.

Even before the pageant started there was enthusiasm: As the sun was setting all Nuestra Belleza Gay participants, along with their supporters, gathered at the main bus station where the contestants sat on the hood of a car and everyone caravanned through town with a police escort — basically a very small Pride parade. Small clusters of people did wait along the route that went through the center of town to wave and enjoy the beauty.

Though there may not be gay bars or a gayborhood to speak of, Austin and Strickland, along with their two dogs, Osa and Hoppy and a cat named Miche, are enjoying their new life in México. ■

Jesús Chairez is an activist and freelance writer; former producer and host of U.S.'s first LGBT Latino show Sin Fronteras (Without Borders) on KNON 89.3 FM. He resides between Dallas and México City.

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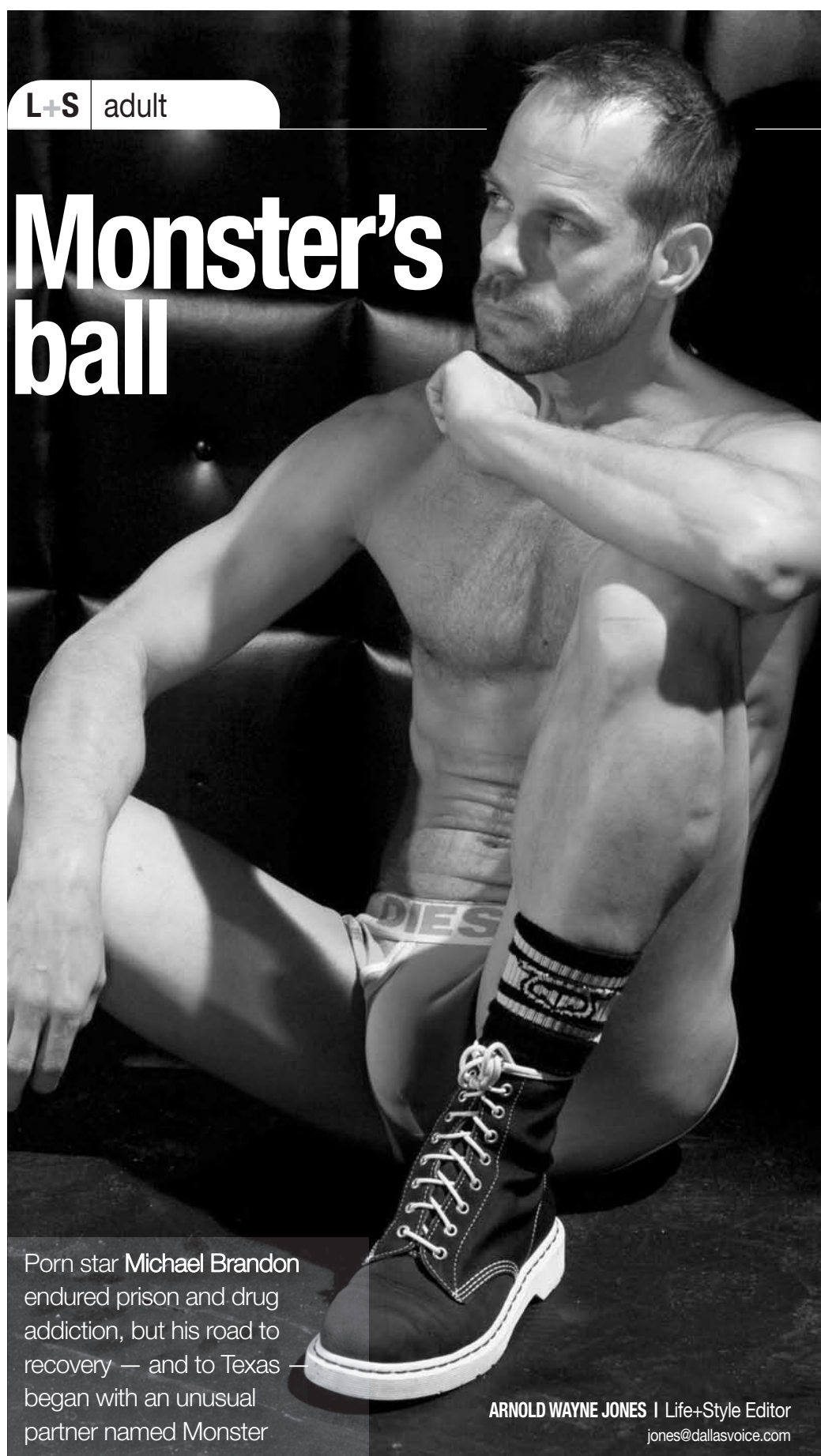
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Monster's ball



Porn star Michael Brandon endured prison and drug addiction, but his road to recovery — and to Texas — began with an unusual partner named Monster

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
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Porn star Michael Brandon loves the cool weather in his hometown of San Francisco, but he is happily, and voluntarily, giving it up to come to Dallas.

"I actually have family there," he says. "Legend has it my uncle was the CEO of Texas Instruments back in the day." Not counting family reunions, the trip will mark the Dallas debut of his live show. So what exactly got him to Texas

finally?

"I think I would have to credit Monster," he says.

Monster, it turns out, is his pet name for his penis. Only if you listen to Brandon talk about it enough, it seems like a business partner rather than a part of his business.

Here's how it happened.

■ **MONSTER**, Page 35

MAN OF A CERTAIN AGE | At 46, the once-twinky Michael Brandon has embraced his new-found role as a daddy to younger men who were barely alive when he started his porn career.

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■ **MONSTER**, From Page 32

"One of my fans, Topher, has been on me to come to Texas for years — 'Bring Monster to Texas!' he kept saying. For some reason, Texas wasn't an easy nut to crack for me," Brandon says. So superfan Topher took it upon himself to meet Monster in person, setting out on a campaign to get someone — anyone — to bring Monster and his owner to the Lone Star State.

"I'll be damned if he didn't get Midtowne Spa [on board]," Brandon says still a bit incredulously. "Midtowne doesn't normally fly people in, but they agreed to this time — and it went from 'just Dallas' to a three-city tour."

Brandon's Badass Texas Tour — designed to promote the adult performer's first hardcore sex film in several years, the fetish picture *Badass* — started in Austin Wednesday, and will bring him (well, *them*) to Dallas tonight at 8, followed by an appearance in Houston on Sunday.

To hear Brandon talk about it, it really is a collaboration, and one borne unexpectedly from tragedy.

In the 1980s, Brandon was, in his words, "fresh off the bus" when he came out of the closet with a vengeance. He was 24 and quickly got involved in the seedier aspects of gay culture. He was working at a bar when he answered an ad for XXX models. The photographer was impressed by the young man's member.

"In the gay world, your cock can be your calling card on many levels — especially in the sex industry, and mine is really large," Brandon quickly admits. But soon after he started doing porn, he developed an addiction to meth. It ruined his life.

"I was already 140 lbs. soaking wet without using anything, but I dropped even more — I was skinny as a rail. When I did the speed I stopped doing

porn because I didn't have any confidence in front of the camera. Then I started selling it, then did jail time, then prison time, then living on the streets. From 24 to 34, I saw eight-and-a-half years inside state penitentiaries. But those revolving doors kept me alive. Left to my own devices, I would have been dead. I *should* be dead. *Dead!* I'm talking skull-and-crossbones chemicals being shot into my veins. I've known people who did less than I did and can barely put two sentences together. Staying as strung out as I did, I would have been so out of it I would have walked in front of a bus."

He spent 18 months in rehab, and it was really after that when "Michael Brandon" was born.

"'Michael Brandon' was just my stage name but I started cultivating it as an entity and business," he says.

Brandon won back-to-back performer of the year Gay VN Awards in 2001 and 2002 — the only porn actor to do so — and Monster was a big part of it.

"Part of the process [of recovery] is to learn who you really are, so I was reading reviews of



TEXAS AT LAST | Brandon's Texas tour resulted from an email campaign from a superfan.

me on an [escort evaluation site]. One review, the client was saying how nice my eyes were and called my cock a 'monster.' I thought, 'Why don't I give it an identity and take mine back? And it's been a hit. Working together has been huge for my career. Monster gets his own birthday wishes, own emails, his — 'can Monster come out and play?' It's been such a big marketing tool. No pun intended."

Brandon took a break from porn and escorting when he met his true love, Marcos, "and in order to cultivate a healthy personal relationship, I stepped out from in front of the camera and basically had a monogamous relationship with him."

That relationship ended after five years "in a blaze of glory" last October; in December, Brandon went back in front of the camera to make *Badass*. He was already 45 years old. But apparently as in-demand as ever.

"People ask me, 'How long have you been in your industry?' I sometimes answer, 'How old are you?' I get a lot of emails saying, 'I have watched you since I was 12 years old.' I wanna ask, 'How old are you now, 15?' Our community is youth-obsessed but I find the youth is obsessed with the papis and the daddies. I get these random emails that say, 'I really like having sex with older men.' When did *that* happen?"

But Brandon isn't complaining. Despite a drug relapse — he has been clean for a second time almost three years now, following a nine-month binge that nearly destroyed him again — he's as happy and focused and well-adjusted as he's ever been. And like Lady Gaga, he credits his little — well, not so little — Monster. ■

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Pumping tin

Playing a sexy ax-man in 'The Wiz' has been rewarding for Sydney Harcourt

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
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When Sydney James Harcourt signed to play the Tin Man in Dallas Theater Center's new production of *The Wiz*, he didn't know he'd have such a tough act to follow... or that that act would be one of his best friends.

Wade McCollum, who played the MC in DTC's *Cabaret*, is one of Harcourt's closest friends. McCollum's legions of gay fans swooned over his ripped, muscular frame — a legacy Harcourt became all-too-aware of very quickly.

"I can't hear enough about Wade's abs," he says with a sigh. "Everyone has a story about how ripped

he was — abs, abs, abs. Well, the part I'm doing right after this is Rocky in *The Rocky Horror Show* at the Old Globe in San Diego,

where I'm wearing nothing but a gold Speedo." And the specter of McCollum's physique is enough to give him an inferiority complex.

Not that that's likely to happen. True, he's been in training with a low-fat regimen to get his body in peak shape for Rocky. But just playing the Tin Man eight shows a week at the DTC has worked wonders.

"I've probably dropped two waist sizes since I started," he says. And there are still two more weeks to go.

He's not complaining. Wearing the costume has been spectacular for helping him develop the character. He's so constricted, he knows what it must be like to have rusted in the woods.

This isn't the first time Harcourt has had to contend with a complicated costume — he spent 18 months on Broadway, playing Simba in *The Lion King* eight times a week. The headdress for that costume occasionally made him bleed. But getting decked out as the Tin Man has been a commitment of an entirely different level.

The process begins with Harcourt donning a neck-to-toe Under Armour bodysuit to wick perspiration away from his skin. Then he applies the shiny foil makeup to his face, taught to him by a professional makeup artist. ("It's changed — I've figured out my own way to make it look more reflective," he says.) That can take half an hour. Next comes sliding into the silver Lycra bodysuit, onto which are stitched most of the components of the Tin Man's costumes. They are *not* detachable. And the sweating begins immediately.

"Originally, they were gonna be separate and we could wash the Lycra suit," he says. "But

■ PUMPING, Next Page



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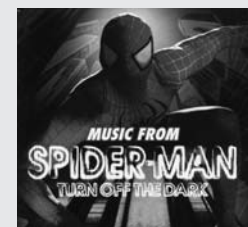
B'way: 'Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark'

In the old days, cutting the original Broadway cast recording of a new musical was always expected — even if the show closed immediately. Economics have made that less of a given (the Tony-nominated flop *Cry-Baby* closed without a CD of the score being made). But when your show is called **Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark** and it gets reworked during nine months of previews, who even knows what the score will *sound* like by the time it opens?

On the other hand, you have something unique in the score by Bono and The Edge: A built-in audience of rockers who couldn't give a shit about a B'way musical but who are addicted to U2's music. Thus was born this CD, carefully titled *Music from Spider-Man*. The implication: These are some of the songs, but maybe not all of them. And some tracks are even demos performed not by the cast, but by Bono and The Edge himself. "For fun," the liner notes claim. More like for economic necessity.

Musical purists may sniff, but the songs are undeniably the product of some rock gods who are trying to create their version of *The Who's Tommy*. Not all of the numbers work; "Bouncing Off the Walls" is both too literal and too corny exposition, with a dull, repetitive riff, and "Pull the Trigger" tries too hard. But there are the bones of some hits. The show itself might be a disaster, but at least some of the music swings.

— A.W.J.





TAKE IT EASY | Sydney James Harcourt, above, deals with the Texas heat by wearing gym clothes everywhere — except, of course, onstage in 'The Wiz,' where he's layered in a heavy costume, opposite, that has sweated off two waist sizes in four weeks. (Photos by Arnold Wayne Jones and David Leggett)

■ **PUMPING**, From Previous Page

they are all attached. That suit has *not* been washed since we started. It started to smell like a pickle. Now they just spray it with Febreze and let it dry in the sun. I used to be self-conscious, but I am no longer the smelliest costume. There are worse." He refuses to name names.

Next, the arm pieces are then strapped down in a ritual Harcourt describes as "like putting on a snow suit: You have suspenders and a hood and the tap shoes and spats. The last thing is the shell, which is like armor. I cannot get into that without help. And I cannot get out of the costume at all without someone's help — trust me, I've tried."

All of which means that once Harcourt is strapped in he cannot — ummm ... *relieve* himself. At all.

"The bathroom breaks are carefully timed," he says. Once you're in, you're in for the show. It's only 90 minutes, but altogether I'm probably in it three hours." On days when he performs two shows with a three-hour break in between, he gets out of the costume entirely — including the makeup.

"Yeah, it looks weird walking around without the costume," he says. "It kinda looks like black-

face."

The first time Harcourt actually performed at rehearsal in the costume nearly killed him. After the R&B jive of "Slide Some Oil to Me," he bent over, panting and exhausted. He then transitioned immediately into the ballad "To Be Able to Feel." That caught him off-guard when he showed up to rehearsal — the song had been moved by director Kevin Moriarty to much earlier in the show than it was originally.

But the one-two punch of Harcourt's solos has made the Tin Man — and arm pieces are then strapped down in a ritual Harcourt — the darling of audiences and critics. And he didn't see it coming.

"I play him as completely sexual, and some of my jokes didn't seem to be working," like when he calls Lion a "pussy... cat." But when he started in front of an audience, the reaction was intense.

"I think people are responding just to how much I love doing it," Harcourt says.

For good reason: In his 13-year professional career, this is the first time Harcourt has created a role, rather than understudying someone else's creation. And he likes it — as well as the reception he's received on his first stint in Texas.

It's enough to warm the heart of this Tin Man. ■

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LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

**A singing plant. A daring hero.
A sweet girl. A demented dentist.**
In the most outrageous musical comedy in years!

July 22 – August 21

Seymour loves two things: a beautiful, way-out-of-his-league girl named Audrey and interesting, unusual plants. As a down-and-out Skid Row floral assistant, he never dreamed that discovering an exotic plant with a mysterious craving for fresh blood would turn him into an overnight sensation! *Little Shop of Horrors* is an affectionate rock-n-roll spoof of 1950s sci-fi movies that will have you laughing and dancing in your seats. **So come join Seymour, a deranged dentist, the alluring Audrey, and the audacious Audrey II for this zany production that's absolutely out of this world!**



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photo by MARK ORISTANO

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'Shop' keeper

Little Shop of Horrors may have the catchiest pop score composed for a Broadway musical in the past 30 years. There has been rock-ier, toe-tapping-er, more bombastic music written in that time perhaps, but for the sheer joy of storytelling through sprightly, smart songs? I can think of no comparisons. It remains the only cast album I ever purchased during intermission of its performance; even if there were no songs in Act 2, I reasoned, Act 1 was a worthy investment, starting with the anthemic fugue "Skid Row" and continuing through its pastiche of doo-wop choruses and power ballads like "Suddenly, Seymour." (The team that wrote it, Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, went on to be Disney's resi-

dent writing geniuses: *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*.)

The production by WaterTower Theatre, now onstage in Addison, doesn't do full justice to its very able source material. Long before *Avenue Q*, *Little Shop* pioneered the use of puppets to turn kiddie entertainment into something adult and disturbing: It's *Sweeney Todd* with jokes.

Or it should be. There are missed comic opportunities in the story of schlubby floral shop worker Seymour (Jason Kennedy) who cultivates a man-eating plant to win the affections of abused shoppirl Audrey (Mary Gilbreath Grim, pictured with Kennedy). There are missteps in the design as well (the normally reliable Aaron Patrick Turner eschews character-appropriate costumes

— Audrey for one should be a lot trashier — for pretty, tailored pieces that make no sense). But the magic of the show works its way through.

Grim does an admirable job turning Audrey, so closely identified with Ellen Greene's idiosyncratic charm on film and stage, into her own creation, and the tango between Seymour and his boss Mushnik (Randy Pearlman) is winsome. But the star of the show is Alex Organ in a host of roles, most notably a sadistic dentist. Organ (gangly, limber, rubber-mugged) commits fully, throws himself physically into every scene. He's funny, cruel, goofy, protean — and, along with the score, an excellent reason to patronize this *Little Shop*.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

Through Aug. 21. WaterTowerTheatre.org.



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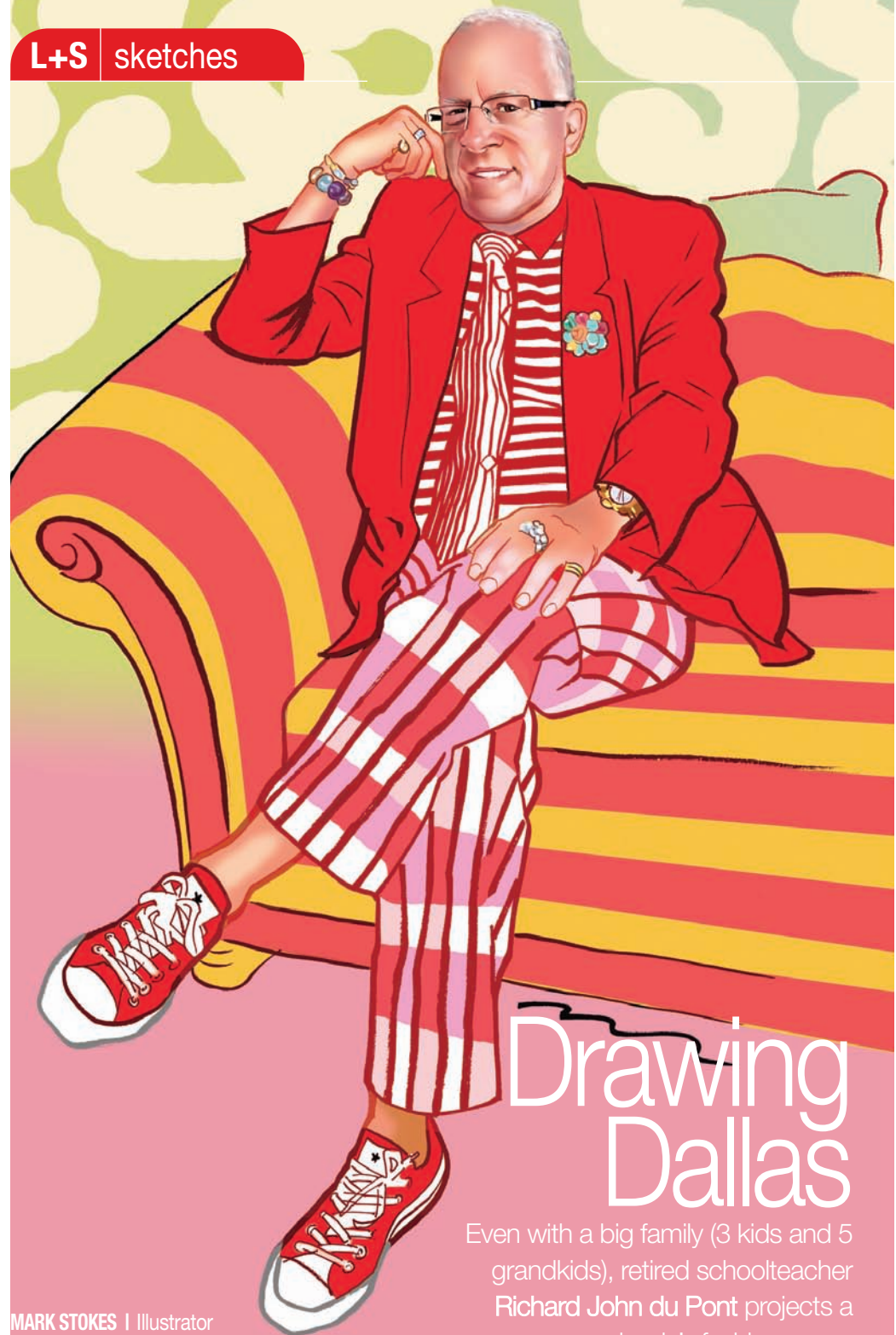


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Drawing Dallas

Even with a big family (3 kids and 5 grandkids), retired schoolteacher Richard John du Pont projects a dandy's fashion sense

MARK STOKES | Illustrator
mark@markdrawsfunny.com

Name: Richard John du Pont

Occupation: Retired elementary school teacher

Spotted at: Kroger's on the Strip

Colorful and vibrant, Richard was born and reared in upstate New York in a small town on the Mohawk River called Crescent. Retired since 2003, this tireless educator spent 30 years teaching 4th and 6th grades, and continues as a substitute teacher for the Dallas I.S.D (Sam Houston Elementary and Maple Lawn Elementary). He graduated with a bachelor's in elementary education from the Central University of Iowa and has masters in education from North Texas State University at Denton.

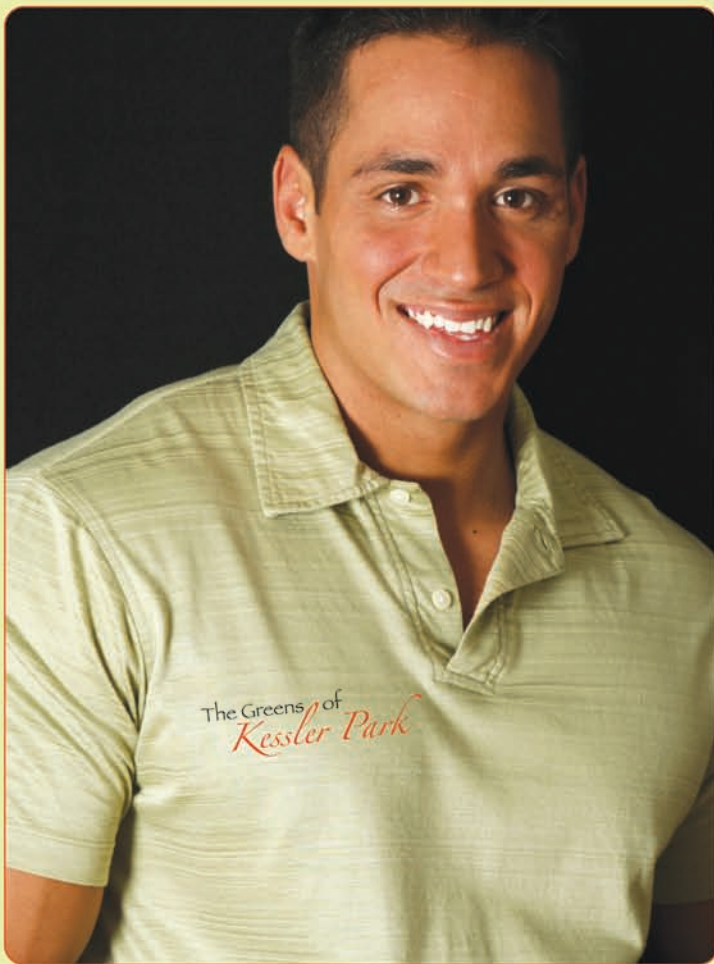
A man of taste: This silver-haired taste maker owns an exquisite collection of antiques, tastefully chosen to accent his beautiful home. He also lends his skill and expertise as a salesman to two estate sales and as a sales rep for Metrotex at the four large annual shows at the Dallas Trade Center.

Daddy dearest: This proud patriarch of two sons, one daughter and five grandsons sees family as the root of his life. His close-knit clan lives in the area so he is able to spend a lot of time with his children and grandchildren.

His hobbies include volunteer work for DIFFA, Legacy Counseling Center and Fresh, as well as traveling, reading, working out at Gold's Gym Uptown, dancing and shopping. He collects vintage clothing and jewelry (more than 100 suits at least — he attends the Cathedral of Hope every Sunday in one of them with an antique brooch), and Converse and Vans shoes.



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Perfect match

Bob Nunn and Tom Harrover have been a couple for 4 decades. But it wasn't until a near tragedy that they realized they were truly meant for each other



RICH LOPEZ | Staff Writer
lopez@dallasvoice.com

Bob Nunn agrees with the adage that the longer a couple lives together, the more they begin to look alike. Nunn and his partner Tom Harrover might not look that similar on the outside, but they match in a way that few couples do.

Let's start with some history.

The two have that classic meet-cute that began on the wrong note. As Nunn tells it, Harrover was the duller person he'd ever met—the two

just didn't like each other. Then, following a spontaneous invitation to a midnight movie, they ended up hitting it off. That movie led to conversation and then dating.

Forty-two years later, they still watch movies—as Nunn puts it, "I couldn't get rid of him."

A job in Houston took Nunn away from Harrover for three months, but old-fashioned letter

■ **PERFECT**, Page 44

familylife

LIFE GOES ON | Nunn, right, and Harrover stand before a project commissioned for the convention center hotel. Four years ago, Nunn was near death because of kidney disease. (Rich Lopez/Dallas Voice)

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Team of 5 - \$130

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■ PERFECT, From Page 43

writing kept the newbie relationship afloat.

"Tom had been writing me letters. He's a *very* good writer," Bob boasts. "He basically proposed to me by letter."

They committed to each other, moving in and pursuing their careers: Harrover in architecture and Nunn teaching art. For 37 years, they lived in "a fabulous house" in Hollywood Heights. Life was good.

Then their life took a sharp turn.

"When we got together, Tom knew I had a kidney disease," Nunn says. "Nothing was really a problem until about 30 years after we met — my kidneys began to fail and I had to start dialysis."

Nunn registered with Baylor for the national organ donor list, but the experience was frustrating: They received little response or encouragement from the hospital.

"Bob was on a downhill slide and the frustration with Baylor seemed like they were stonewalling us," Harrover says. "We talked about going to Asia even. It felt like they didn't want to deal with a senior-age gay couple."

Then Harrover suggested something novel: He could donate his kidney to the organ list, with the idea that Nunn could get a healthy one. Sort of a kidney exchange.

In desperation, they went back to their physician, who enrolled them in St. Paul Hospital's then-new program for kidney transplant. The ex-

perience was a complete turnaround. Nunn was tested and processed immediately while Harrover prepped for his organ donation to an anonymous recipient.

Kidney transplants require a seven-point match system; a minimum of three matches is necessary for the recipient to be able to accept the organ into the body.

The tests revealed that Harrover's kidney matched Nunn's on all seven points.

"We assumed I would donate mine for use elsewhere," Harrover says. "It never occurred to me that we'd be a match. The odds for that are off the charts."

"See what happens when you live together for so long?" he chuckles.

Just six months after entering St. Paul's program in 2007, they were on the operating table. They were the first direct living donor pair in the program. "It was all fairly miraculous," Nunn understates.

Four years later, both men are doing well. Although officially retired, they both continue to work: Harrover does the occasional contract job while Nunn is currently on commission for an art project at the new convention center hotel. Outside of any official work, each interjects their quips about home, life be it cooking together or working on the lawn.

The obvious question for them might be "What's the secret?" But they don't see it just that way. Their relationship boils down to the obvious virtues of trust, respect and compromise.

"Selfishness doesn't rear its ugly head in this relationship," Harrover says. "You just have to be willing to accommodate, support and encourage what the other is interested in."

Nunn agrees. "I would not be doing what I'm doing without his support."

Nunn says if there is a secret, it's akin to the dynamic on a playground: Like each other and share. If you don't share your whole life, there isn't a relationship, he says. At this point, Harrover says it would be impossible to separate. On paper, they are so intertwined with their house and financials, he jokes they are "Siamese twins."

They've witnessed a lot in their decades together, including something they never expected to come to pass in their lifetimes:

Same-sex marriage. Coming from a time when just being gay conflicted with moral codes set by their jobs, they wonder over the progress made in recent years. (They were officially married in Boston in October 2009.)

"I'm confident that it will happen for everyone," Harrover says. "I'm sorry that it's moving at a glacial pace, but it has that same inevitability



A LITTLE DAB'LL DO YOU | Bob Nunn is officially retired from teaching art, but continues to paint.

as a glacier. We'll get there."

But nothing compares to the bond Harrover and Nunn already have, a shared intimacy few couples could imagine. Same-sex marriage was merely unlikely; what they have experienced is miraculous. ■

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Friday 07.29

Lady looks like a dude

What is poor Victoria thinking? Dressing up as a man who performs as a female entertainer? Clearly a struggling artist will do anything to get by. Uptown Players presents the musical *Victor/Victoria* where Victoria becomes the toast of Paris as Victor but now has to deal with the mobster who is getting a little too attached.

DEETS: Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. 8 p.m. \$30-\$40. UptownPlayers.org.

Saturday 07.30

Being all he can be

Justin Elzie may be a happy man right now. As "don't ask, don't tell" comes to an end, his work wasn't in vain. Named Marine of the Year in '93, he was discharged for coming out on national TV. He sued, won and has been advocating for LGBT rights in the military. He comes to Dallas to discuss his work in fighting for DADT's repeal.

DEETS: Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan 2 p.m. RCDallas.org.

Thursday 08.04

Just a hot mess

Do we love Ke\$ha because she's the sloppy mess we wish we could be? It's a brilliant act to come off as a drunken slacker *and* a blonde bombshell. See how she does it this week on her Get Sleazy Tour with LMFAO and Spank Rock.

DEETS: Gexa Energy Pavilion, 1818 First Ave. 7:30 p.m. \$30-\$65. Ticketmaster.com.



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FRIDAY 07.29

COMMUNITY

FUSE drop-in weekdays for gay and bi guys up to 29. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. Tuesdays-Fridays at 2 p.m. DFWFuse.com.

Youth First Texas groups for ages 14 to 22. 3918 Harry Hines Blvd. Fridays-Saturdays and Tuesdays-Wednesdays at 6 p.m., Thursdays at 4 p.m. YouthFirstTexas.org.

Unwired Dallas. Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA) meets for those wishing to quit using meth. Also meets on Mondays and Wednesdays at the same time. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7:30pm. Free. CrystalMeth.org.

Stonewall Group of Narcotics Anonymous. Meets daily at noon and 7:30 p.m. 2438 Butler St., Ste. 108.

CODA, codependents support group at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 7 p.m. Cathedralofhope.com.

THEATER

The Final Adventure of Hercules. Pocket Sandwich Theatre, 5400 E. Mockingbird Lane. Through Aug. 20. \$10-\$18. PocketSandwich.com.

Satyricon, the scandalous comedy tells the story of a broke Roman soldier, his slave and the people they con to get by. Stone Cottage Theater, 15650 Addison Road, Addison. Through Aug. 13. 8 p.m. \$18-\$22. MBSProductions.net.

The Wiz. In collaboration with Dallas Black Dance Theatre, the Dallas Theater Center presents this urban retelling of The Wizard of Oz. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. Through Aug. 7. \$10-\$80. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

ART

Statuesque. Exhibit of six international artists whose work reveals "a renewed significance of the figure in contemporary sculpture." This marks the Nasher's first exhibition outdoors. Nasher Sculpture Center, 2001 Flora St. Through Aug. 21. NasherSculptureCenter.org.

Synclines featured new work by Cabe Booth, Kevin Obregon and out pop artist Robb Conover whose works have appeared at Buli and Drama Room. Ro2 Art, 110 N. Akard St. (in the Kirby Building.) Through Aug. 13. Ro2Art.com/Synclines.

SATURDAY 07.30

COMMUNITY

Khush Dallas, a support group for LGBT South Asians meets the last Saturday of every month for social outings. Restricted to LGBT South Asians and their partners. Meetings are restricted and location disclosed to those attending to protect privacy. Contact for more information. 7 p.m. 469-454-8741. Khushtexas@gmail.com. KhushTexas.org.

Dallas FrontRunners fun run. Runners and walkers at all levels welcome. Meet on the patio of the

recreation house at Sunset Bay at White Rock Lake Park. 8 a.m. Frontrunners-Dallas.org.

Fuse: Core Group for gay men ages 18 to 29. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 2-5 p.m. DFWFuse.com.

DFW Prime Timers play bingo at private residence. 7 p.m. Call 972-504-8866 for details.

Rainbow Ministries International. Meets weekly. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 2 p.m. 469-222-3400.

Late Great Chevy

Car Show. Guests can not only see a selection of vintage cars, but can also dress to participate in the sock hop costume contest. The event is hosted by Norma's Café Trinity Mills and continues every second Saturday through October. Norma's Café, 17721 N. Dallas Tollway. 8 a.m. Free.

BROADCAST

Cathedral of Hope worship service. Ch. 8 at 12:35 a.m. (Friday after midnight).

SUNDAY 07.31

COMMUNITY

Youth First Texas Collin County. Group for LGBTQ youth and allies up to age 22. North Texas Youth Connection — Allen Office, 201 W. Boyd Road. Suite 105D, Allen. 6 p.m. CollinCounty@YouthFirstTexas.org.

Gaymsters bridge club. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 2 p.m.

Breath of Life Interfaith Mindfulness Fellowship. LGBT-friendly "meditation and more" event. In-

this week's solution

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CLASH OF THE TITANS | Mythical creatures battle it out in 'The Final Adventure of Hercules'



spired by Buddhist spirituality, all faiths welcome. Deaf interpretation provided. Dallas Meditation Center, 727 S. Floyd Road, Richardson. 5 p.m. Donations accepted. InterMindful.com.

The ONE Church, 2515 Inwood Road, Ste 213. Services at 11:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. Dallas1Church.org.

Dignity Dallas sponsors Roman Catholic liturgy. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6 p.m. 214-521-5342 ext. 1732. DignityDallas.org.

Resounding Harmony holds weekly rehearsals at Oak Lawn United Methodist Church, 3014 Oak Lawn Ave. 7 p.m. ResoundingHarmony.org.

30/40Something social group meets weekly. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 10 a.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

MONDAY 08.01

COMMUNITY

F.A.C.E., support group for those impacted by HIV/AIDS in any capacity. The group also meets on Thursdays. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 7 p.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

DFW Prime Timers play bridge every week at 1 p.m. Call 972-504-8866 for details.

The Women's Chorus of Dallas holds rehearsals. Sammons Center for the Arts, 3630 Harry Hines Blvd. 7-10 p.m. 214-520-7828.

CABARET

Mama's Party. Amy Stevenson hosts the weekly cabaret featuring local stage actors and musicians. Contemporary Theater of Dallas, 5601 Sears St. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY 08.02

COMMUNITY

Classic Chassis Car Club. Ojeda's 4617 Maple Ave. 6:30 p.m. 214-446-0606.



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Hercules' now at the Pocket Sandwich Theatre.

National Leather Association-Dallas meeting. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7 p.m. NLA-Dallas.org.

Q's Day Potluck. Friendly casual LGBT gathering gets together every Tuesday. The Corporate Image, 5418 Brentwood Stair Road, Fort Worth. 7 p.m. 817-446-3395.

Sista to Sista support group provided by AIDS Outreach Center. Meets every first, second and third Tuesday. AIDS Outreach Center, 400 N. Beach St., Fort Worth. 11:30 a.m. AOC.org.

Positive Recovery Auricular Acupuncture meets Tuesdays and Wednesdays. AIDS Outreach Center, 400 N. Beach St., Fort Worth. AOC.org.

Miracle Workers (formerly Peace Builder Leadership Team) meets in Fellowship Hall. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30 p.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

FUSE Movie Night every week. For gay and bi guys up to 29. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7 p.m. GetYourFuseOn.com.

Cathedral Ringers handbell rehearsal. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6:45 p.m. Contact Jeremy.crosswhite@gmail.com for information.

Stop Smoking psycho-educational group by the AIDS Outreach Center, 400 N. Beach St., Fort Worth. 2 p.m.

BROADCAST

The 10% with Israel Luna and Richard Curtin streams every Tuesday and Thursday at 3 p.m. on RationalBroadcasting.com.

WEDNESDAY 08.03

COMMUNITY

Dallas PUMP, rehearsal for the chorus for LGBT youth. Youth First Texas, 5415 Maple Ave. Suite 225. 6:30 p.m. DallasPump.org.

FUSE drop-in weekdays (except Tuesdays). For gay and bi guys up to 29. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 3-8 p.m. 214-540-4435.

Gay Teen Project. 909 W. Magnolia St., Suite 2, Fort Worth. 7 p.m. 817-332-7722.

EI Sol, an AIDS Outreach Center support group meets weekly. AIDS Outreach Center, 400 N. Beach St., Fort Worth. 2 p.m. AOC.org.

BROADCAST

Lambda Weekly. LGBT radio for North Texas. This week's guest is counselor Candy Marcum. 89.3 KNON-FM at 7 a.m. LambdaWeekly.com.

THURSDAY 08.04

COMMUNITY

PFLAG of Fort Worth meets. First Jefferson Universalist Unitarian Church, 1959 Sandy Lane. 7 p.m. Free. Hotline 817-428-2329. PFLAGFortWorth.org.

First Thursday Gallery Walk where all showrooms and galleries along Dragon Street in the Design District will remain open until 8 p.m. each month.

Standing on the Promises A.A. group. There are no dues or fees for membership nor is it have specific association. 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30 p.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

Choir and orchestra rehearsals at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 7 p.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

Brokeback Dallas. Support group for gay men married to straight women. St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church, 6526 Inwood Road. 7:30 p.m.

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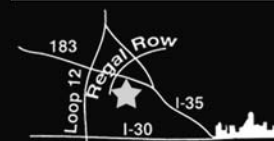
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CELEBRITY BIRTHDAY

By Jack Fertig



President Barack Obama turns 50 on Thursday. While the president has frustrated the LGBT community at times, he made strides by recently signing the law that repeals "don't ask, don't tell." Gays and lesbians will be able to serve openly as of September. He also just nominated openly gay judicial candidate Michael Walter Fitzgerald to the U.S. district court.

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

Your birthday month is your time to roar, but keep quiet. Words are too important to waste and quiet intensity is stronger than loud declarations. Deal with serious issues; then celebrate.

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Tough times bring out your inner strength. Meditation as well as thoughtful organization helps to economize better. Helping others less fortunate inspires you to greater effectiveness.

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

You have a lot of hard work and challenges now, but keeping an eye to the future helps you see through the gloom of the present. Your friends help you keep perspective.

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Doubts push you too hard at work. Calm down, meditate. Family helps you get solid grounding. They also wear you down, so pick your confidants and approach them carefully.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 20

You need a mental challenge in a new venue. If you can't afford a real vacation, find movies, art shows or a good book that take you to different worlds and stimulate your brain. Invite a friend.

CAPRICORN Dec 21-Jan 19

Take charge in the bedroom. This is your chance to be supremely powerful and dominant — or to make an art form of being a pushy bottom.

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Disagreements with your partner are nothing new. The serious ones gain special importance, not in a divisive way, but as a challenge for you to learn something and grow closer.

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 19

Be very careful of sports injuries and sunburns. Get very serious about your health! There may be some very serious problems lurking. The sooner you deal with them the better.

ARIES Mar 20-Apr 19

Let your partner guide and focus your dazzling brilliance. Restrictive suggestions are the most helpful. If you're single, a durable love is out there in someone much older or younger.

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

Parental responsibilities loom large. If you don't have kids or elderly parents needing your attention, think about your community and keeping it strong for your own benefit and others'.

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

Get more meaning in fewer words. Practice the communicative art of silence: the subtle nod, the lift of an eyebrow, the discreet gesture. There is power in saying more by talking less.

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

You're at the beginning of a 15-year career upswing. Take good stock of your virtues and your flaws to have a clear idea of what foundation you provide to build on.

THIS WEEK

The sun in Leo is beach weather. Vacations, fun, strut your stuff! But as Sol is sextile Saturn in Libra needful limits and responsibility are lurking behind the fun. A constructive project, maybe a charitable fundraiser, could even be the fun. Work with others to focus your creative juices.

Jack Fertig can be reached at 415-864-8302 or Starjack.com

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bitter girl



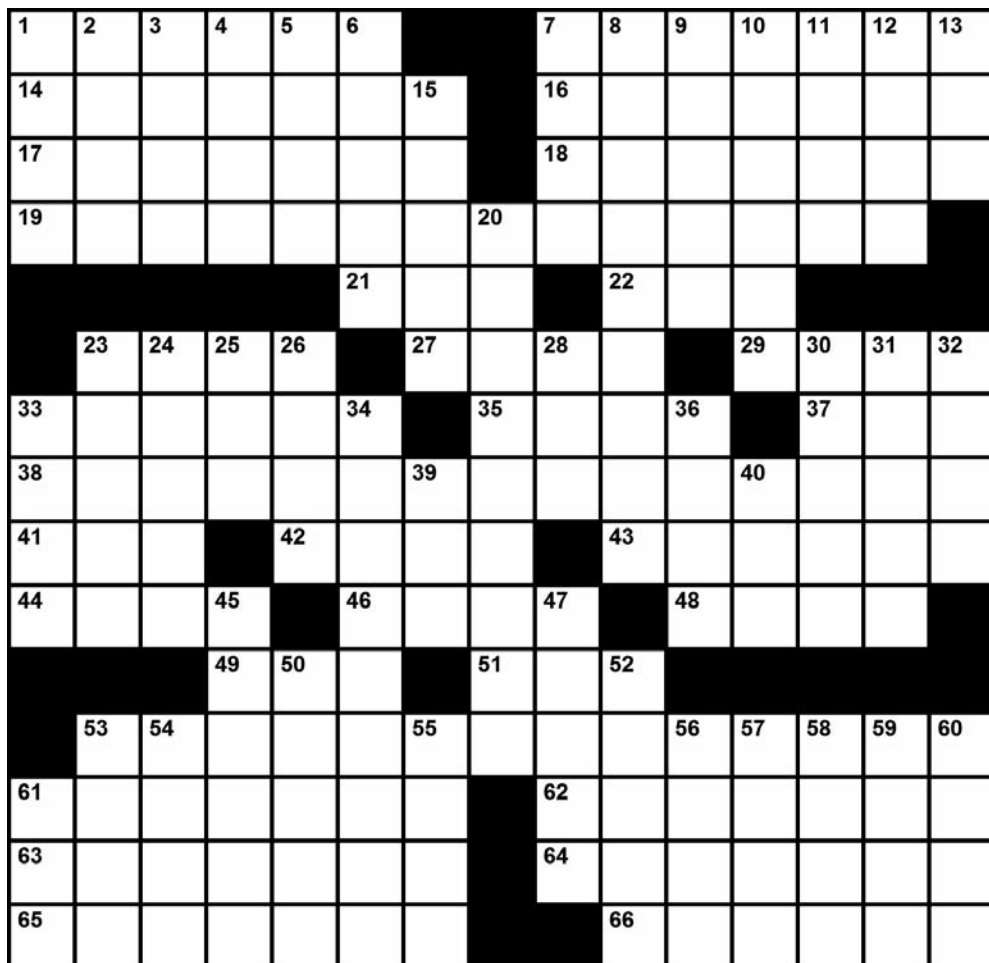
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Kilt Inaction

Solution on page 49

Across

- 1 Mr. in an Orton play
- 7 Sends back to a lower court
- 14 They may shoot cream into your mouth
- 16 Dancer Duncan
- 17 Gradual absorption
- 18 It takes balls
- 19 Start of a quip
- 21 Philosopher Mo-__
- 22 Memorial designer Maya
- 23 It's a curd in the kitchen
- 27 NCAA home of the Bruins
- 29 Belgrade native
- 33 Harvey, in Torch Song Trilogy
- 35 Avoids family cooking, with "out"
- 37 Summer zodiac sign
- 38 More of the quip
- 41 Org. for Annapolis grads
- 42 Egyptian vipers
- 43 Blues singer Ma
- 44 Tiny bit of matter
- 46 Singer Williamson
- 48 Mapplethorpe model, often
- 49 Blood group system

Down

- 51 TV band
- 53 End of the quip
- 61 Scent of a man
- 62 Honeymoon place that rhymes with Viagra
- 63 Gin and rum
- 64 Kahlo's tongue
- 65 Like the tightest buttocks
- 66 Defense without weapons

Down

- 1 One with a flat bottom
- 2 S&M unit
- 3 Bottom's offer to pay?
- 4 Quotation notation
- 5 Like a buttinsky
- 6 George, who was Mary Ann
- 7 Heed the alarm
- 8 Still people go down on them
- 9 Start of a favorite holiday
- 10 Decks out
- 11 "___ creature was stirring ..."
- 12 AZT, e.g.
- 13 Pianist at Rick's Café Americain
- 15 Mazda competitor
- 20 Like some genes
- 23 Coin word
- 24 Bridge bid, briefly
- 25 One of "them"
- 26 Bone by the radius
- 28 Lake, to fifty million Frenchmen
- 30 Serengeti sight
- 31 O'Connor of Xena
- 32 Winterson's Written on the ___
- 33 Water color
- 34 Bargains at Barneys
- 36 Laurel of laughs
- 39 "All Things Considered" station
- 40 Lucy of Charlie's Angels
- 45 George Moscone, and others
- 47 Classic western
- 50 The African Queen co-star, informally
- 52 Feel up for weapons
- 53 Inside scoop
- 54 Brothers & Sisters producer Ken
- 55 ___ Side Story
- 56 Biggest of a bear threesome
- 57 It makes gelatin get hard
- 58 Peter Pan pooch
- 59 Hurry along
- 60 Successful pitch
- 61 Judy Chicago's hrs.



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This Paper is 100% RECYCLABLE



Ace, Ken and Theron at BJ's NXS!



Jonathan, Ken, Reese and Chance at Drama Room.

Frick, it's hot! OK, just had to get that out of our system. Let's see what's going down The **Dallas Voice Drillers** softball team is ready to get all sudsy on you with the **Drillers Car Wash** Saturday morn at the **Round-Up Saloon** parking lot. That gets your wheels nice and shiny for the week **DJ Alan Metts** provides the soundtrack for Saturday's **Beat the Heat Beach Party** at **the Brick**. Singer **Jurni Rayne** hosts **Tuesday Night Karaoke** every week. But when she takes the mic, pay attention. She's kind of amazing **Best Friends Club** will host the **Miss Tarrant County State and State at Large** pageant on Sunday The theme for this week's **Fetish Friday** at the **Dallas Eagle** is "boots" so wear 'em, polish 'em, lick 'em or whatever else gets you excited over footwear. **The Red, White and Blue Hanky Party** goes down Saturday and it's not even a patriotic holiday! How great are those Eagle guys? Some good Americans! The **UCLSE** hosts **Christmas in July...Barely!** on Sunday. The holiday party benefits **AIDS Interfaith Network** and puts Santa in 100-degree weather. And find out who is the **Bear of the Week** on Thursday **Sue Ellen's** begins the weekend a little differently. Friday night will be **Sexy Mic Comedy** which has our interest piqued. Who doesn't like someone who is hot and funny? It's a lethal combo for sure. **The Paco Estrada Band** plays Saturday. We're curious about **The Matthew Show** on Sunday. The nerd popster has been dropping singles from his podcast **Whitney Paige** hosts her **Super Sunday Show** every week at **the Rainbow Lounge**.... **The Rose Room** hosts the **Newcomer of the Year** pageant Thursday Now that's a full dance card. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREGORY HAYES. FOR MORE PHOTOS, VISIT DALLASVOICE.COM.



Donnie, Tim, Joe and Allen at Dallas Eagle.



Jesus and Libby at JR.'s Bar & Grill.



Chelcie and Baby Bear at Best Friends Club.



Sherry and Rhonda at Sue Ellen's.



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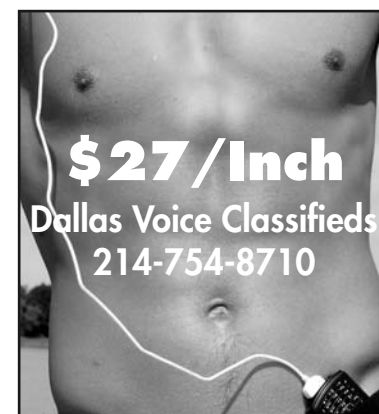
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