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■ STAGE, Page 16



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calling OUT the SCOUTS

As local and national LGBT activists continue to fight the Irving-based Boy Scouts' ban on gays, a glimmer of hope appears on the horizon

■ COVER STORY, Page 6

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headlines

■ TEXAS NEWS

- 9 GetEQUAL calls sit-in charges harsh
- 10 Crime down near Cedar Springs strip

■ LIFE+STYLE

- 18 Cuba is becoming a gay paradise
- 20 Lesbian singer Brani Carilile's new CD
- 21 Asian film fest has LGBT appeal

■ COVER ART

Photography by David Taffet.
Design by Kevin Thomas.

departments

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----|-------------|
| 6 | Texas News | 16 | Life+Style |
| 8 | Pet of the Week | 26 | Starvoice |
| 8 | Death | 28 | Scene |
| 14 | Viewpoints | 30 | Classifieds |

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IN THE MINORITY | Reps. Eddie Bernice Johnson, from left, Lloyd Doggett, Sheila Jackson Lee and Charlie Gonzalez were the only four Democrats from Texas who signed the brief opposing DOMA. Five House Democrats from Texas — Reps. Henry Cuellar, Al Green, Gene Green, Rubén Hinojosa and Silvestre Reyes — declined to sign the brief.

Resource Center Dallas calls out Dwaine Caraway for anti-LGBT lyrics in latest anti-sagging song

Last week we told you that Dallas City Councilman Dwaine Caraway had unveiled yet another rap song containing homophobic lyrics to promote his anti-sagging-pants campaign. In response to our post, Resource Center Dallas' Cece Cox sent a letter to Caraway on Monday, July 9, calling for him and other city leaders to repudiate the song's anti-LGBT message.



Dwaine Caraway

"It was with great dismay that I read a blog post last week from the Dallas Voice about your renewed campaign to discourage men from wearing saggy pants," Cox wrote.

"For the second time in five years, the campaign is using a rap song featuring anti-LGBT lyrics to promote this campaign. According to the Voice, five years ago the lyrics to the song were modified to remove the anti-LGBT content, so I was highly surprised to see them return and be expanded on in the re-launched campaign," she wrote.

"The Center shares common ground with you on the sagging pants issue; in fact, we agree that dress-

ing without one's underwear showing is a good idea," Cox wrote. "Our concern is the approach to the campaign and the lyrics to the song. Calling someone on the 'down low,' meaning men having sex with men (MSM) and stating it as a put-down, helps promote fear, shame and discrimination against men who are gay or bisexual or are perceived to be gay or bisexual."

CC'd on Cox's letter to Caraway are Mayor Mike Rawlings and all of the other council members. For the record, Caraway's assistant, Sloan Anderson, hasn't returned our phone calls seeking comment about the song.

— John Wright

Majority of House Democrats from Texas decline to sign brief opposing Defense of Marriage Act

With friends like these, who needs enemies?

The Texas Democratic Party may have recently added marriage equality to its platform, but obviously that doesn't mean all or even most Democratic elected officials in the Lone Star State support the plank — or have the guts to stand up for it.

In fact, a majority of U.S. House Democrats from Texas have declined to sign a court brief opposing the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act.

Five of the nine House Democrats from Texas — the most from any state — are among 60 from across the country who declined to sign the friend-of-

the-court brief filed Tuesday before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Washington Blade reports that 132 House Democrats signed the brief, which urges the federal appeals court to strike down as unconstitutional the 1996 law prohibiting federal recognition of same-sex marriage. The brief was filed in *Golinski v. Office of Personnel Management*, in which federal employee Karen Golinski is seeking benefits for her partner.

Shelbi Day, a staff attorney for Lambda Legal, which represents Golinski, told the Blade that the brief filed by House Democrats "sends a powerful message" and "underscores just how problematic and unconstitutional DOMA is."

"As the brief points out, DOMA is not the rational

result of impartial lawmaking but rather was enacted in haste with no legitimate government purpose," Day said.

"We welcome this brief and applaud the members of Congress who have signed it."

The four Democrats from Texas who signed the brief opposing DOMA are Reps. Lloyd Doggett, Charlie Gonzalez, Sheila Jackson Lee and Eddie Bernice Johnson.

The five U.S. House members from Texas who declined to sign the brief are Reps. Henry Cuellar, Al Green, Gene Green, Rubén Hinojosa and Silvestre Reyes. (To his credit Al Green is a co-sponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, which would repeal DOMA.)

— John Wright



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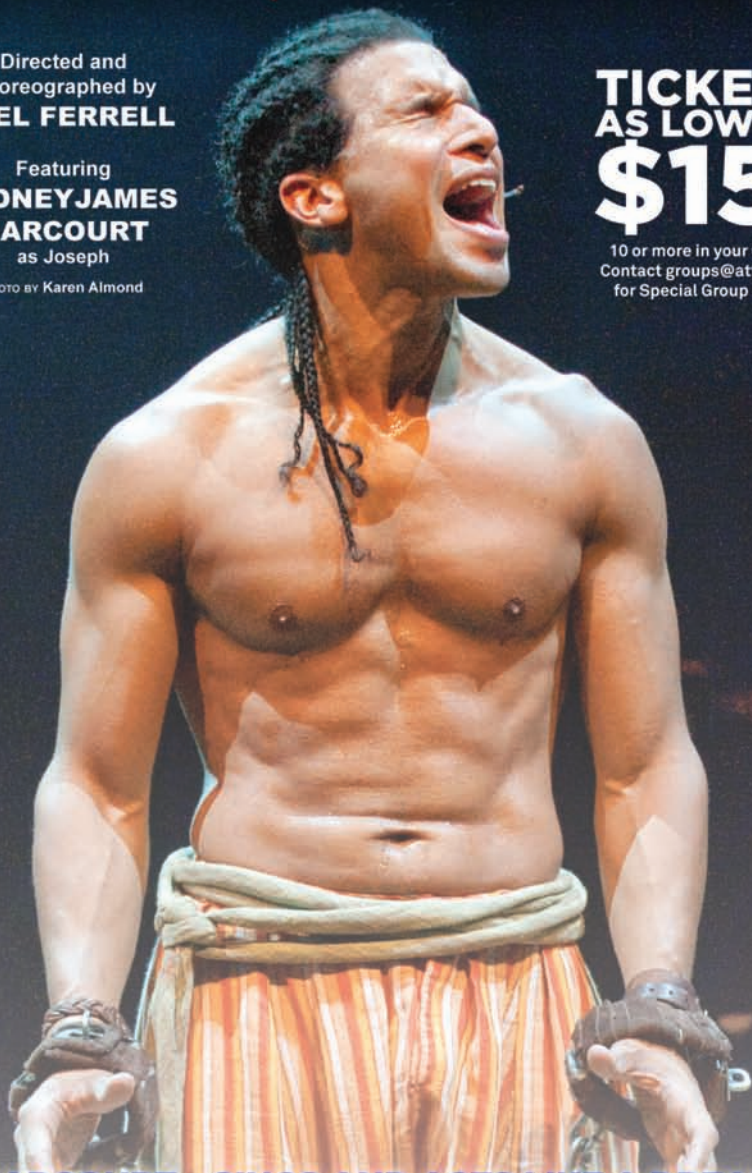
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Elaine Liner, Dallas Observer



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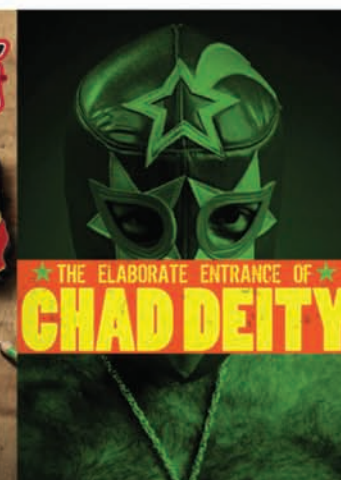
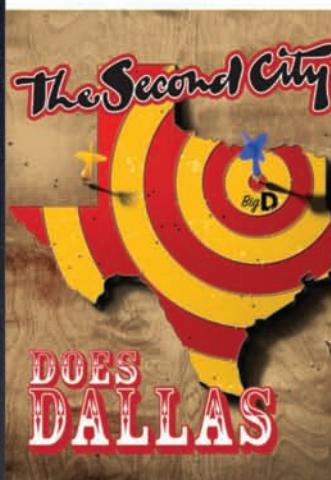
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Calling out the Scouts

As local and national LGBT activists continue to fight the Irving-based Boy Scouts' ban on gays, a glimmer of hope appears on the horizon

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Sunshine is a single Dallas mother and an out lesbian.

A few years ago Sunshine, who declined to give her full name, decided she wanted to get her son involved in extracurricular activities.

"He wanted to try Boy Scouts because one of his friends was in it," Sunshine said in an email to Dallas Voice.

"Once they found out I was openly out, they would not let him join a troop," she said.

Sunshine said no one called her back to help get her son in the Scouts.

"Sad for a fourth-grader at the time," she said. "However, he is 14 now and doesn't seem like it affected him one bit."

Marlin Earl Bynum, a local gay schoolteacher who's been active in protesting the Boy Scouts ban on gays, said Sunshine's case goes even beyond Boy Scout anti-gay policy. Under the policy, a child shouldn't be excluded because a parent is gay, Bynum said.

Bynum was a Cub Scout and a Webelo. But his recent interest in the Boy Scouts and the group's discrimination against gays and atheists developed when he moved to Las Colinas, a few blocks from the Boy Scouts national headquarters in Irving.

"It's directly connected to bullying," Bynum said of the policy. "When you tell someone 'we don't care how accomplished you are, but you can't be part of us,' it can cause you to be suicidal."

Sunshine and Bynum are just a few of the local LGBT people who've been personally impacted by the Boy Scouts policy banning gays, which dates back at least to a 1978 memo that read: "We support the decision of the Mankato, Minn., Explorer post Advisor regarding the denial of membership to youth members who declare themselves to be homosexuals."

But cracks in the BSA policy have begun to



SCOUTS DISHONOR | Marlin Bynum pickets Friday, July 6, in front of the Boy Scouts National Council on West Walnut Hill Lane in Irving. Bynum, a gay schoolteacher from Keller, believes the Scouts' ban on gays contributes to bullying and teen suicide, and he said recent developments mean it's time to relaunch the demonstrations he once conducted regularly outside the group's national headquarters. (David Taffet/Dallas Voice)

emerge of late, with two prominent Executive Board members declaring their support for diversity.

Meanwhile, Jennifer Tyrrell made news in April when she was removed as den mother for her son's Cub Scout troop in Ohio.

Tyrrell served in the position for a year, but after being named treasurer of the pack and finding inconsistencies in its finances, she was removed because she did "not meet the high standards of membership that the [Boy Scouts of America] seeks."

And Zach Wahls, a former Eagle Scout raised by two moms, joined her fight after accidentally meeting her in GLAAD's New York office. Wahls delivered boxes containing a petition with 284,000 signatures to the Boy Scouts calling for them to end the discriminatory policy and reinstate Tyrrell.

'I hope you burn in hell'

Bynum said that for him, the recent national developments may mean it's time to relaunch his weekly protests at the Boy Scouts headquarters, at 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane.

The Boy Scouts moved to Irving from New Jersey in 1979. Today, about 500 people work at the

Boy Scouts National Council. Almost 80 percent are women.

Two years ago, Bynum was a regular protester at Boy Scouts headquarters.

On Saturday and Sunday mornings, he would spend two hours picketing along the curb, greeting people as they went into the National Scouting Museum.

Last week he conducted a short protest and got several thumbs-ups, horn honks and waves.

Bynum kept a diary of his earlier experiences. "I won't say I changed the world, but at least I felt I was exposing the hate this organization supports by not allowing gay people in as members and leaders," he wrote in one entry. "Someone from the museum was on the phone with someone and was very upset that there was 'this guy out front that had a sign that said BSA and Hate on it.'"

A week later he wrote, "I had three different people stop and ask about the protest and were shocked that the BSA kicks out gays."

On another day, a woman going to the museum with her children said she would tell them they should change their policy.

Another stopped, asked what Bynum's gay Pride flag meant and said: "I hope you burn in

hell. You are what's wrong with America."

As a high school teacher, Bynum said he's concerned about how the BSA policy, which teaches the 2.7 million boys currently involved in scouting that homosexuality and atheism are wrong, is encouraging bullying in schools and affecting young people's self-esteem.

Bynum didn't come out as gay until he was 42 and had just fought a battle with cancer. For 25 years he had been a Church of Christ preacher.

"And that's not United Church of Christ," he said. "It's the bad one."

Bynum knew he was gay from the time he was young but lived a celibate life and preached in small-town churches in West Texas.

Now he's an atheist, openly gay and teaches in Keller.

"Cancer kind of wakes you up," he said.

Bynum said he protested when Robert Jeffress, senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Dallas, preached against gays and lesbians.

"Gay kids heard those horrible things over and over," he said. "You hear 'God hates you' and you become suicidal."

And he claims that's exactly what the Boy Scouts are doing.

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death

James W. McCoy Jr., 43, died on July 10, 2012. He graduated from Mesquite High School where he played football and was a member of the National Honor Society. He graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a bachelor's degree in information systems.

McCoy met his husband, Paul Cross, on Sept. 27, 2002, and they were married in San Francisco on Oct. 4, 2008, making theirs one of the California marriages that remained legal after Proposition 8. He worked at AXIOM Systems as a healthcare IT consultant.

McCoy was a member of Cheer Dallas, participated in the Pegasus Slowpitch Softball Association as a player and coach, and rode with team Slow Spokes in the Lone Star Ride Fighting AIDS. Since 2001, he went to Camp Willowswish every year and was named Miss Camp Willowswish America 2001. McCoy loved country and western dancing at the Round-Up, Christmas and Halloween parties, group trips to Screams, birthdays parties with family and friends, as well as hosting outdoor movie nights at the pool at their home in Northwest Dallas and hanging out with friends at Two Corks and a Bottle.

He is survived by his husband, Paul Cross; his mother, Cynthia McCoy; father and stepmother, James W. and Jana McCoy; sister and brother-in-law, Jeana McCoy Enochs and Edgar Hill Enochs III; nieces and nephews, Brittany Caviness and Jordan and Emma Enochs; parents-in-law, Sam and Laurie Batt; and his many aunts, uncles, close



McCoy, right, and his husband Paul Cross

friends and relatives across the country.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to YouCaring.com (TinyURL.com/7h33zpo) to help pay medical and funeral expenses. Money collected over the goal will be split between the Pancreatic Cancer Network and the Lone Star Ride.

The funeral will take place at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, on Friday, July 13, at 10 a.m. followed by burial at Restland Cemetery, 13005 Greenville Ave.

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GetEQUAL: Charges for marriage sit-in too harsh

Mark Jiminez, Beau Chandler face up to 6 months in jail for refusing to leave Dallas County Clerk's Office on July 5 after being denied a license

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com



BOOKED | Jiminez and Chandler, shown in their Dallas County jail booking photos, each posted \$500 bail before being released.

GetEQUAL Texas alleges that Beau Chandler and Mark "Major" Jiminez are facing harsher charges than people arrested at similar protests around the state and country.

Chandler and Jiminez were arrested at the Dallas County Clerk's Office on July 5 when they refused to leave after they were not issued a marriage license. They are charged with class-B misdemeanor criminal trespass.

A similar Austin protest earlier this year also resulted in different charges that are also Class-B misdemeanors.

On Valentine's Day, a same-sex couple applied for their marriage license at the Travis County Clerk's Office. After being denied by tearful and supportive Clerk Dana DeBeauvoir, the couple and their witness were arrested and charged with "obstructing a highway or other passageway."

"Is it any harsher?" said Dax Garvin, the Austin couple's attorney. "On the face of the statute, probably not ... but depending on the facts of the case, it may be easier to prove."

Garvin explained that if a government office is closing, that is one form of trespassing. But if it is still open and protesters are blocking passage, then it is obstructing.

Class-B misdemeanors are punishable by up to 180 days in jail and \$2,000 fines.

Asked whether these charges would be considered harsh for a political protest, Carmen Castro, spokeswoman for the Dallas County Sheriff's Department said, "This has nothing to do with the couple's political rights. They refused to leave a

county building at closing time, 4:30 p.m. and were given numerous opportunities to leave the building or continue their demonstration outside."

Cathy Marino-Thomas, co-president of Marriage Equality USA, disagreed.

"This is pretty harsh," Marino-Thomas said. "I haven't heard of charges like this being filed at all."

Marino-Thomas said in most other cases, protesters are removed from the premises and released — with charges later dropped.

After an anti-marriage state constitutional amendment passed in North Carolina in May, Mary Jamis applied for a marriage license for herself and her partner Starr Johnson. When she was denied, Jamis refused to leave the Forsyth County Register of Deeds office in Winston-Salem, N.C.

According to the Associated Press, she was arrested and charged with second-degree trespass, a misdemeanor, and released without bond. Chandler and Jiminez were released only after each paying \$500 bail.

In 2010, California's San Diego County sheriff sent 50 deputies dressed in full riot gear to disperse nine peaceful protesters at the office where marriage licenses are issued. When the protesters refused to leave, they were arrested and charged with failure to disperse and interference with the

■ **CHARGES**, Page 11



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■ texasnews

Crime down 47% near Cedar Springs strip

Business leader says recent string of robberies has become rare, credits working relationship with police for decrease in Wycliff-Lemmon TAAG

ANNA WAUGH | Staff Writer
waugh@dallasvoice.com

Despite a recent string of robberies that made the TV news, overall crime dropped sharply in the first six months of 2012 in the area near the Cedar Springs strip.

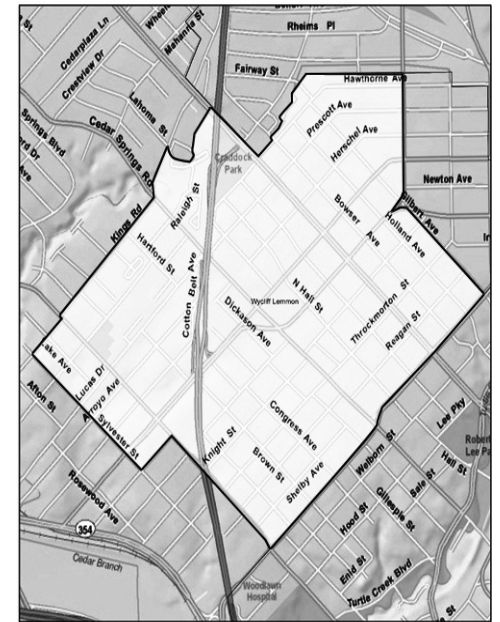
Crime in the Wycliff-Lemmon Target Area Action Grid, previously called the Cedar Springs-Wycliff TAAG and the Maple-Wycliff TAAG, decreased 47 percent from January 1 to July 10 compared to year-end numbers from 2011 obtained from Dallas Police Department.

The TAAG stretches from Maple Avenue to Lemmon Avenue and from Oak Lawn Avenue to Kings Road. Violent crime dropped 46 percent, with 58 offenses in the first six months of the year. There were 362 nonviolent crimes reported, a 47 percent drop from last year's numbers.

Scott Whittall, executive director of the Cedar Springs Merchant Association, said merchants have been working closely with police to report crimes. The security guard the association hired has also communicated with police to report suspicious people and incidents.

"I think the reason crime is down is because we've worked closely with Dallas police, even though we don't have cameras yet," he said. "[Cameras] are a great reason to drive down crime even more."

The Wycliff-Lemmon hot spot ranked No. 7 for overall crime in April, but currently ranks No. 11 among the list of 27 hot spots citywide. The TAAG is also No. 11 in line for new police technology that would furnish areas with added cameras and



GAY HOT SPOT | The Wycliff-Lemmon TAAG is outlined in the above map from DPD.

bait cars. The top 10 are expected to be equipped by the end of 2012.

Four robberies and a possible fifth that police are investigating occurred within the first 11 days of July in the Wycliff-Lemmon TAAG, prompting NBC Channel 5 to air a story about the offenses this week.

The first robbery was at 3 a.m. on July 4 when a man walking near his residence in the 3800 block of Cedar Springs Road was held up by a suspect in a vehicle. The suspect took the victim hostage and stole his wallet before releasing him at a gas station in Addison.

On July 7, a man and his friend were robbed in the 4100 block of Hall Street around 11 p.m. They were walking toward a residence when two white suspects in their 20s with brown hair and medium

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builds came up behind them. One pointed a pistol at them and demanded they get on the ground and give the suspects their money, phones, wallets and credit card pin numbers.

Two robberies occurred July 9. A man and a woman were robbed while walking to the Kroger at Cedar Springs and Wycliff Avenue shortly after midnight. A Hispanic suspect in his 20s approached them on foot in the 4100 block of Hall Street, pointed a small silver semiautomatic pistol at the man's head, demanding his money. The man told the suspect he didn't have any money, but the woman handed over \$50.

Around the same time, two men were walking in the 3900 block of Rawlins Street when two Hispanic suspects in their 20s demanded money and beat one of the victims in the left arm with a baseball bat when he didn't "comply fast enough," the incident report states. When the victim responded in Spanish, the suspects fled the location without any of their property.

Police are also investigating a possible robbery in the early hours of July 11 when a 19-year-old black man yelled at a man leaving a gas station in the 4000 block of Cedar Springs. The suspect tackled the victim and took \$60.

Lt. Scott Walton said it's unlikely the robberies are related because the suspect descriptions are different.

Whittall said the recent robberies are not common anymore as more patrols, quicker response times and a greater police presence in general has driven crime down near the strip. He said the lower crime rates are a "shining example of what can happen when you have a really good working relationship with police," adding that the high percentage crime dropped was not a surprise because of the community's efforts.

"We knew that they would go down. The tell is in the numbers," he said. "We're elated. We're very, very happy because that was the goal."

Sr. Cpl. Laura Martin, DPD's LGBT Liaison, agreed that participation and involvement from the community has helped lower the numbers by reporting crimes.

"We do our best to send resources when people report crime," she said. "When people report crime, we saturate the area and crime going down is normally a crime trend." ■

■ CHARGES, From Page 9

business of a public agency. The group has come to be known as the Equality 9. The case is still pending, but the maximum penalty would be three months in jail.

Merino-Thomas, based in New York, said the Dallas case is getting national attention. "This is the stuff that equal rights movements are made of," she said. "People will push for equality despite the personal cost and rightfully so."

She called the current system "a patchwork of rights" and said her own marriage has been made valid and annulled so many times, she still doesn't feel secure despite living in a state with marriage equality. "Every person needs to be treated equally," she said.

With the rise in support for marriage equality around the country, she predicted that if President Barack Obama wins re-election, gays and lesbians will soon gain the right to marry nationwide.

Jamille Bradfield, a spokeswoman for the Dallas County District Attorney's Office, said the DA's office has not received Jiminez and Chandler's cases yet, so it was too soon to tell if the office would lower or drop the charges. The sheriff's department has up to 10 business days to file with the district attorney's office.

Chandler and Jiminez were given a court date of Aug. 2 but their cases are scheduled for different courtrooms at the same time. As of press time, they had spoken to attorneys but not yet retained counsel. Merino-Thomas said placing their cases in separate courts but at the same time was an example of how same-sex couples are treated differently.

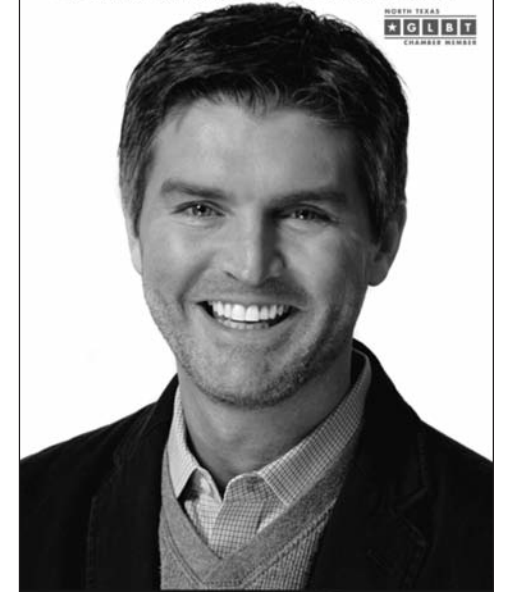
Jiminez and Chandler both said they plan to plead not guilty and continue their fight for a marriage license.

Merino-Thomas had one piece of advice for the couple. "Go for it," she said. ■

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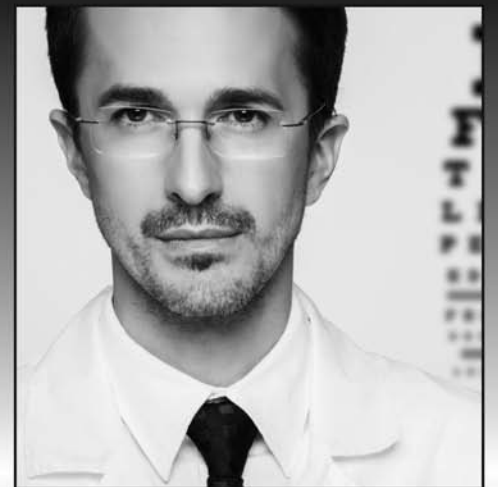
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coverstory



'ONE OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE MOMS' | Jennifer Tyrrell made national news in April when she was removed as den mother for her son's Cub Scout troop in Ohio. Rich Ferraro, a spokesman for GLAAD, said, 'Her story resonated so well because of her beautiful, happy, healthy family.' (Associated Press)

■ **SCOUTS**, From Page 6

When Bynum looks through the Boy Scout manual, he sees a wonderful program to build character. And he said the Boy Scouts do wonderful things for the community. But he said they are also teaching kids hate and violence against gays.

Popcorn colonel fights back

Jon Langbert was the Popcorn Colonel for his son Carter's University Park Cub Scout troop. Many Boy Scout groups finance their year's activities through popcorn sales, similarly to the Girl Scouts and cookies.

Langbert was so successful, sales increased to \$13,000 the year he took over from just \$4,000 the year before.

But in 2010, a couple of dads in Carter's troop heard that a gay dad was involved and insisted he leave. The troop's leader, happy with Langbert's involvement and thrilled with his sales, said no. The dads took their complaint to the Area Council on Harry Hines Boulevard.

The Council sided with the dads and insisted Langbert's official involvement with the Scouts end.

While Carter remained a member of his troop, Langbert pursued equality in the Boy Scouts quietly from within the organization, but now he's taking a different approach. He's pushing the school district, the PTA and the Dads Club. And he's been successful locally.

The Boy Scouts have been kicked out of two of the four Park Cities elementary schools, Langbert said.

"Don't collect fees and then turn around and discriminate," he said.

In one of the schools, a gay couple had two adopted kids. One of the dads was a potential president of the PTA, yet he couldn't be involved in the Boy Scout troop at the school. Langbert said school officials saw the "irony and hypocrisy and

bigotry all rolled into one" and stopped sponsoring the scouts.

"My focus is on winning the battles I can win," he said.

With the school district, he's insisting they enforce their own nondiscrimination policy.

He called Tyrrell's case a shame. He said there's no example of a gay or lesbian parent being removed from his or her position because of misconduct.

"It's other parents agitating," he said, and then, once the gay parent is gone, typically not picking up the slack.

That happened in his case. After the parent complained about Langbert being the Popcorn Colonel, the troop leader offered to get rid of Langbert if someone would take over the position. The parents declined to volunteer as popcorn colonel but went to the Council and had Langbert removed.

"The tide is turning," Langbert said. "They're a hold-out and risk becoming an anachronism. If the military is fine with gays, how can the Boy Scouts not be fine with gays?"

Board members ready for battle

Rich Ferraro, a spokesman for GLAAD, agreed. He's been working with Tyrrell since she contacted his office in mid-April.

"Her story resonated so well because of her beautiful, happy, healthy family," he said.

Tyrrell is raising four children with her partner, Alicia.

Ferraro said parents in her son Tiger's troop rallied around her. They never had to talk about gay issues until the Boy Scouts brought it up, forcing them to discuss with their children why their leader had to step down.

"People in the area are now vocal supporters of her and her family," Ferraro said. "She's become one of America's favorite moms."

Since the Supreme Court enshrined the BSA's



COOKING UP SOME REVENGE | Jon Langbert, a gay dad who was removed as popcorn colonel for his son Carter's University Park Cub Scouts troop in 2010, said he's since gotten the Scouts booted from two Park Cities elementary schools. (Courtesy of Jon Langbert)

right to freedom of association as a private organization in 2000, it has seemed like nothing could be done about BSA's policy excluding gays and atheists. That may be changing with new, vocal board members and a change of president.

The outgoing president was Rex Tillerson, better known as CEO of ExxonMobil, a company with the lowest possible rating on LGBT equality from the Human Rights Campaign.

The incoming BSA president is Wayne Perry, who is retired from McCaw Cellular, which became a part of Dallas-based AT&T — a company that receives the highest possible score from HRC.

Randall Stephenson, CEO of AT&T, is a vice president of the Boy Scouts. And Stephenson recently issued a statement that reflected AT&T's commitment to diversity and his disagreement with Boy Scout policy regarding sexual orientation.

"Diversity and inclusion are part of AT&T's culture and operations, and we're proud to be recognized as a leader in this area," he said.

Stephenson's spokesman, Marty Richter told Dallas Voice he's committed to changing the pol-

icy. But Richter said it was another board member, Ernst & Young Chairman and CEO James Turley, who is even more outspoken on the subject.

In his statement recently, Turley said, "As I have done in leading Ernst & Young to being a most inclusive organization, I intend to continue to work from within the BSA Board to actively encourage dialogue and sustainable progress."

Richter said he believes Turley will lead the effort to make the Boy Scouts inclusive with Stephenson's full support.

But the current position of the Boy Scouts is that the policy isn't going to change.

"Contrary to media reports, the Boy Scouts of America has no plans to change its membership policy," Boy Scouts spokesman Deron Smith wrote in a statement. "The introduction of a resolution does not indicate the organization is 'reviewing' a policy or signal a change in direction."

But if Executive Board members introduce a resolution at next year's board meeting and Stephenson and Turley have convinced enough other board members to vote for it, the Boy Scouts may just change. ■

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viewpoints

Couple sets an example for us all

In getting arrested at marriage sit-in, Major and Beau showed the LGBT community that we are not inferior, and it's time to assert our equality

We love each other," Beau said, "and we want to get married." Clerk's assistant Melinda Saavedra got misty-eyed. There is no better proof that a law is unjust than a government worker's tears while she does her duty. I saw that on July 5.

On that day, Mark "Major" Jimenez and Beau Chandler went to the Dallas County Clerk's Office and waited their turn for the piece of paper that would give them access to 1,138 state and federal rights that the couple seated next to them could enjoy via the payment of a small fee, the booking of a courtroom or church, and the possible involvement of caterers. They only wanted to be recognized as two people who have given their lives to each other for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.

It was not to be. Texas law tied Saavedra's hands from issuing their license, and these two loving, committed American citizens sat down, handcuffed themselves together, and refused to leave until they got what they came for. They were arrested for it. They were escorted from the Dallas County Records Building by sheriff's deputies, and taken to the county jail. They were booked. They were photographed. Fingerprinted. They were no longer even second-class citizens; they were common criminals.

Initial reports and conventional wisdom said they'd be charged with class-C misdemeanors, which Texas usually punishes with fines of up to \$500. Turning down a one-way street the wrong way — even by accident — or riding Dallas' light rail system without first purchasing a ticket, for instance, are class-C misdemeanors.

But this turns out not to be their charge: Instead, something altogether different is going to happen to Major and Beau. Their crime is deserving of the maximum penalty, according to the powers-that-be in Texas — and they've been upgraded from class-C to class-B misdemeanors, which can (and often are) punished by up to six months in jail.

And in a surprisingly refined move of cruelty by the county authorities, they won't even be charged together. On Aug. 2, they'll appear in separate courtrooms, meaning they won't be allowed to hold hands, speak to each other or console each other if the worst comes to pass. Their friends cannot come and support their joint stance against an evil, immoral and unjust law. They'll have to face their fates at the hands of Dallas County exactly as the state of Texas sees them:



SITTING TO MAKE A STAND | Beau Chandler, left, and Mark 'Major' Jimenez sit on the floor of the Dallas County Clerk's Office on July 5 after handcuffing themselves to each other when they were denied a marriage license. (Anna Waugh/Dallas Voice)

two individuals with no connection to each other. At least, no connection that means a damned thing.

Major and Beau did not go into this ill-advised. They knew they would not be issued a license.

They knew that refusing to leave would likely lead to their arrests. They knew that authorities could prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. But they also knew something more important, a lesson many in our community still need to internalize: They knew they were equal. They knew that equality is not something that can be bought and sold in our courts or legislatures; it is something guaranteed to them by their very birth as American citizens. When they walked into the

Dallas County Clerk's Office, they were not there to take a stand for equality, they were they taking a stand to assert equality.

It was Eleanor Roosevelt who famously said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." This community has consented for far too long. The real lesson I hope the LGBT community is learning from the actions of these two

brave men is that *we are not inferior*. We are equal in every way to our heterosexual brothers and sisters, and as such we must no longer accept inequity in the laws of our country or our state.

A people who know they are equal have a moral obligation to follow Major and Beau's example. We must no longer take "no" for an answer, because there's simply no reason for our public officials to say it. We must not be denied our rights to marriage, or employment, or housing, or safety; our founding documents declare us equal — man and woman, black, white, brown, immigrant and native-born.

We must not endure another minute, another hour, as second-class citizens, because there is no second-class status in the U.S. To assert that there is such entities as citizens without the right to be whoever they are and marry whomever they love is to say, "You are less than me." That is the essence of the un-American.

We must recognize publicly Major and Beau's right to marry in the U.S. this very day, or at least in time for the wedding they've planned for Sept. 13. Their love deserves no less.

Daniel Cates is North Texas regional coordinator for GetEQUAL. He can be reached at daniel@getequaltx.org.



Daniel Cates
Contributing columnist

Why changes at Exodus really matter in the Culture Wars

President of 'ex-gay' group admits there's no cure for homosexuality, depriving the religious right of one of its favorite anti-gay weapons

The president of the world's largest "pray away the gay" ministry, Alan Chambers, made headlines by proclaiming to major media outlets that there is no cure for homosexuality. He also condemned so-called "reparative therapy," which seeks to change the sexual orientation of clients by delving into their family dynamics.

While at Exodus' annual conference last week in St. Paul, Chambers told Associated Press reporter Patrick Condon: "I do not believe that cure is a word that is applicable to really any struggle, homosexuality included. For someone to put out a shingle and say, 'I can cure homosexuality' — that to me is as bizarre as someone saying they can cure any other common temptation or struggle that anyone faces on Planet Earth."

On Saturday, Chambers reiterated his change of heart to Eric Eckholm of the New York Times:

Mr. Chambers said that virtually every "ex-gay" he has ever met still harbors homosexual

cravings, himself included. Mr. Chambers, who left the gay life to marry and have two children, said that gay Christians like himself faced a life-long spiritual struggle to avoid sin and should not be afraid to admit it. He said Exodus could no longer condone reparative therapy.

There are critics who claim that what Chambers said does not matter because he still believes that homosexuality is sinful. They point out that the "ex-gay" activist's new spiritual remedy is celibacy or marrying an understanding opposite-sex partner, as Chambers has done. These skeptics conclude that such advice to LGBT teenagers is just as damaging as the old promises of "freedom from homosexuality through Jesus Christ."

I disagree with this assessment and believe such critics are missing the big picture. Ex-gay programs have never really been about converting gay people into heterosexuals. It has really been a gigantic marketing and public relations campaign used by anti-gay organizations to say, "Gay people don't need equal rights; they need therapy and prayer instead."

In exploiting the "ex-gay" industry, our oppo-

nents have positioned homosexuality as a sinful, unnatural behavior that could be altered, rather than being an integral and immutable part of a person. This message has either directly or indirectly been used as a club in which to bash LGBT people in referendums for the past 15 years and serves as a wedge issue to fire up their base in election cycles. Embracing these groups also allowed the Religious Right to smarmily and cynically claim they "loved" LGBT people and were just trying to help them.

Without holding out the magical promise of change, Exodus has little value to the Religious Right's political ambitions. While some evangelical voters may see celibacy or sham marriages as reasonable options, most Americans will consider such demands as cruel, unrealistic, and potentially damaging to both the gay person and their spouse. In other words, pushing the impractical idea of turning millions of LGBT people into sexual ascetics won't play beyond the extreme right's base.

Exodus' new message will also fall flat with most LGBT youth, even ones from evangelical or fundamentalist backgrounds. Just a couple of

years ago, Exodus offered flashy ads that exploded with hope. One ad for their national convention confidently screamed: Revolution, radically change your world. Freedom from homosexuality is possible.

What is Exodus' new message to teens? "Live a life of hell on earth so you can get to heaven when you die?" Or, maybe their new recruitment brochure might say: "A life of sexual frustration and loneliness has never been so fun!"

Clearly, this despairing message will have a limited audience, especially when Exodus is competing with the Internet and an increasingly accepting culture. New York Times columnist Frank Bruni summarized the new cultural tide that Exodus is fighting:

"Look at the last few weeks, even the last few days. The high-profile wedding in the news over the weekend was of the retiring Congressman Barney Frank and his male partner. The high-profile wedding the weekend before that was of the Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes and his male partner.

"A male hip-hop star just came out; a prominent pray-away-the-gay advocate just conceded that sexual orientation is Psalms-resistant; Google just announced that it would promote gay rights worldwide, even in countries where homosexual acts are now criminal.

"That's not to mention Anderson Cooper's recent acknowledgment that he's gay, which elicited more yawns than gasps. The reaction befitted a world in which Ellen DeGeneres is a pitchwoman not only for Cover Girl but also for J.C. Penney, whose catalogs this year included same-sex couples."

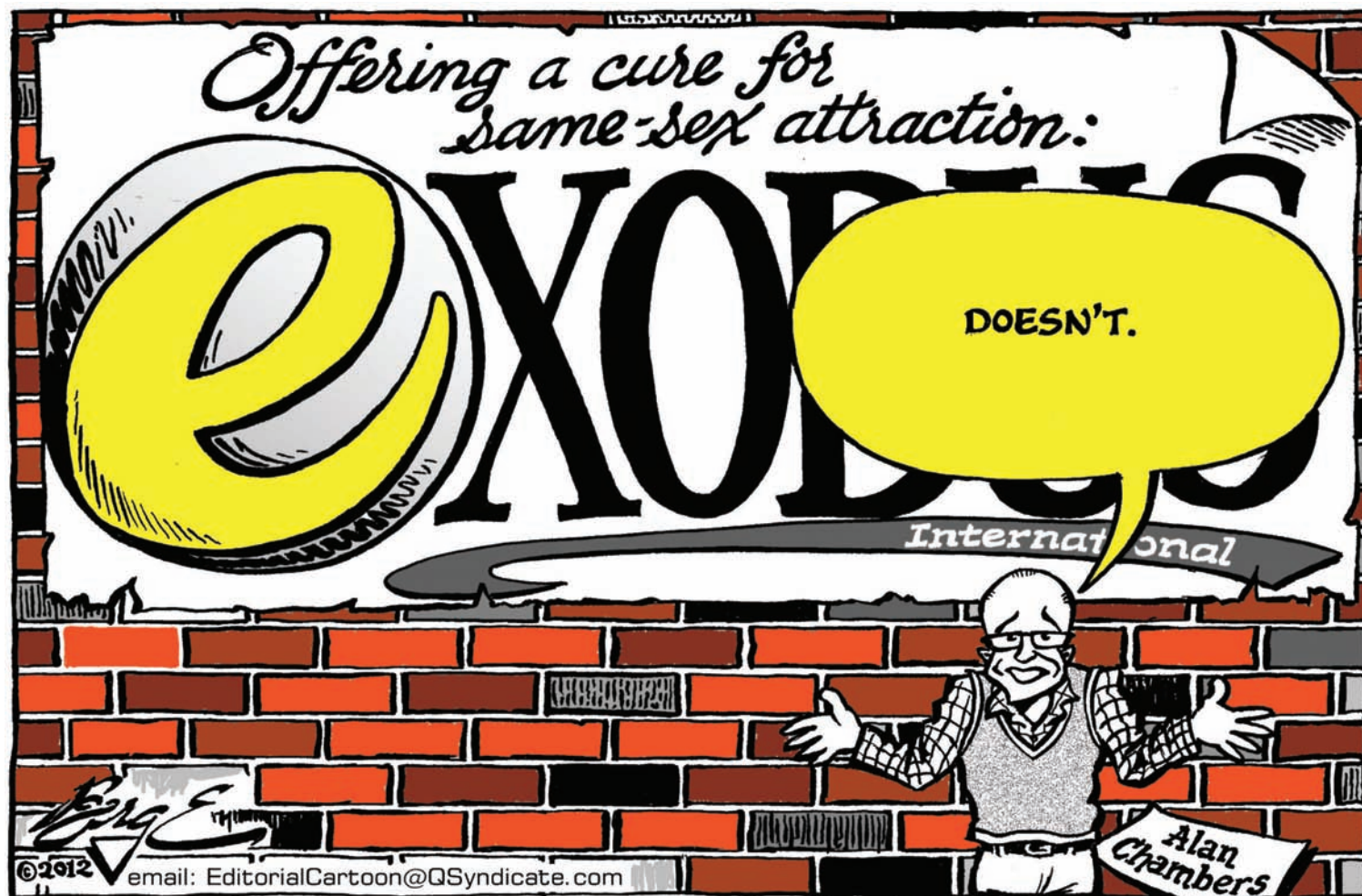
Exodus needs both shame and sorcery to seduce society and attract new clients.

At the moment they have neither and ironically will need a miracle to survive and remain relevant in these rapidly changing times. ■

Wayne Besen is founding executive director of Truth Wins Out, a Vermont-based nonprofit organization that fights anti-gay religious extremism. He can be reached at WBesen@TruthWinsOut.org.



Wayne Besen
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Why changes at Exodus really matter in the Culture Wars

President of 'ex-gay' group admits there's no cure for homosexuality, depriving the religious right of one of its favorite anti-gay weapons

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I disagree with this assessment and believe such critics are missing the big picture. Ex-gay programs have never really been about converting gay people into heterosexuals. It has really been a gigantic marketing and public relations campaign used by anti-gay organizations to say, "Gay people don't need equal rights; they need therapy and prayer instead."

In exploiting the "ex-gay" industry, our oppo-

nents have positioned homosexuality as a sinful, unnatural behavior that could be altered, rather than being an integral and immutable part of a person. This message has either directly or indirectly been used as a club in which to bash LGBT people in referendums for the past 15 years and serves as a wedge issue to fire up their base in election cycles. Embracing these groups also allowed the Religious Right to smarmily and cynically claim they "loved" LGBT people and were just trying to help them.

Without holding out the magical promise of change, Exodus has little value to the Religious Right's political ambitions. While some evangelical voters may see celibacy or sham marriages as reasonable options, most Americans will consider such demands as cruel, unrealistic, and potentially damaging to both the gay person and their spouse. In other words, pushing the impractical idea of turning millions of LGBT people into sexual ascetics won't play beyond the extreme right's base.

Exodus' new message will also fall flat with most LGBT youth, even ones from evangelical or fundamentalist backgrounds. Just a couple of

years ago, Exodus offered flashy ads that exploded with hope. One ad for their national convention confidently screamed: Revolution, radically change your world. Freedom from homosexuality is possible.

What is Exodus' new message to teens? "Live a life of hell on earth so you can get to heaven when you die?" Or, maybe their new recruitment brochure might say: "A life of sexual frustration and loneliness has never been so fun!"

Clearly, this despairing message will have a limited audience, especially when Exodus is competing with the Internet and an increasingly accepting culture. New York Times columnist Frank Bruni summarized the new cultural tide that Exodus is fighting:

"Look at the last few weeks, even the last few days. The high-profile wedding in the news over the weekend was of the retiring Congressman Barney Frank and his male partner. The high-profile wedding the weekend before that was of the Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes and his male partner.

"A male hip-hop star just came out; a prominent pray-away-the-gay advocate just conceded that sexual orientation is Psalms-resistant; Google just announced that it would promote gay rights worldwide, even in countries where homosexual acts are now criminal.

"That's not to mention Anderson Cooper's recent acknowledgment that he's gay, which elicited more yawns than gasps. The reaction befitted a world in which Ellen DeGeneres is a pitchwoman not only for Cover Girl but also for J.C. Penney, whose catalogs this year included same-sex couples."

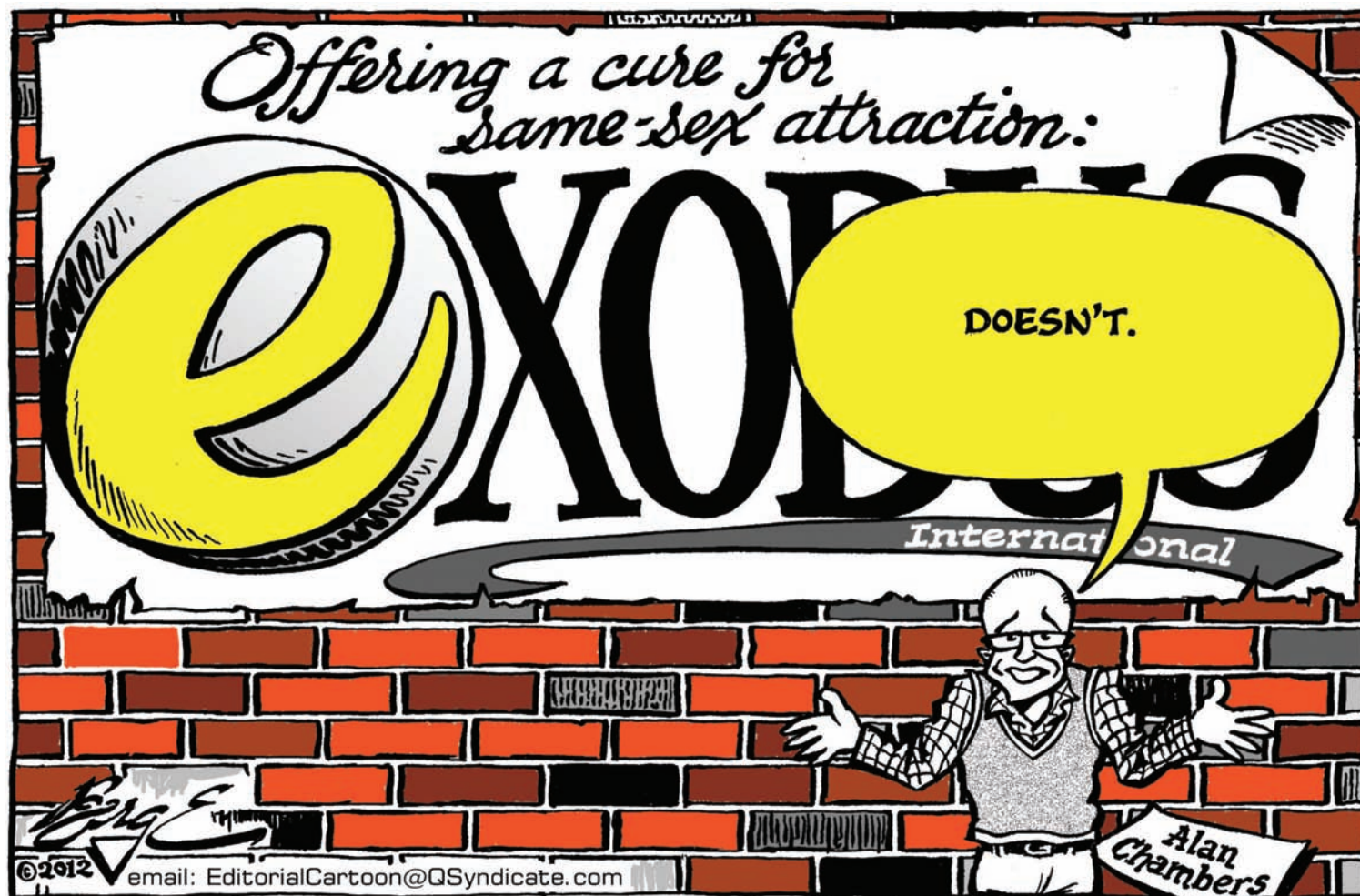
Exodus needs both shame and sorcery to seduce society and attract new clients.

At the moment they have neither and ironically will need a miracle to survive and remain relevant in these rapidly changing times. ■

Wayne Besen is founding executive director of Truth Wins Out, a Vermont-based nonprofit organization that fights anti-gay religious extremism. He can be reached at WBesen@TruthWinsOut.org.



Wayne Besen
Contributing columnist



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Kicking the habit

At one time, Coy Covington tried to avoid drag roles, but with 'The Divine Sister,' he's fully embraced his inner Busch

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

"He writes such wild stuff," Covington says. "Through him I've been through the Byzantine era, the Spanish Inquisition, '40s Hollywood, '50s Hollywood, I've been a whore, a murderess ... now I'm a nun. He once said to me, 'I have to keep writing to keep you in roles!' He's *my* divine sister. I'm very grateful."

Covington didn't always feel that way. There was a time when he had to be convinced to audition for a Busch play.

"I went through a little bit of a phase where I resisted," he says, wanting to play, as he calls them, "trouser roles." "But I kind of succumbed to the notion that this is my niche — it's what I'm best at. I'll have to hang my wig on that. I would like to play a role in pants again, though."

Being friendly with Busch has challenged Covington to do his best when approaching one of his roles — and this time, it's especially taxing.

"I like to pay homage to what he's created of the period. He's a cinema historian and he takes these parodies very seriously and with a true affection for these ladies. But with his stuff the devil is in the details. The syntax is so specific, so the dialogue has been hell to master. Because the characters are so complex, you can't skip anything. As I like to say, you can't trim the Busch. But I also have to make it my own."

Covington has a crew of allies helping him out. Along with producers Craig Lynch and Jeff Rane, *The Divine Sister* reunites Covington with director Andi Allen and costumer Suzi Cranford, plus his frequent onstage co-star Kevin Moore. And he takes inspiration from Busch as well.

"Since we have a personal relationship, it not only makes it all that more fun to do, it is more important to me that I don't fuck this thing up," he says.

He also gets to enjoy the ride of doing another riotous comedy that plays its humor close to the vest — or rather, wimple. Although inspired by perky nun movies, "it's really a perverse parody of the secret lives of nuns," he explains. "You have horny novices, a young boy destined to go over the rainbow, a dominatrix in hiding and a monologue about extreme penile endowment. This ain't a [dour] sermon — there's a lot of

blue humor. But my character stays true to her vows. It's about redemption — losing your faith and then regaining it, and the mother superior is steadfast."

Despite the ultimate message about spirituality, Covington knows it will be considered another drag comedy. And while he burns a candle that he may take on a more serious part again, he's come to terms with it if he doesn't.

"I long to do some serious stuff," he sighs, "but I know my mission too: it is to entertain and spread God's love."

Just like a good nun. ■



DON'T TRIM THE BUSCH | Mastering Charles Busch's dialogue has been especially challenging for Coy Covington, who has made a career out of performing as the playwright's alter ego (pictured together, right). (Photos by Mike Morgan and Arnold Wayne Jones)

Coy Covington vividly recalls the first time he met Charles Busch in person.

Busch is a legend in gay theater — heck, the theater world generally. A Tony-nominated playwright, he's also performed in many of the shows he's written, usually playing the heroine himself, in drag. (One of the gimmicks: No one acknowledges it is a man in drag.)

Covington, one of Dallas' most charming bon vivants and legendary for his performances in drag, has been a natural go-to guy for Busch roles for more than a decade. So it was fitting they should meet while Covington was recreating one of Busch's signature characters in *Die, Mommie! Die!*

"We had established an online relationship through a mutual friend — this was before Facebook — but had never met," Covington recalls. "Then one of his movies was chosen to screen at the USA Film Festival, and [Busch] was coming to Dallas to make an appearance ... which happened to be during the run of *Die, Mommie! Die!* He rarely attends because they are often so rotten, but some friends convinced him to go."

Having the playwright in the audience might intimidate some actors, but Covington rose to the challenge.

"It was one of my best nights in the theater," he coos. "Sometimes the fairy dust falls and everything goes right. That was probably our best performance of the run. After the show we just gabbed and dished for hours. Charles and I especially bonded over wigs — wigs are my life, and his. He was so kind and warm and funny; he even said he was gonna steal some of the bits from our show for his upcoming production."

Since then, Covington and Busch have stayed in touch, even so far as communicating while Covington prepares for his latest role, the Mother Superior in Busch's most recent play, *The Divine Sister*, which opens Friday.

Busch's plays have spoofed '60s beach musicals-cum-slasher movies (*Psycho Beach Party*), Douglas Sirk films (*Die, Mommie!*), commie-baiting melodramas (*Red Scare on Sunset*) and even a horror-biblical epic hybrid (*Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*). *The Divine Sister* tackles another genre: The heartfelt nun movies and TV shows of the late '50s and '60s, including *The Nun's Story*, *The Singing Nun*, *Change of Habit* and *The Flying Nun*. But don't expect it to be preachy.

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Havana nights

Think that Cuba is totally off limits? It's not, and a paradise for gay travelers

Puerta Vallarta — so 2000s. Key West — boring. The new hot spot for gay men is 90 miles south of Florida. Sleepy, mysterious Cuba may be officially off-limits to Americans, but with a little creativity is readily accessible to Texans looking for a unique Caribbean adventure.

Cubana Airlines has one daily flight departing Cancun at 3 p.m. for Havana, so any morning flight from DFW to Cancun will get you there in plenty of time for a connection. Cuba's immigration and customs are surprisingly accommodating to Americans (they do *not* stamp your passport), and money is easily exchanged (the rate is roughly 97 Cuban cents to the American dollar, though with commissions it can run to 90 cents).

Havana is a city of severe contrasts. Cubans make on average the equivalent of \$20 per month. Most of the residents live in multi-story concrete housing that has not been updated in years, if not decades — some even have trees growing through them. Meanwhile, Old Havana boasts homes and restaurants that have been meticulously restored, as well as great shopping.

Cuba's literacy rate is 99 percent, with an outstanding education and university system. Students are required to learn English in primary

school, so many of the younger crowd can speak it, whether haltingly or fluently. (Older Cubans tend to get rusty and will speak only Spanish.)

Spectacular beaches make Cuba a sun-worshipper's paradise, with several very comfortable all-inclusive hotels geared toward tourists. A room at a beach will set you back about \$50 per night in summer and \$98 in February's high season. The two most noteworthy beaches are Varadero to the north and Trinidad to the south. The food at the hotels is average but you can drink mojitos, beer, rum punch, or Cuba libres all day without putting down a dime. There are two brands of beer on the island — Crystal and Bucanero — which will generally set you back about a dollar; a liter of rum costs about seven bucks.

The Malecon is the center of social life in Havana. This four-mile stretch of seawall is a family-friendly destination by day, but after 6 p.m., police make sure the crowd is only 18 and over; as the night draws on, the strip fills up shoulder-to-shoulder with men and women. Americans are known for their generosity in such a poor country, and are popular with the local boys — if you walk 100 feet, expect at least 15 young, smiling men to approach you.

TRAVEL DIARY

Colorado has had a devastating summer so far, but Pagosa Springs has sidestepped most of the fire damage that hit other parts of the state. Located 270 miles southwest of Denver, the Rocky Mountain backdrop and natural springs make this small town a big scenic destination. And one reason to visit is the lesbian-owned **Wild Spirit Gallery's** new exhibit *Spirit of Woman*, pictured, through July 31.

The exhibit incorporates more than just works from different female artists. The gallery includes the performance Gushikawa: Dancing with Swords for Peace, the Pat Dahnke Fashion Show and discussions with authors and animal communicator Jennifer Martin.

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I AM CUBA | A young man, opposite, jumps into the water off the Malecon; the Nicho Cascadas, above, provide natural beauty ... as do many of the local men, right. (Photos by Paul William)

It can, though, also be dangerous along the Malecon (or other Havana streets) at night, so try never to walk alone after dark to avoid being mugged. Fortunately, there's a solution for that.

Since being embargoed by the U.S. in the early 1960s, Cuban has struggled to modernize, but that comes with some charming points of nostalgia. There are more 1950s-era American cars in Cuba than there are Mercedes-Benzes in Dallas. They come in all makes, models and states of rehabilitation ... and all are in service as taxis. One night I was part of a group of nine who piled into a 1953 Buick Estate station wagon for a "charter" across town ... and we could have easily accommodated three more. That's not always the case; some cannot hold more than a few passengers.

If you plan to hail a taxi, merely hold up as many fingers as passengers you have; drivers will stop if they can accommodate your party. It is easy to find one's way around in Cuba — street addresses are all listed by cross streets; it helps you to know where to get out of a taxi.

Cuba has made great strides in gay rights during the last decade or so, thanks in large part to Mariela Castro, daughter of President Raul Castro. Five years ago, gays congregating near the National Hotel would whisper which abandoned building would host that night's dance party, as raids were common and punishment could be severe. But Mariela, who is trained as a sexologist, founded the National Center for Sex Education, and with his father's blessing was given latitude to expand gay rights. There are now five gay bars in Havana that stay open until 5 a.m., and gays have a regular zone to hang out in along the Malecon. Sexual reassignment surgery is now provided free of charge through the national healthcare system.

Cubans are very hungry to get to know Americans, and with the opening of gay culture, it's much easier to get to meet the locals. Sex is fairly



free-flowing here, and Havana is a dream destination for those attracted to Latinos. Lifeguards on the beaches are paid a mere \$14 per month, so even the married ones are open to fraternization. (Most Cuban men will tell you they are straight anyway.) While they may have visited beaches outside Havana, most have never been to a beach resort or fine restaurant, and are happy to accept a generous invitation. (Don't be surprised if they want to take some food home with them — family is revered in Cuba, and when they say food or money is going to help their families, they mean it.)

If you hope to take a local home with you, be forewarned: There are many tourist hotels with moderate prices but locals cannot go above the first floor — not even as guests for a few minutes. Instead, you may want to stay at a *casa particular* — basically, a guesthouse or B&B with relaxed rules. Most are rooms in private homes but some are in stand-alone apartment buildings. They rent for 25 Cuban bucks a night and serve the needs of tourists who may be staying in a hotel and want to share a room with a local.

Cuba is a fantastic destination, the travel is easy and returning home via Cancun and going through customs is painless ... unless, of course, you try to bring back Cuban cigars. ■

— Paul William

For more information about travel to Cuba, contact the author at hermanopablo12@gmail.com.

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L+S music

Emotional rescue

'Bear Creek' starts badly — and then Brandi Carlile lets her true self shine through

RICH LOPEZ | Staff Writer
lopez@dallasvoice.com

Even though she hails from the Pacific Northwest, Brandi Carlile peppers **Bear Creek**, her latest album, with major touches of Appalachia. Coupled with sensitive lyrics, the backwoods sounds bring out some of her best work. But trudging through the lesser songs is a chore.

When I got to the meat of *Bear Creek*, I was reminded of Carlile's strengths in writing and singing. She relies on these more than any type of flash so it's sometimes easy to forget what she's capable of. But she's consistent with solid work that is less about creating a hit and more about forging a legacy.

This comes through foremost on "That Wasn't Me," the album's fourth track, but also the start of the good stuff. Her emoting connects with a smoky vocal resonance. There's something exterior about Carlile, but when she opens up, as she does here, it's like uncovering a buried treasure. The ballad recalls a bit of Adele's "Someone Like You" in its drama, but with an easiness to it that keeps it her own.

When Carlile steps away from her woodsy-flavored sounds, she shines with a peppier track, as on "100." The beat trots at a steady pace over a sweet love song. Carlile is one of the few songwriter who can compose a song that doesn't reek of sappiness; breaking out of her hillbilly music box is proof she can stretch her sound successfully but without making a shocking departure.

She rides her musical prowess on "A Promise to Keep," recalling hints of early Fleetwood Mac, and the flirty "Heart's Content," with its lacelike instrumentation underneath her singing. Carlile is displaying top-of-her-game goods.

She falls back into reliable territory with "Still Be There" and "Rise Again," songs that bridge her album to her stellar final tracks. The hearty resignation of "In the Morrow" is melancholic with opposing optimism. She sings *In the morrow I'll be gone / I gave it everything I had for so long / Don't we always find a way to carry on* with such honesty that I felt like I was reading her diary, but the poetics behind it made me want to turn the page.

"Just Kids" could have veered into Sarah



'BEAR,' STERNLY | Lesbian singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile seems detached at the start of her new album — until she puts her heart on her sleeve.

MacLachlan snoozer territory, but Carlile pulls back to keep it from jumping off that cliff. It's hypnotizing and drifty, with a power to make me stop everything else just to listen. This wraps up *Bear Creek* wonderfully.

But the opening could have used some work — a lot of it. Carlile channels her inner Loretta for the first three tracks, but they miss. She's

being bleak, with lyrics that refer to death despite even as the music is all yee-hawing. On the opener, "Hard Way Home," she confesses *I'll tell you how I wanna live / forget about the take forget about the give. / I wanna leave this town. Fake my death and never be found.* She refers to being six feet deep in "Raise Hell" and almost left me thinking this whole album would be a buzzkill set to a square dance.

These songs, along with the more delicate "Save Part of Yourself," open the first act of *Bear Creek*, but Carlile's voice is nowhere present in them. It's unfortunate starting off an album with a tone of detachment especially when, once you get past them, a door opens and a flood of greatness rushes in. ■



Haunted filmmaker

H.P. Mendoza's musicals were too gay for Asians and too Asian for gays. So he made a horror film

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

The tragedy of the film industry is that once you are known for one thing, it's difficult to get people to see you in a different light. That's certainly been an issue for H.P. Mendoza.

Ever since 2006's *Colma: The Musical*, Mendoza — who wrote, composed and co-starred in the film — has been known as “the musical guy.” While he preferred that to “people seeing me as either the gay filmmaker or the Asian filmmaker,” he says, the resistance he has encountered trying to break out of the pigeonholes people set for him has been frustrating.

“After *Colma*, I had straight, Asian friends say to me, ‘Have you thought about making films where people weren't such outliers of society?’ What they meant was ‘queer.’ But at every gay film festival, someone would come up to me and say, ‘You need less lotus blossom/chinky people.’ I was shocked! I even had one Hollywood producer — who is gay! — say to me, ‘Oh, H.P., you're a good writer, but Asian faces don't sell and will never sell.’” (The producer later apologized.)

Almost in defiance of the haters, Mendoza's follow-up to *Colma* (which he also got to direct) was another musical, *Fruit Fly* ... which he made even *more* gay and *more* Asian than *Colma*. It worked — *Fruit Fly* won best film at Fort Worth's Q Cinema in 2009. (“I was really flattered by that,” he says.)

But ever the contrarian, Mendoza has gone in an entirely different direction with *I Am a Ghost*, which plays at the Asian Film Festival of Dallas this week. Basically a two-character period film about murder and the occult, it seems to have nothing in common with the musical genre for which he became famous.

“No, it definitely does not,” he says. “I found this Venn diagram online where one circle was ‘People who love musicals’ and the other was ‘People who love horror films,’ where they met was ‘Serial killers.’”

Mendoza hasn't killed anyone — yet ... though he's probably been tempted to. (Remember his encounter with the gay producer?) But he also sees more in common than at first appears.

“*Colma* does not have a happy ending and *Fruit Fly* is about how perkiness disappears. I've



ASIAN-AMERICAN HORROR STORY | H.P. Mendoza, inset, admits that once he added a wig to his Japanese leading lady, the look of *I Am a Ghost* took on qualities of a Hong Kong horror film. But that wasn't his intent.

had friends tell me I should make a non-cynical musical, but I don't think my musicals are cynical. It's just that we all have our good times and bad times; the typical musical is nothing but good followed by a moment of sadness. That's not reality,” Mendoza says.

Still, there are *some* moments of levity in his musicals; *I Am a Ghost* is unrelentingly dark.

“With *I Am a Ghost* I decided not only am I gonna do a horror film, but make it very experimental and tribute the haunted house films of the 1960s and '70s,” he says.

The premise is that a ghost named Emily, apparently murdered in her home a century ago, spends the entire film communicating with a present-day clairvoyant, who is trying to exorcise her and free her from her house.

Even this film, though, was a reaction against what people expected of him.

“There's a reason I called it *I Am a Ghost*. I was tired of how, after *The Sixth Sense*, there were a lot of knockoffs where the twist was the character was dead. I decided, we'll know from the first frame that she's dead and talking to a medium.” That doesn't mean there aren't twists; it just means Mendoza is more concerned with pushing boundaries.

With initials like “H.P.” (short for Henry Patrick), you might think Mendoza was *destined* to make horror movies; one of the pioneers of the horror story was the writer H.P. Lovecraft.

“It's just coincidental,” Mendoza insists, “although I love horror films. I never thought about what people might think when they see a horror movie by a guy named H.P. I love *Call of Cthulhu* and *Danse Macabre*, but I think most people don't even know who H.P. Lovecraft is; when I say my name, I usually add, ‘As in Hewlett Packard.’

Most people *do* get that, sadly.”

Interestingly, although Asian (his heritage is Filipino), Mendoza was not inspired by Hong Kong or Korean films in making *I Am a Ghost*.

“I love Asian horror films — how slow they are and deliberately creepy, as opposed to jumping out and scaring you. But when I was writing it and shooting [this film], I was thinking most about [the Australian drama] *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. I wanted everyone to see it as a haunted horror film by way of Bergman or Kubrick.”

That may have been the plan, but once he choose a specifically anachronistic hairstyle for his leading actress, it transformed the look.

“With that '70s wig on, because she is Japanese, she looks kind of like a character from *Ringu* or *The Grudge*; that's just a happy accident,” he says.

Mendoza is also pleased that *I Am a Ghost* has been a hit not only in Asian and fright fests, but also among gay festivals.

“I submitted it to a queer festival in Mexico and just heard it won an award,” he says. “I was scared people would walk out since there is no out queer content, but they all thought it was really queer. There's a lot to be said about a gay sensibility. I'd say most gay men between ages 35 and 45 will guess it was written by a gay man — I can't hide it. It comes out in subtle ways.” (There are gender identity questions in the film but that's also where the spoilers lie.)

Mendoza may not be moving away from the horror genre and back to musicals just yet.

“I was talking to a producer who was asking if I have any other horror movies in me,” he says. “I'd love to tell *The Exorcist* from the perspective of the demon.”

The producer didn't seem to think it would work. That might be exactly why Mendoza will try it.

ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

The Asian Film Festival of Dallas runs through July 19 at **Magnolia Theatre**, 3699 McKinney Ave. *I Am a Ghost* screens July 16 at 9:45 p.m., with Mendoza in attendance. AFFD.org.



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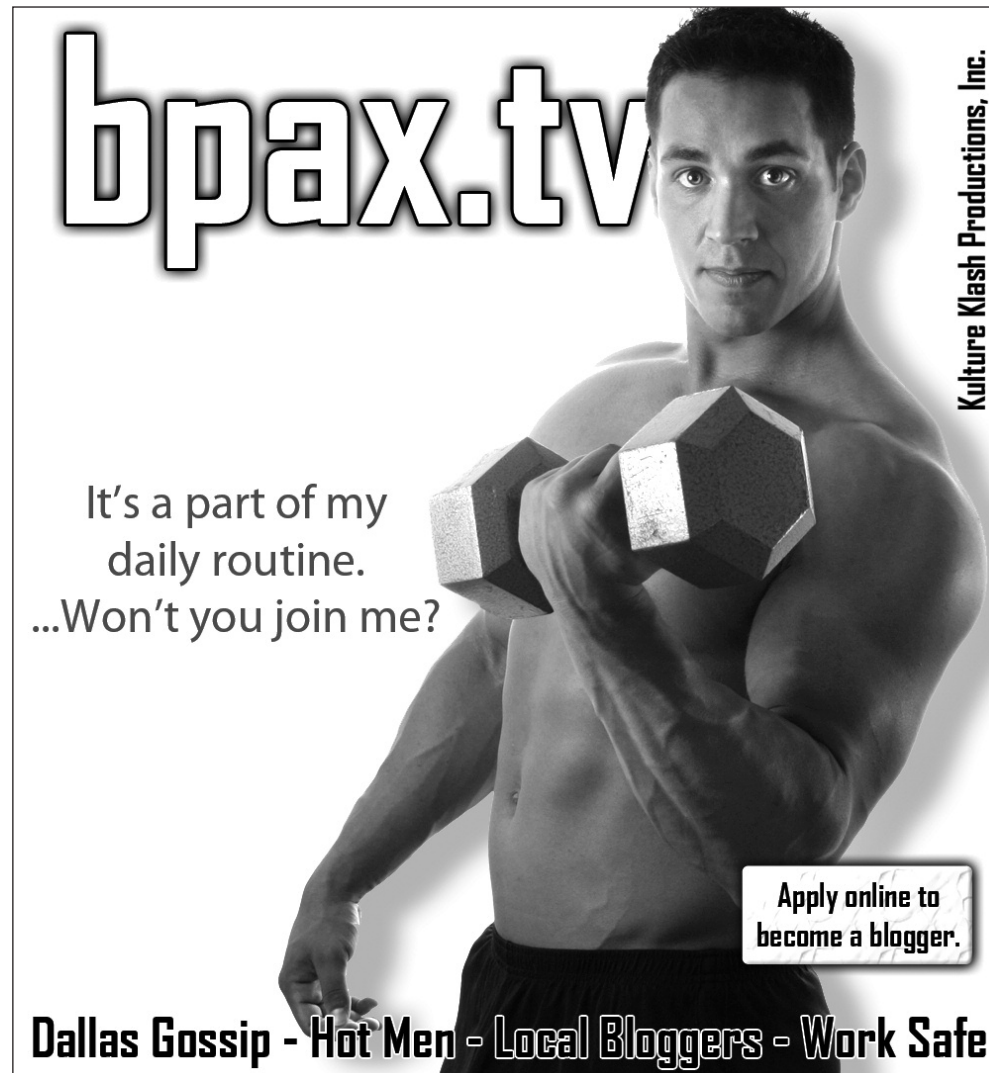
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Friday 07.13

The right FIT

Summer time brings back the 14th Annual Festival of Independent Theatres (or FIT) with four weeks of both innovative and classic works. From Edward Albee's *Counting the Ways*, pictured, by WingSpan's Susan Sargeant to Kurt Kleinmann's suspenseful *Dead of Night*, FIT has the right show for all tastes.

DEETS: Bath House Cultural Center, 521 E. Lawther Dr. Through Aug. 4. \$18 per show. FestivalofIndependentTheatres.org.

Friday 07.13

Bite this

Taste of Dallas satisfies all appetites this weekend with its 26th annual event. Whether your nosing from food trucks, sampling a selection of wines or putting your tongues to the test in the Taste of Olympics, you're likely to walk away with a favorite new dish — or several. Live music, chef demonstrations and visual arts fill out this feast for the eyes, nose and definitely, tummy.

DEETS: Fair Park, 3600 Grand Ave. Through Sunday. \$8. TasteofDallas.org.

Saturday 07.14

Suds in the bucket

We got no shame. Especially when it comes to good causes. The Dallas Voice LifeWalk team, the Elizabeth Trail'rs holds a fundraising car wash and bake sale and you will just hurt our feelings if you don't stop by.

DEETS: Round-Up Saloon lot, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Lifewalk.org/ElizabethTrailers



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village station Hits

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FRIDAY 07.13

COMMUNITY

High Tech Happy Hour hosted by the TI Network and open to all. La Calle Doce, 415 W. 12th St. 5:30 p.m. pavv@ti.com.

Congregation Beth El Binah Shabbat service. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7:30 p.m. BethElBinah.org.

JEWEL Crafting Circle meets on the second Friday. ilume, 4123 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30 p.m. Visit website for the craft project of the month. RCDallas.org.

ART

Mark Mullino. The local musician and actor displays his art based on music. Granville Arts Center, 300 N. Fifth St., Garland. Through July 30.

The Ripple Effect water-themed art show features works by local artists including Erica Felicella, Jenice Johnson, Clint Scism and more. Kettle Art, 2714 Elm St. 7 p.m. KettleArt.org.

Texas Lady Singers. Cathey Miller paints Texas-born women with musical flair from honky tonk to rock 'n' roll. Kessler X+ Gallery (in The Kessler), 1230 West Davis St. CatheyMiller.com.

THEATER

Avenue Q. The queer-loving puppet play takes the underground space of Theatre 3 in this local production. Theatre Too, 2900 Routh St. Through July 29. Theatre3Dallas.com.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. The Dallas Theater Center puts on a new production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. Wyly Theater, 2400 Flora St. Through Aug. 12. \$15-\$90. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Sinbad the Sailor, the newest melodrama by Pocket Sandwich complete with popcorn tossing. Pocket Sandwich Theater, 5400 E. Mockingbird Lane, Ste. 119. Through Aug. 25. PocketSandwich.com.

SATURDAY 07.14

COMMUNITY

Pam's Present. Spend Christmas in July with this benefit for the children of Genesis Women's Shelter.



LOVELY THING | MBS Productions brings back its favorite drag queen Lovely Uranus in 'The Importance of Being Lovely' which opens on Thursday.

The all-day event features a silent art auction, pictures with Tropical Santa and live music by Emy Taylor, SuZanne Kimbrell, Anton Shaw and more. Monetary or school supply donations are encouraged. TMC: The Mining Company, 3014 Throckmorton St. 1 p.m. Find the event on Facebook for more information.

Red Ribbon Show. The Imperial Court de' Fort Worth/Arlington hosts the event in its 19th year with proceeds benefiting Samaritan House. Rainbow Lounge, 651 S. Jennings Ave. 7:33 p.m.

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

SUNDAY 07.15

COMMUNITY

The Set serves as a safe environment for mature-minded SGL African-American men to create a community meets every third Sunday. The Jefferson Clubhouse, 1001 Ross Ave. 69 p.m.

Friends Associating and Relating LGBT social group, meets twice a month for potluck dinners, game nights, and more in the evenings. Newcomers welcome and there are no dues. Email FAR--@hotmail.com (with dashes) for more information.

DFW Prime Timers Prime Games at member's residence. 2 p.m. Call 972-504-8866 for details.

MONDAY 07.16

COMMUNITY

DFW Prime Timers play bridge every week at

member's residence. 1 p.m. Call 972-504-8866 for details.

United Black Ellum's Hot Topics. A weekly discussion group for black gay and bi men, 18-29. U-BE in Deep Ellum, 3116 Commerce St., Ste. C. 7 p.m. UBEDallas.org.

Leadership Lambda Toastmasters meets to improve public speaking and leadership skills. Oak Lawn Library, 4100 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30-8 p.m. 214-543-5860.

TUESDAY 07.17

COMMUNITY

Stonewall Democrats of Dallas. Ojeda's Restaurant, 4617 Maple Ave. 6:30 p.m. 214-506-3367.

JEWEL Lesbian Fiction Book Club meets on the third Tuesday. ilume, 4123 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30 p.m. Visit website for meeting dates if they change due to author's availability. RCDallas.org.

Late Bloomers, social support group for women who came out later in life. La Madeleine, 3906 Lemmon Ave. 6 p.m. 903-778-4446.

WEDNESDAY 07.18

COMMUNITY

Prime Timers Prime Lunch at Shady Grove BBQ followed by a tour of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Noon. Call 972-504-8866 for more information or to attend.

Outstanding Beautiful Brothers (O.B.B.), support group for young black men who have sex with men living with HIV, by providing a safe and confidential space to offer support, empowerment and education. Meetings every first and third Wednesday. Call 214-702-6511 for information and location. 7 p.m.

Legacy of Success Community Mixer meets every third Wednesday. Catfish Blues, 1011 S. Corinth St. 6:30 p.m. LOSF.org.

BROADCAST

Lambda Weekly. LGBT radio for North Texas. This week's guest is CeCe Cox, executive director of Resource Center of Dallas. 89.3 KNON-FM at 7 a.m. LambdaWeekly.com.

THURSDAY 07.19

COMMUNITY

The House of Glamour is a monthly event by the Legacy of Success Foundation for African-American women to meet and caucus. Brooklyn's Jazz Café, 1701 S. Lamar St. 3 p.m. LOSF.org.

Free Third Thursdays. Free admissions for a variety of activities that respect the environment. Trinity River Audubon Center, 6500 Great Trinity Forest Way. 9 a.m. Free. TrinityRiverAudubon.org.

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

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

THEATER

The Importance of Being Lovely. MBS Productions brings back drag queen Lovely Uranus in this new comedic misadventure. Stone Cottage Theater, 15650 Addison Road, Addison. Through Aug. 11. \$18-\$22. MBSProductions.net.

this week's solution

C	A	R	R	Y		L	I	E	D		W	K	R	P
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CELEBRITY BIRTHDAY

By Jack Fertig



Tony Kushner turns 56 on Monday. The gay playwright and screenwriter won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award for *Angels in America: Perestroika* in 1993. He also garnered Golden Globe and Oscar noms for the screenplay to the Steven Spielberg film *Munich* in 2005. His commitment ceremony in 2003 to Mark Harris was the first to be featured in the *New York Times*.

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

Feeling alone is a lesson in standing on your own. When you feel negative and self-critical focus on ways to improve yourself. Decide on some positive habits to develop and stick with them.

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

Get time alone now. When the Sun enters Leo on the 22nd you'll feel stronger and more certain, perhaps too much so. Approach others with modesty and sensitivity.

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Asserting your sexuality, whether as an individual or as part of your LGBT community, requires insight. Reconsider your place in the community. Maturity and growth require adaptivity.

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Feeling lost and disconnected is good. Take yourself on an intellectual, artistic adventure. You won't find yourself in a museum, but you'll find surprise in brilliant new ideas.

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Sex offers distraction from your problems. Talk about whatever's bothering you. Without that clarity you get crankier, undermining your work and your health. And nobody likes a cranky queen.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 20

Plans with your partner push you to reevaluate your priorities. Creative thinking gets you through this, but you won't manage it on your own. The partner comes in way handy for this.

CAPRICORN Dec 21-Jan 19

Don't take anything for granted with your health. Change your habits: quit smoking, start exercising routine, improve your diet. You've heard it all before. Now just do it.

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

You upset someone. Think ahead about consequences. Also remember the difference between justice and vengeance. Are you speaking up for noble purposes or from resentment?

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 19

Refinancing a mortgage could work out very well, but do your homework, be clear on details and fight for better terms. Tough domestic issues and decisions still need to be dealt with.

ARIES Mar 20-Apr 19

What you say is too important to go off half-cocked. Bombastic challenges get shut down. Think about how to express yourself so that they will appreciate what you have to say.

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

Don't worry about the global economy. You're going to be OK. Your hard work is appreciated and valued, and some meditation will take the edge off. Keep those two in balance and you're fine.

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

Listen to your pals about what they need and be adaptable on long-term strategies. Reconsider future plans. Let go of some boring, old ideas. Identify problems now, solve them later.

THIS WEEK

Mars in Libra making a T-square to Uranus and Pluto suggests solutions to major crises, but the teamwork involved means that you have to adapt your plans to suit others, not vice versa. These problems aren't going away soon. Consider it just an early step.

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

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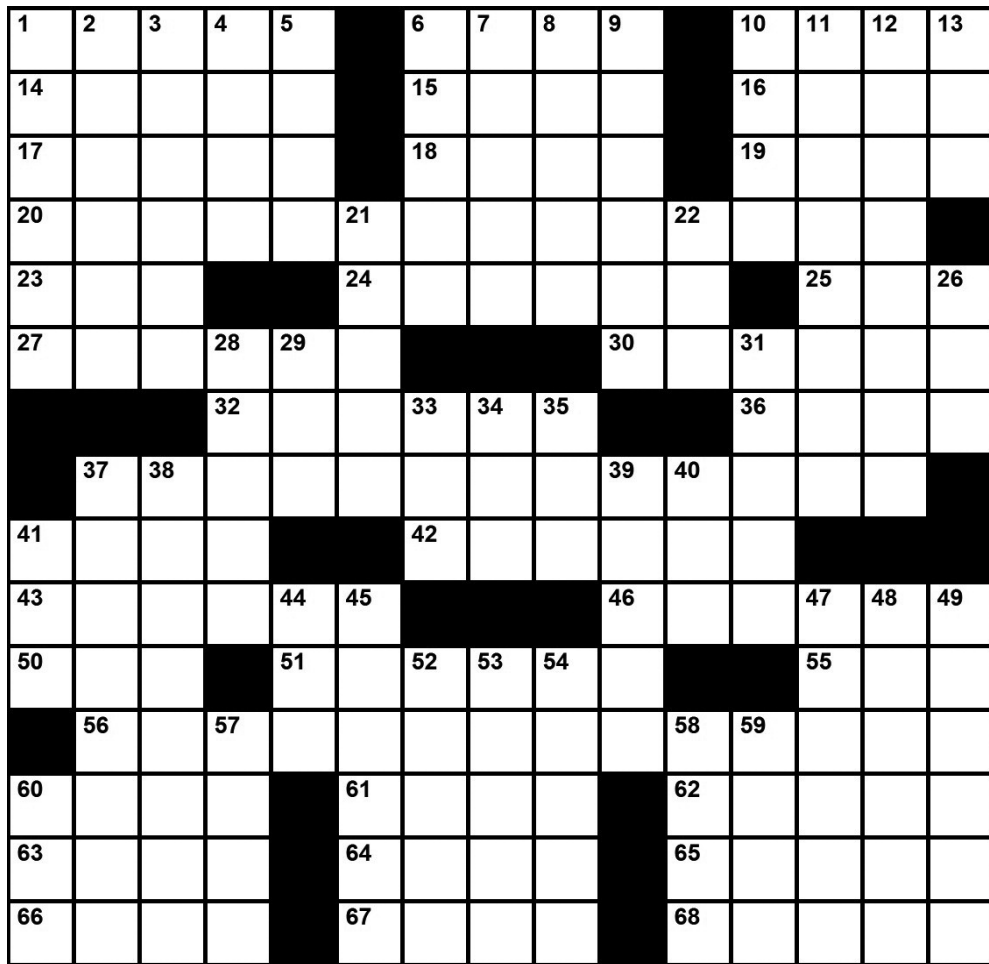
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bitter girl

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Anchor's Aweigh

Solution on page 25

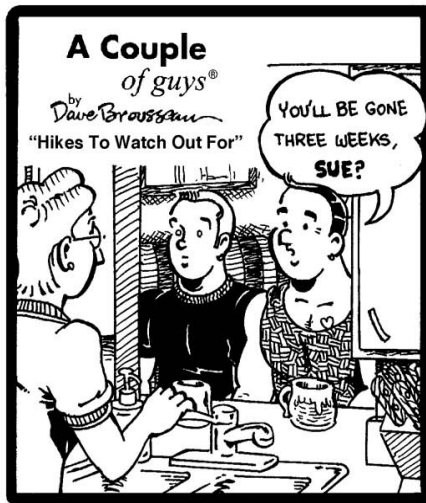
Across

- 1 Act up, with "on"
- 6 Used a forked tongue
- 10 Sitcom radio station
- 14 Threesome member for Dumas
- 15 160 rods
- 16 Strong as ____
- 17 It may slip over one's head
- 18 Can of worms, maybe
- 19 Salty bodies
- 20 CNN anchor in the news
- 23 "Look at Me, I'm Sandra ____"
- 24 Poet Rimbaud
- 25 Ewe's milieu
- 27 Give out
- 30 Medical treatment
- 32 Like something in the state of Denmark
- 36 Persian Gulf land
- 37 Website that published a statement by 20-Across
- 41 Evita's husband
- 42 Cowboy's job in The Boys in the Band
- 43 Put the collar on
- 46 Uses a gifted tongue
- 50 Neither Rep. nor Dem.
- 51 Man who doesn't date women

- 55 St. that follows My Own Private
- 56 Statement by 20-Across
- 60 Nannies' cries
- 61 Oompa Loompa creator
- 62 Judges
- 63 Seizures for Caesar
- 64 Do a nocturnal activity
- 65 Shrek and others
- 66 On top of that
- 67 Parts of a min.
- 68 Gay rodeo accessory

Down

- 1 Where PrideVision originated
- 2 Makes up
- 3 Where a Colossus straddled all who entered the harbor
- 4 Deep pink
- 5 North Sea feeder
- 6 What a surrogate mom goes into
- 7 Impotence confession
- 8 John of Gay Sex Quotes
- 9 Alternate route
- 10 Ethnic acronym
- 11 Oral sex providers, perhaps
- 12 Really enjoyed, as a Margaret Cho routine
- 13 GI suppliers
- 21 Vixen's master
- 22 Vein contents
- 26 Objectivist Rand
- 28 Cara of Fame
- 29 Alanis Morissette role, in Dogma
- 31 Sporty Mazda
- 33 Reason for extra innings
- 34 Above-ground trains
- 35 MSG container?
- 37 Shake your moneymaker?
- 38 Condoms, to a Brit?
- 39 ____ of Leather, Slippers of Gold
- 40 Make a blunder
- 41 ____ alai
- 44 Letters from South Beach
- 45 Sports deals
- 47 Pussies with sharp teeth
- 48 Mingo's portrayer in Daniel Boone
- 49 Affirms orally
- 52 Start of Caesar's boast
- 53 Set of principles
- 54 River deposits
- 57 Canadian oil company
- 58 Clay Aiken was almost one
- 59 Huge opening?
- 60 Writer's deg.

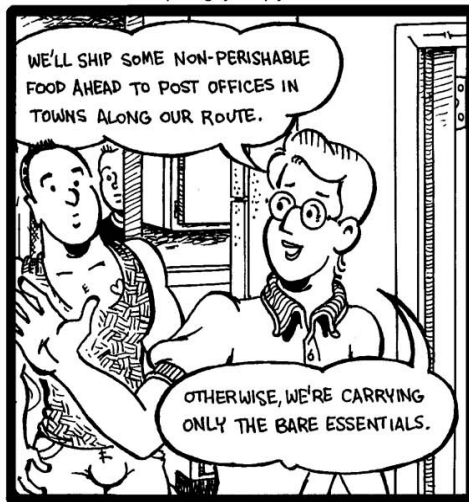


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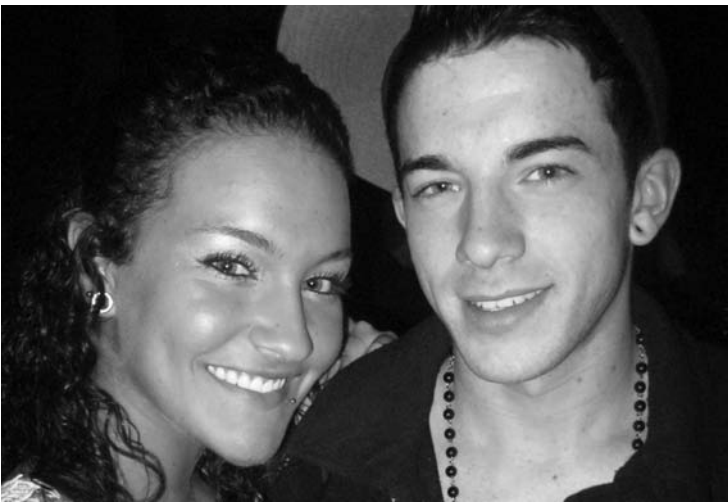


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Lindsey and Shawn at BJ's NXS!



Melani, Kimberly and Julia at Sue Ellen's.

Go west young men and women for your music fix at **Best Friends Club** in Fort Worth. Country band **Rooster Boots** opens the weekend in **Cowtown** on Friday. ... Need more live music? **Sue Ellen's** is always a reliable go-to. The **Kat Moore Band** performs Friday night. **Paco Estrada** returns for a Saturday night gig. But the club goes all out on Sunday with **Girl Jam 18**. It's like a lady-palooza with a roster that includes the **Tyla Taylor Band**, **Kickback**, **Rachel Stacy** and more. ... And for just a little more music in the flesh, don't miss **Christmas in July** with **Pam's Present**. With requests for school supply donations, the event benefits the children of **Genesis Women's Shelter**. The all-day event features **Emy Taylor**, **Suzanne Kimbrell** and **Fingerless Ghost** just to name a few. ... Don't worry, dancing queens. We got your back. **Frisky Fridays** continues at the **Brick** with a healthy selection of beefy dancers. **The United Court of the Lone Star Empire** hosts **A Celebration of Pride** benefiting the **DFW Sisters** on Saturday before **DJ C Wade** mixes out the **Sexy Saturdays** party with MCs **Yava B**, **Kisa** and **Betty Neal**. ... Every Jueves (that's Spanish for Thursday), head to **Kaliente** for the **El Show Comico** hosted by **Catharaita**. ... The **Dallas Eagle** hosts the **Superstitious Friday the 13th Show** leading up to sexy **DJ Paul Kraft** taking over the music for the night. And see who gets crowned **Miss Gay Dallas** at the **Round-Up Saloon** on Wednesday featuring **Jenna Sky**, **Trisha Davis** and **Celeste Martinez**. ■

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K. and S. at Station 4.



Friends' night out at Alexandre's.



S. and C. at the Round-Up Saloon.



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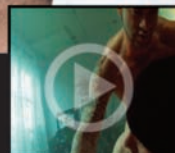
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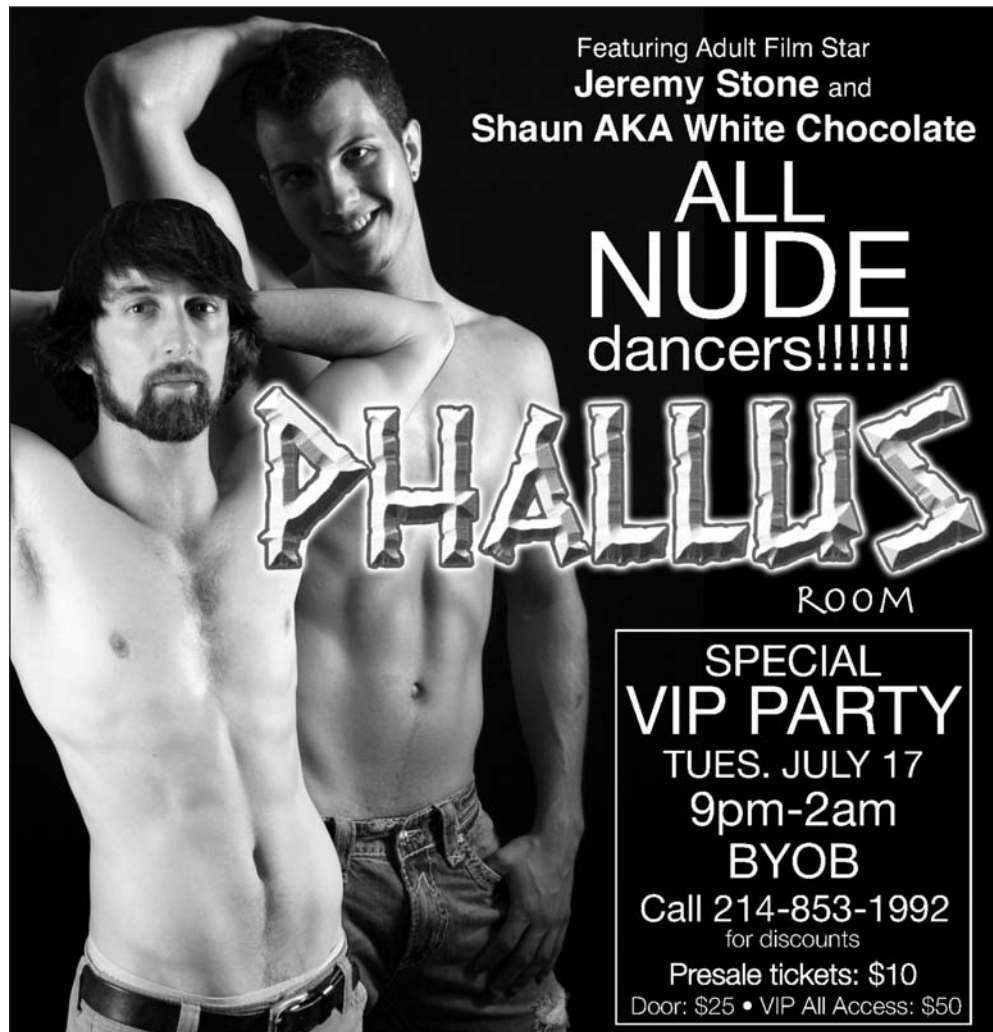
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index » 07.13.12

Employment30
Movers31
Insurance31
Real Estate32
For Rent32
For Sale32
Real Estate Services32
Realtors32
Services33
Computer Services33
Photography33
Home Services33
Cleaning33
Air Conditioning/Heating33
Painting33
Plumbing33
Landscaping33
General33
Pets34
Personal Care34
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Personal Training34
Spirituality34
Salons/Stylists34
Massage34
Announcements35

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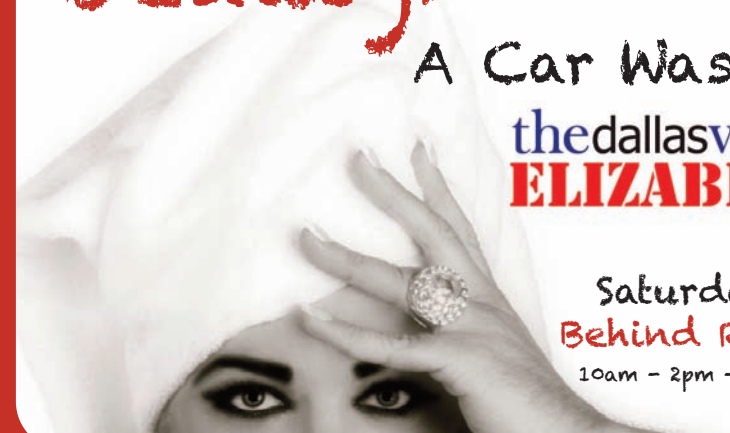
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