

dallasvoice

Out country stars
Ty Herndon &
Billy Gilman
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Where to go,
what to do
& how to help
this season

The
Christmas
Issue



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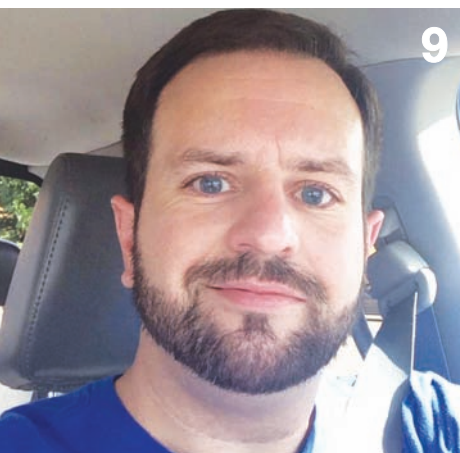
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Drag diva Cassie Nova gets in the ChristmIssue spirit. Photo by Terry Thompson. Design by Terry Thompson and Erin Moore.

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Mike Rawlings will run for re-election as mayor in 2015

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings confirmed Tuesday, Dec. 2, that he will run for re-election next May, telling Dallas Morning News that he still has some "big bold goals" left to accomplish.

Rawlings voted in May with 12 other council members to pass a pro-LGBT resolution that was "a comprehensive statement of support" that directs city staff to evaluate and fix the inequities for LGBT employees in city employment.

Rawlings, 60, is also the former CEO of Pizza Hut and a former chief executive of the Tracy-Locke ad agency, and a vocal supporter of efforts to end domestic violence.

— Tammye Nash

11th Circuit refuses to extend stay on marriage equality in Florida

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals denied on Wednesday, Dec. 3, the state of Florida's request to

extend the stay placed on a lower court's ruling overturning the Sunshine State's ban on marriage equality. This clears the way for same-sex couples to begin applying for marriage licenses late on Jan. 5 when the current stay expires.

— Tammye Nash

Remembering Brandon James Singleton

I learned that over the weekend former Dallas Voice contributor Brandon James Singleton died in Los Angeles. He would have been 32 in just a few weeks.

Over the years, I've worked with dozens of writers and freelancers. The best ones, you remember. And it was easy to remember Brandon.



He wrote a piece for Dallas Voice called "Tex'n the City," a kind of bucket list of things he wanted to accomplish before he turned 30. It ran for 13 weeks. The pieces were marvelous. The series culminated with Brandon actually turning 30, on Dec. 15, 2012, and reflecting on what that meant.

His wake is from 7:15–8:15 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 5 at Golden Gate Funeral Home, 5701 Loop 820 South, Fort Worth. His funeral will take place from 1–3 p.m. on Dec. 6 at Golden Gate.

— Arnold Wayne Jones



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- Thu 12/11, 7:30p - **Big Red Wine Tasting**
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Resource Center offers health insurance help

Resource Center is teaming up with Out2Enroll to help find affordable health insurance for individuals and their families. The center will host trained health care assistants to answer questions and help enroll or re-enroll in affordable coverage from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. on each Saturday, Dec. 6, 13 and 20 at Resource Center, 2701 Reagan St.

Black Tie Dinner hosts Beneficiary Distribution Celebration

BTD hosts its Beneficiary Distribution Celebration from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11 at the Renaissance Dallas Hotel, 2222 N. Stemmons Fwy. Light hors d'oeuvres and Stoli cocktails will be served. Valet parking is available. RSVP at blacktie.org/RSVP.

Movies That Matter screenings in Fort Worth

The quarterly series Movies That Matter: A Human Rights Film Series presented by the Fort Worth Human Relations Commission will present A Day of Film and Reflection on Dec. 6 at Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 3200 Darnell St. The event commemorates International Human Rights Day. The event will feature four films: *Solar*



Mamas, Stealing Africa, Wasteland and Four Horsemen. A reception is scheduled from 3:15-4:15 p.m. Visit bit.ly/1ykF3Tn for showtimes.

Admission to the films is free, but seating is limited, available on a first-come, first-served basis beginning 30 minutes before each film.

Dallas Senior Services Program hosts free brunch and dance

City of Dallas' Senior Services Program hosts a free brunch and dance from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11 at the Jaycee Zaragoza Recreation Center, 3114 Clymer St. The event will include vendors, door prizes, giveaways, DJs and free parking. RSVP by Dec. 5 at 214-670-5227. ■

pet of the week / BUDDY

Buddy is a gentle, 2-year-old lab/mastiff mix. Even though his most fervent wish is to be your lap dog, if for some reason you prefer not to have him on your lap, he will gladly defer to your wishes. He's very people oriented and calm. Ask for Buddy, A863695, at Dallas Animal Services & Adoption Center, 1818 N. Westmoreland. He's patiently waiting and his adoption fee has been waived.

The Adoption Center is open 11 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Monday-Saturday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. All adopted pets are spayed or neutered, vaccinated and microchipped. Standard adoption fees are \$85 for dogs and \$55 for cats. They also offer discounts on adoption fees for pets over 6 years of age, to any senior citizen that adopts a pet, and to anyone adopting more than one pet at a time. For more information, visit DallasAnimalServices.org or find us on Facebook at Facebook.com/DallasAnimalServices. Photo contributed by Judi Burnett.



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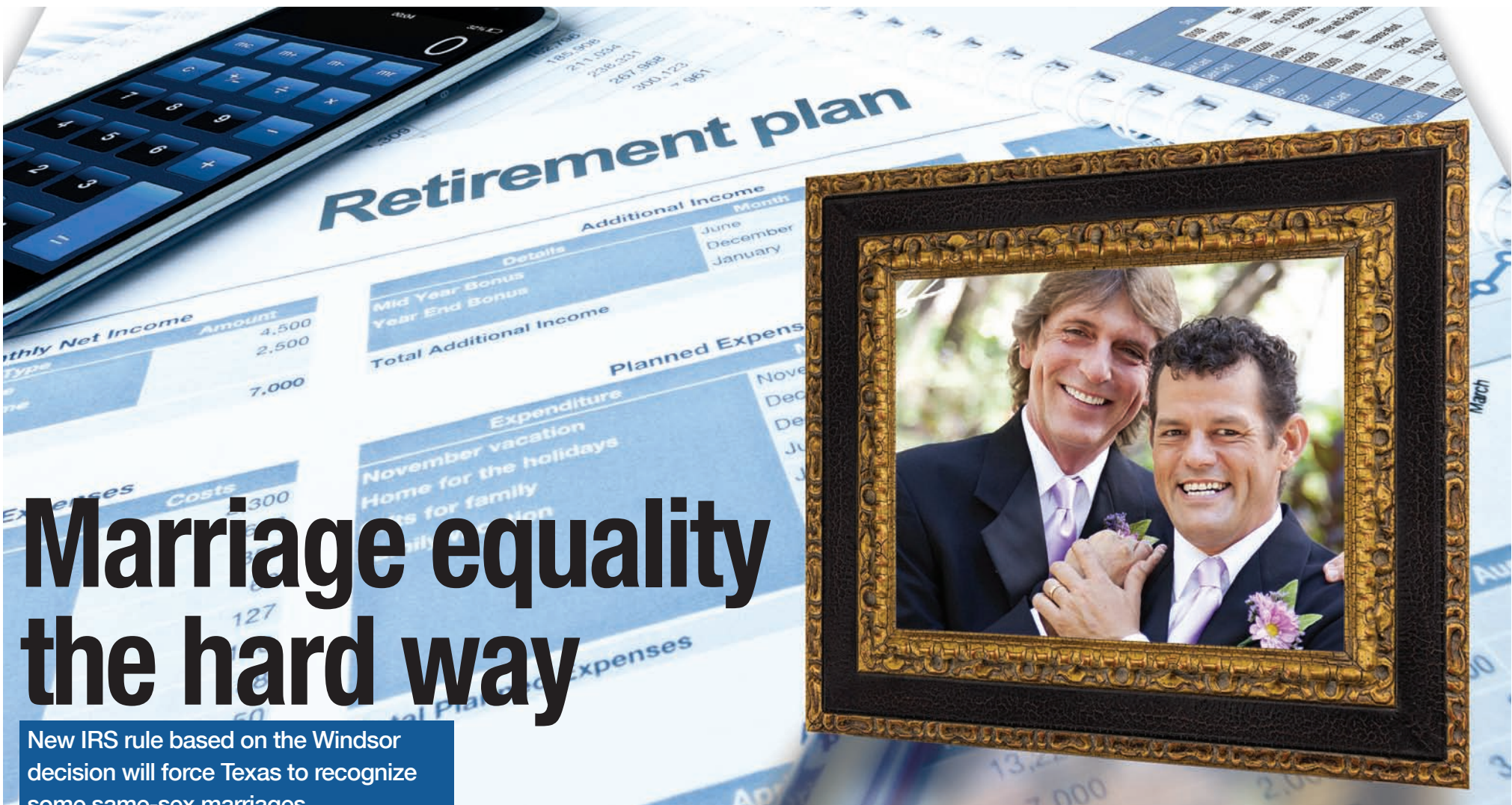
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Marriage equality the hard way

New IRS rule based on the Windsor decision will force Texas to recognize some same-sex marriages

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
nash@dallasvoice.com

As the first week in December wound down, LGBT Texans were still waiting for word out of San Antonio on whether federal District Judge Orlando Garcia would lift the stay on his February ruling declaring Texas' same-sex marriage ban unconstitutional.

In the meantime, though, same-sex marriages were already being recognized in the Lone Star State, although only under very limited circumstances. And yet, the penalty for those entities unwilling to abide by the rules of those limited circumstances, the fall-out could be severe.

Thanks to the efforts of Jonathan Saenz and Texas Values, a group working to keep it from being implemented, LGBT activists in Dallas and Fort Worth recently learned of a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service requiring that certain types of retirement and benefit plans recognize same-sex marriages.

Resource Center Communications and Advocacy Manager Rafael McDonnell and Fairness Fort Worth President David Mack Henderson said that requirement means that governmental agencies that offer employees 401(a) retirement plans — a class which includes the more well-known 401(k) plans — and the “125 cafeteria plans” must recognize the same-sex spouses of employees participating in those plans, even though state law prohibits such recognition.

The ruling requiring the recognition was handed down by IRS officials in September 2013, in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *United States v. Windsor* overturning the portion

of the Defense of Marriage Act prohibiting the federal government from recognizing legal same-sex marriages.

“The changes [demanded by the IRS] basically mean that same-sex marriages are recognized [for federal purposes] on a state of ceremony basis, not a state of domicile basis,” McDonnell said this week. “That means that if you were married in a jurisdiction that does legally recognize same-sex marriage, then your 401(a) retirement plan has to legally recognize your marriage, even if you live in a state like Texas that doesn't.”

According to information provided by the IRS office in Dallas, “Qualified retirement plan operations must reflect the outcome of *Windsor* as of June 26, 2013. ... For federal tax purposes, effective as of September 16, 2013, Rev. Rul. 2013-17 adopts a general rule recognizing a marriage of same-sex individuals that is validly entered into in a state whose laws authorize the marriage of two individuals of the same sex, even if the individuals are domiciled in a state that does not recognize the validity of same-sex marriages ...”

The IRS does not, however, give the same legal standing to domestic partnerships, civil unions or “other similar formal relationship[s].”

McDonnell said he and other Dallas activists have been “working with Dallas County over the last several months, talking about how to make their policies and benefits more LGBT-inclusive.” When he heard about the IRS ruling, McDonnell said he “reached out to” the Commissioners Court who asked the county's human resources director, Mattye Mauldin-Taylor, if the county's retirement plan complies with the IRS requirements.

Mauldin-Taylor in turn asked Lavonda Haynes, “who handles most retirement issues for Dallas County.” Haynes then reviewed the question with officials at Texas County and District Retirement System, the county's retirement plan.

According to that review, Mauldin-Taylor said, TCDRS is “already in compliance with the new IRS regulations.”

But McDonnell and Henderson both noted technicalities that could cause problems for LGBT individuals trying to designate their legal same-sex spouse as a beneficiary of their retirement plan.

McDonnell noted that even though the TCDRS is apparently compliant in practice, the entity's paperwork has not been updated. It allows employees to designate an opposite-sex spouse, but not a same-sex spouse.

He said he was told that LGBT employees can enter their same-sex spouse as beneficiary on the current paperwork as “other than spouse.” And that just won't fly with the IRS, given that only legal spouses are eligible for certain benefits under these plans.

“Words matter,” Henderson said, noting that the IRS ruling clearly states that “additional alternatives are provided for surviving spouses that are not available to non-spousal beneficiaries.”

Henderson and McDonnell called the TCDRS's compliance “closet compliance” at best because even though the benefits are available to LGBT employees and their legal spouses, no one is telling those employees.

“What good is a benefit if you don't know you have access to it?” McDonnell said.

TCDRS is one of several defined contribution retirement plans in Texas that are subject to the

new IRS ruling regarding same-sex spouses. According to the State Pension Review Board, there are 171 defined contribution local retirement systems in Texas with about 100,000 members and about \$2 billion in total net assets combined. That includes 401(a) plans, 401(k) plans and 457 plans.

There are 12 other retirement systems enabled by state statute with their own provisions. At least some of those plans are 401(a), 401(k) or 457 plans which are required to recognize legal same-sex spouses of plan members.

Among those 12 is the Dallas Police and Fire Pension System, a group that recently chose to put off implementing full benefits for its LGBT members, even though the Dallas City Council had already voted in favor of those benefits. According to a DPFP overview publication from 2013, “DPFP is a defined benefit plan qualified under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, and serves almost 9,300 families of police officers and firefighters.”

“About a month ago, Dallas Police and Fire voted to just kick the can down the road instead of acting to do what's right,” McDonnell said. “They haven't made the changes, and they need to. They are out of time. This is not about some one person's strongly-held religious beliefs. This is about a governmental body doing its job.”

The Fort Worth Employees Retirement Fund is another of the 12. Dallas Voice contacted Mayor Betsy Price's office to determine if that plan is also a defined contribution plan but had received no response as of deadline on Thursday, Dec. 4.

Henderson, a tax preparation specialist, ex-



Grindr scammer targeting Dallas gay men

BE AWARE | At least two Dallas gay men have been scammed by a man identified as Michael Bellah of Burleson. This is a photo of Bellah, taken from his Facebook page, and both men confirmed that this a photo of the man who scammed money from them.

'Gay father' from Burleson hitting up dates for cash for tires, school supplies

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Robert Blake is a divorced dad who's retired from the Air Force and lives in Cedar Hill.

He met Michael Bellah on Grindr. Bellah claimed to also be a divorced dad who served a short time in the Air Force.

"We chatted for a while and eventually we met and had dinner," Blake said.

Blake said Bellah was running late for their dinner date. He didn't arrive until 10:30 p.m., claiming he had a flat tire. They went out to dinner anyway, and during the meal, Bellah told Blake he had gotten the tires he needed but had to come up with \$100 by the next day to pay the tire store manager.

He also told Blake how school was starting soon and he had to give his ex-wife money for school supplies. To top it all off, Bellah said, he was short on cash because payroll at his company was "messed up."

"I paid for dinner," Blake said.

Still, Blake said, he and Bellah hit it off because they had things in common. Bellah told him he had served in the Air Force a short time before he got a medical discharge.

"Being a divorced gay dad that lost everything when I came out, I knew what it was like to struggle to make ends meet," Blake said. "I felt sorry for him, and gave him a check for \$250 as a loan."

Blake said he felt compassion for someone in that position because he'd been there.

"This was also a bad life lesson that I learned the hard way," he said.

Blake said he called Bellah a number of times to ask about a follow-up date and to ask when he

could get his money back. But Bellah always had an excuse why he couldn't meet Blake.

One evening, Blake was having dinner with his friend John* from church. "We started talking and I told him about my situation with Michael," Blake said. "When I told him he lives in Burleson, he said, 'Oh. Interesting.'"

Then John added, "I met him on Scruff about a year and a half ago."

John said Bellah told him that his children were having medical issues. He asked John to do a Facebook fundraiser for him.

"I got six friends to donate a total of about \$300," John said, adding that he should have gotten a clue when Bellah refused to put the fundraiser on his own Facebook page.

John was in the middle of moving to Dallas. After he was settled, they connected again. And again Bellah asked for money: "I know you're tight because you've unemployed. But can you loan me money?" John recalled Bellah saying.

He said they had been dating for about a month when he told another friend about Bellah. John said that friend said, "Please tell me you didn't give him money."

But John had. He gave Bellah a check for \$275.

John asked Bellah about this other friend who warned him.

"That's when problems started," he said.

He said he called a number of times about getting the loan repaid but Bellah just got angry at him and said he shouldn't have given him the money if he couldn't afford it. Then Bellah stopped answering John's calls.

He said he signed into Scruff on another friend's account. Soon after they started talking, Bellah was at it again.

"I was getting the sob story again about the sick kids," he said.

According to Blake, others have been scammed as well.

"I have another friend that lived in south Arlington that Michael approached and asked for \$500," Blake said. "My friend is a little brash and told him to f-off."

Dallas Voice contacted Bellah through Facebook, asking him to comment for this story. In a Facebook message, Bellah said he was "not discussing my personal business with someone I do not know. If you would like to present facts of these allegations I will be happy to discuss them with you."

Even though he was provided with the Dallas Voice phone number and said he would be in contact with the Voice reporter, as of press deadline Thursday, Dec. 4, Bellah had not contacted Dallas Voice further.

*Editor's note: The man identified as John asked that his full name not be used to protect his identity.

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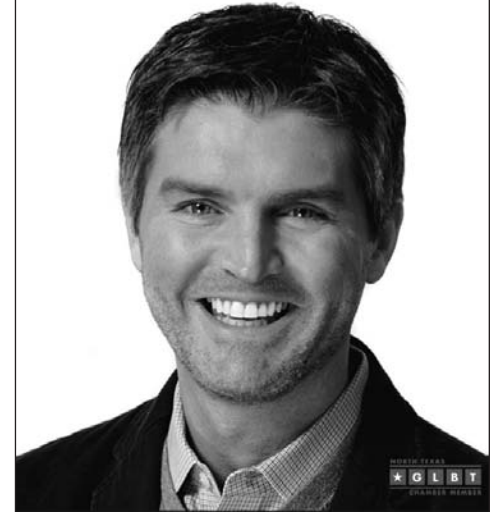
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Holiday Calendar

Holiday spotlight: Fourth annual LGBTQ Saves winter prom



JAMES RUSSELL | Staff Writer
russell@dallasvoice.com

Proms are a staple of high school life for many teens, just as much as homecoming, football games and endless college applications.

But Sharon Herrera of Fort Worth never felt comfortable attending hers. For the closeted lesbian, dancing with, much less dating, a man wasn't her idea of a fun time.

Two decades later, you'd think Herrera wouldn't just avoid reunions, but that she'd also try to forget her bad high school experiences.

But as a Fort Worth Independent School District employee, Herrera can't avoid high schools. So instead she's working to change them, in part by creating the kind of prom for the district's LGBT students and their friends that she would have loved to attend when she was in school.

Thus was born the LGBTQ Saves Winter Prom, presented by the youth advocacy group supporting FWISD.

The prom will be exactly like the typical high school prom: There will be DJs, snacks and drinks. But it will be "more comfortable, where the students can be freer," Herrera said, meaning it will be really, really queer.

Bernardo Vallarino, vice president of the group's board, didn't have a negative experience at his high school prom. But when asked if he's attending, he responded with an enthusi-

astic "yes." Students and parents learn about the prom through a variety of means: schools with Gay-Straight Alliances, word-of-mouth and outreach by board members and LGBT community liaisons.

Unfortunately not all students can attend.

Some students may be out at school or among school employees but in the closet at home. Many others lack the means of transportation to get to the small church in Fort Worth's Near Southside neighborhood where the dance will be held, Vallarino said. "But we're working on it."

Board Secretary Pilar Candia-Juarez is an ally who only joined the board six months ago. She's among those who are "working on it."

Candia-Juarez said she joined the LGBTQ Saves board to provide mentorship and guidance. A passionate advocate for LGBT causes for all of her life who grew up with LGBT friends, she knows LGBT youth need strong advocates. "Teenagers need as much as they need to be loved and accepted," she said.

Candia-Juarez also knows high school students need to have fun in a safe and welcoming space. She can't wait to attend the prom for another, more personal reason. Growing up poor in Mexico, she said, she was never able to attend one. But this weekend, with her husband as her date and a new dress, she's excited to be among LGBT people, whom she proudly calls family. ■

7-10 p.m. at Celebration community Church, 908 Pennsylvania, Fort Worth.

December

Through Dec. 20: Gauge Xavier's Annual Coat Challenge

Dallas Bears member Gauge Xavier challenges you to donate new or gently used winter clothing to the local charity of your choice, preferably one that does not resale the item. <http://on.fb.me/1Begw3s>.

Dec. 3-Dec. 24: 16th Annual CoH Christmas Gift Wrap Service

Drop off gifts in the reception area at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, before Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services throughout December and they will be wrapped and ready for you when you leave. Purchase gifts at Sources and use the CoH Gift Wrap Service to receive a \$2 Sources gift card. 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 3, 10 and 17. 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7, 14, 21. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 24. Contact Paul Kolasci at paulkolasci@gmail.com to make an alternative appointment.

Dec. 5: Taizé: "Blue Christmas Service of Healing" at 7 p.m. in the CoH's Interfaith Peace Chapel.

Dec. 5: Purple Foundation presents quarterly party with DJ Joe Ross

The Purple Foundation presents its quarterly party with Houston DJ Joe Ross, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., at Dallas Eagle, 5740 Maple Ave. Suggested \$5 donation.

Dec. 6: Lost Souls Rugby Toy Drive and Ugly Sweater Party

Lost Souls Rugby Club hosts a toy drive and ugly sweater party, 6-9 p.m., at The Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road.

Dec. 6: LGBTQ Saves Winter Formal

Fourth annual dance LGBT youth group in Fort Worth, 7-10 p.m., at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania, Fort Worth.

Dec. 7: Cantata

9 and 11 a.m. at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth.

Dec. 7: Hope 4 Peace and Justice Year-End Banquet

H4PJ celebrates the year's accomplishments, honors long-time board members for their years of service and recognizes the contributions of the Rev. Jim Mitulski, interim pastor of Cathedral of Hope, 6:30 p.m. at Mattito's Tex-Mex, 3102 Oaklawn Ave.

Dec. 7: Advent: Peace Sunday service at 9 and 11 a.m. at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

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Former CEI executive Paul Lewis has died

Longtime Pride parade volunteer and former parade grand marshal remembered as a kind and selfless man

JAMES RUSSELL | Staff Writer
russell@dallasvoice.com

Former Caven Enterprises Inc. Vice President and 2010 Pride grand marshal Paul Lewis died Friday, Nov. 28, after suffering two heart attacks. He was 69.

Friends this week remembered Lewis as a selfless man who loved Dallas' LGBT community.

"I can't think of anyone who didn't love him," said Alan Pierce, co-owner of the Round-Up Saloon.

Lewis' positive influence on those around him was evident on social media as, upon learning about his death, members of the LGBT community and its allies shared photos, memories and grief.

"Our parade directors, and executive directors who carry the parade in current years have made sure that his view of the parade was always the best; front and center," read a post

on the Dallas Tavern Guild Facebook page. "We are truly saddened by his passing, and he will be dearly missed by all. Rest in Peace, Mr. Lewis."

Christine Bengston worked under Lewis at Village Station, the Caven nightclub which has since morphed into Station 4. She called him a "strong but fair" man.

"He'd walk up to someone at the bar, look at their face and knock them on the head three or four times," Bengston said. "You knew that meant it was time to go. And he always made sure they got home safely."

Michael Doughman, executive director of Dallas Tavern Guild, said Lewis "carried a gruff, almost hostile demeanor at times when out in public and at work. But those of us who knew the man knew of his unending generosity and thoughtfulness."

"From cooking a 4 a.m. breakfast for all the Caven crew, to opening his home time and time again to a person struggling with AIDS/HIV and caring for them in their last days, Paul was a father to many a young man and woman in our commu-

nity," Doughman added.

Among the young people Lewis helped was Summer Semmens of Fort Worth. She knew him from when they both lived in Houston, where he ran bars. Her mother, who died last year, worked for Lewis, and Semmens was one of his "daughters."

Semmens said that even though Caven Enterprises recruited Lewis and moved him to Dallas, he didn't abandon the Semmens family. She recalled a time that he sent teddy bears to her entire preschool class; he wanted her class to think she bought them.

"He wanted me to be the coolest kid in pre-kindergarten," she said.

Oscar Noeth, Semmens son, said Lewis was "like a father to my mom and is my grandfather. He is the most special man, so special. Only if he was still on the earth, I'd be happy. I wish I could see him one last time."

Lewis kept his private life very private. But according to information provided by Semmens and others, he was born on Jan. 15, 1945, and was raised in an orphanage in Iowa. He eventually moved into a foster home, but his foster parents died when he was a teenager, leaving him to take care of himself.

Lewis joined the Army

but didn't last long.

"He liked to say he ditched the Army when they told him to jump out of a plane," Semmens recalled. "He said, 'This fairy don't fly.'"

After moving to Dallas, Lewis became friends with Alan Ross, first executive director of the Dallas Tavern Guild and the man for whom Dallas' annual Pride parade is named. That was the beginning of Lewis' nearly 30-year relationship with the Tavern Guild, including his stint as coordinator of the guild's annual Holiday Gift Project.

The Holiday Gift Project, started by Ross, was an effort to provide gift bags for people with HIV/AIDS, and it was started at a time when most of those people were gay men whose only "family" were their friends in the LGBT community.

Friends said 2014 was the first year that Lewis wasn't involved with the project. But even though he is gone, they said, his legacy with that project and in the community will live on.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 20 at the Rose Room in S4. Doors will open at 1 p.m.



David Henderson

plained that the "125 cafeteria plans" included in the IRS ruling are those benefit plans that allow employees to contribute to savings accounts that can then be used to pay for certain specified expenses, such as health care or child care. He said they are called "cafeteria plans" because plan members have "a whole buffet of benefit options to choose from."



Rafael McDonnell

The cafeteria plans, like the 401(a), 401(k) and 457 plan contributions, are "pre-tax" dollars,

which means that those funds are not subject to federal taxes. And like the retirement plans, the cafeteria plans almost must recognize employees' legal same-sex spouses.

Although the retirement plans in question are, technically, supposed to be in compliance with the IRS ruling in practice already, there is a grace period. According to Internal Revenue Bulletin 2014-17: "The deadline to adopt a plan amendment pursuant to this notice is the later of the otherwise applicable deadline under section 5.05 of Rev. Proc. 2007-44, or its successor, or Dec. 31, 2014. Moreover, in the case of a governmental plan, any amendment made pursuant to this notice need not be adopted before the close of the first regular legislative session of the legislative body with the authority to amend the plan that ends after Dec. 31, 2014."

That means the Texas Legislature apparently must bring these plans fully into compliance by the end of the 2015 legislative session.

McDonnell noted that corporate defined contribution retirement plans are also required to comply with the IRS ruling on same-sex spouses.

Given the political victories by ultra-conservatives in last month's election, McDonnell and Henderson said it will be "interesting to see" what happens in terms of the Legislature updating these retirement plans.

But what happens if to those plans that fail to comply? Those plans are disqualified and "the plan's trust loses its tax-exempt status and becomes a nonexempt trust."

That means, in essence, that all contributions to these funds that had, in the past, been tax-deferred will now be taxed.

"Does the state of Texas really want to do that? To essentially send its retirement system into chaos?" McDonnell said. "It would be catastrophic."

Both McDonnell and Henderson criticized the state and other governmental agencies that may already be in what they called "closet compliance" with the new IRS ruling.

"It's one thing to make a plan change functionally. But if you don't tell anybody about it, are you really making a change?" McDonnell said.

"The state is trying to tell the IRS, see, we are complying. But they are walking a fine line, saying we're not going to comply with your language. We're going to comply, but not tell people about it and not use the language the IRS says to use," Henderson said.

"The state is talking out of both sides of its mouth. No, actually, the state is talking out one side of its mouth and keeping the other side clamped shut, just drooling and dribbling with conflicting language," he said.

McDonnell added, "This is not a huge thing when it comes to Texas recognizing same-sex marriage. It only applies to certain people in certain circumstances. For those certain people, it is a big thing. Overall, it's a small thing, but it is something. It's a baby step that's being compelled by the IRS." ■

REMEMBERING THE NAMES



Resource Center's Youth First participated in the World AIDS Day observances held Dec. 1 in by C.U.R.E. held in Plano. Youth First volunteer Cristina Hayes, program manager Mike Cruz, and one of the Youth First members presented a quilt panel that Youth First attendees made for the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial quilt.

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FW woman murdered, apartment burned



Fort Worth Police are continuing their investigation into the death of Ashlea Harris, 31, found dead in her southwest Fort Worth apartment around 8 a.m. Friday, Nov. 28, by firefighters responding to a fire.

The website for the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office does not yet list the cause and manner of her death, but police are treating her death as a homicide.

A spokesman for the Fort Worth Police Department said firefighters responding to reports of a fire alarm going off in a unit at the River Ranch Apartments, 4700 King Ranch Road, about 4 a.m. Friday found a small blaze inside the apartment that had been contained by the apartment's sprinkler system. After extinguishing the fire, though, firefighters found Harris' body.

According to the medical examiner's website, Harris was found in the bedroom of the apartment.

Friends and family told authorities that Harris, who worked for American Eagle Outfitters at Hulen Mall, had been working a late-night Black Friday shift, and had left the store about 4 a.m.

Friends described Harris as a friendly, positive

person who loved her friends. And they loved her. One friend said she would miss Harris' ever-present smile at Best Friends, the Fort Worth nightclub she often went to. Others promised to keep her memory alive and to keep pressing until whomever killed her is found and brought to justice.

About 50 people were on hand outside Harris' apartment on Sunday night, Nov. 30, for a vigil and balloon release in her memory, and friends have set up a Facebook page in her memory, RIP Ashlea Harris.

Funeral services are set for 2 p.m. today (Friday, Dec. 5), at Baumgardner Funeral Home, 3704 Benbrook Highway. She is survived by her father and stepmother, Tommy Ray Harris Sr. and Mary Reedy; mother, Monica Cassity and her husband, Chuck; her brothers, Tommy Ray Harris Jr. and family, Phillip Cassity and family, Jared Cassity and family, William Cassity and Chris Cassity and family; sisters, Kari Medford and family, Melissa Hill and family, Candace Applebee and family, Amanda Towey and family, and Jamie Harris; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. ■

— Tammye Nash

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STOCKING STUFFERS



On Thursday, Dec. 4, the Dallas Tavern Guild presented a total of \$12,500 to the five beneficiaries of the Allan Ross Texas Freedom Parade. Beneficiaries are AIDS Arms, AIDS Services of Dallas, AIDS Interfaith Network, Legacy Counseling Center and Resource Center. Funds were presented during a reception at the Round-Up Saloon. (James Russell/Dallas Voice)

Dec. 10: Dallas County Democratic Party Jingle Bell Bash

DCDP hosts its annual Jingle Bell Bash 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Stoneleigh, 2926 Maple Ave. Toys can also be dropped off for its Toys for Tots drive, running through Dec. 12, at the party and at DCDP offices, 4209 Parry Ave.

Dec. 10: PULSE: "Third Way" contemporary service at 7:15 p.m. at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

Dec. 11: Our Lady of Guadalupe/Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe

Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, honors Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration with a procession of the image of the Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine in Mexico City at 7 p.m. A following Mass includes a retelling of the 1535 revelation at Tepeyac in Mexico and Folkloric dances by Alegre. After the mass, attendees will share the typical tamales and atole (a Mexican drink similar to chocolate milk).

Dec. 12: AIDS Walk South Dallas launch party

Fifth anniversary launch party hosted by Dallas Black Dance Theater, 6:30-9:30 p.m. at 2700 Flora St. AIDSWalkSouthDallas.com.

Dec. 13: Women's Chorus of Dallas presents HoliDAZE

TWCD sing holiday classics with a twist, 7 p.m. at City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. Tickets at 214-520-7828 or TWCD.org.

Dec. 13: LEGACY Christmas Event & Planning Session

Cathedral of Hope's monthly social group for adults 50 years and older meets for A Christmas Carol potluck dinner at 1:30 p.m. at Bath House Cultural Center, 521 E. Lawther Dr. Contact Roy Joplin via e-mail at rvj5868@att.net with questions.

Dec. 13: Linze's Toys for Tots Drive

Linze Serell's eighth annual Toys for Tots drive and Christmas party begins at 8 p.m. at Garlow's, 308 E. Main Street, Gun Barrel City. Wal-Mart gift card donations will be accepted through Dec. 10. Send to Bill Lindsey/Linze Serell, 802 Bayou Court, Wylie, 75098.

Dec. 14: Advent: Joy, Music

Sunday, 9 and 11 a.m., at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

Dec 14: Worship Service and Holiday Potluck

Following the 10:30 a.m. service, stick around for the 11:45 a.m. Holiday Potluck Dinner at Agape Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec 14: Community Cantata: "Noel Celebration"

Former WFAA news anchor Gloria Campos narrates the production featuring churches from the region, 3 p.m. at Celebration on the Lake, 9120 S. Hwy. 198, Maybank. Contact

Kathy at 817-602-4645 for more information.

Dec. 15: Resource Center Open House

Drop by and meet the staff, 5:30-6:30p.m. at Resource Center, 2701 Reagan St.

Dec 16: DFW Trans-Cendence Holiday Party and Potluck

7 p.m. at Agape MCC, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec. 18-21: Turtle Creek Chorale presents Jangled

Holiday program includes a family version at the Saturday matinee. Thursday-Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Dec. 18: GALA Holiday party and fundraiser

Caroling, silent auction and performance by Gary Poe., 6-10 p.m., at 3504 Pinehurst Drive, Plano. \$18 in advance. \$20 at the door. Free for GALA members. RSVP by Dec. 10 to info@galanorthtexas.org.

Dec. 20: 23rd Annual Lights of Love

7 p.m. at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth.

Dec. 20: Salvation Sisters

The DFW Sisters stage The Salvation Sisters, a take-off on the Salvation Army Christmas bell ringing, 8:30-11 p.m. in front of Hunky's, 3930 Cedar Springs Road. Proceeds benefit HIV services.

Dec. 21: Advent Love Sunday Service and Christmas Concert: Unspeakable Joy!

Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, celebrates Advent at the 9 and 11 a.m. services, and holds a concert at 7 p.m.

Dec. 22: Ring in the Holidays with Leslie Jordan

Benefit for Legacy Counseling Center at 8 p.m. at Theatre Three, 2800 Routh St. Suite 168. Tickets at LegacyCares.org.

Dec 24: Christmas Eve

Dec. 24: Beth El Binah goes out for Chinese

The LGBT Jewish congregation fulfills the biblical commandment to eat Chinese food on Christmas at 7:30 p.m. at Thairrific, 4000 Cedar Springs Road #E. Everyone welcome.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Communion Service

7 p.m. at Agape Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec. 24: Cathedral of Hope holds four Christmas Eve Candlelight Holy Communion Services.

Family worship at 5 p.m. in the sanctuary. A Spanish language service at 7 p.m. in the International Peace Chapel. English language services at 9 and 11 p.m. in the snctuary. All at CoH, 5910 Cedar Springs Road,.

Dec. 25: Christmas

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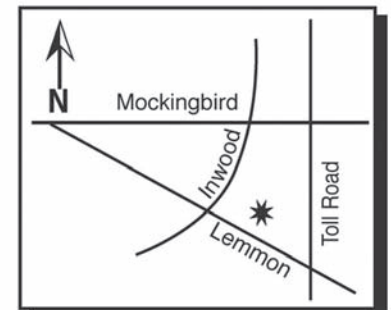
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My annual



‘Why I Hate Hanukkah’ post

I love the Jewish holidays — well, all of them except this one and I’ll probably offend just about everyone explaining why

DAVID TAFFET | Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

It’s not Krismus, Crissmass or Xristmas. So why do we get to choose Hanuka, Hannuka, Hanukka, Chanuka, Chanukka, Channukah and any other combination of H or CH, one or two N’s, one or two K’s and a final H or not?

I just cannot and will not support a holiday they can’t decide how to spell.

There are lots of other reasons I don’t like this least important holiday on the Jewish calendar.

First and foremost, because it certainly is the least important holiday on the Jewish calendar. Most other Jewish holidays have roots in the Bible. This one is from the Book of Maccabees, which we threw out of the Bible more than 2,000 years ago.

We threw the book out but celebrate its holiday? Nonsense.

A little history to explain what Hannukah cele-

brates: In 167 B.C.E., a few thousand Jewish fighters, called the Maccabees, beat the crap out of about 40,000 Assyrians and gained independence. They did it by inventing guerrilla warfare.

About 250 years later, in order to continue practicing their religion under the Romans who would have been ticked off knowing a small band of Jews could beat the crap out of a large army, Jews made up the “great miracle” story of the oil lasting eight days until they received a new shipment in Jerusalem.

Eight days? Really? J-town is about 40 miles from the coast where the oil is refined. Sounds like someone was partying in Tel Aviv a few days before hopping down to Jaffa, stopping at the Exxon station and hightailing it back home.

So Chanuka celebrates the invention of guerrilla warfare, or it celebrates a bullshit made-up story. Take your pick.

Now, other Jewish holidays also may be based on events that never happened. Who knows if Moses lifted his staff and parted the Red Sea? That’s part of the story of Passover.

But Passover also celebrates some good concepts — like slavery bad, freedom good.

And who knows if Queen Esther told the king she was Jewish? Turns out the king really loved her hot ass so he put to death Haman, who was planning to exterminate the Jews. Thus we have Purim, which teaches that genocide is evil.

And did Moses come down from Mount Sinai — the mountain in Sinai, not the hospital on Long Island —

with the 15 Commandments? Whether that actually happened or not, Shavuot celebrates the giving of the law. We learn not to murder or covet thy neighbor’s ass or thy neighbor’s wife’s ass — all good things.

But Hanuka is the first holiday that celebrates something we actually know never happened. Oil? Miracle? All made up. We know we made it up. Maybe those 10 plagues that preceded the Exodus never happened either, but at least we don’t *know* they never happened.

Channukah is also the laziest holiday on the Jewish calendar. One simple prayer that’s ripped off from Shabbat with the change of just one word — that’s how lazy we were with this holiday.

Light a few spindly candles. Give your wife a fur coat or a new Cadillac and, azoy, it’s done.

Passover involves cleaning out the kitchen and replacing all the dishes with Passover plates and removing all the food and replacing it with special Passover food.

(I’m not sure what most Jews will be doing for Passover this year since Manischewitz was purchased by Bain Capital last spring — but that’s another story.)

A huge Passover meal is prepared. Families gather and tell the story of the Exodus and sing songs and eat.

Yom Kippur involves an evening and then a full day of fasting and prayer followed by a huge feast to break the fast.

Sukkot is celebrated by eating a meal in a makeshift shelter built outside in the yard and decorated with fruits and vegetables and Christmas lights. (Well, I think the Christmas lights on the Sukkah tradition might be a Dallas thing.) As we eat out under the stars that shine through the top of the sukkah, we give thanks for the bountiful harvest.

But Chanukkah? Hanukah has one measly prayer and one monotonous song: “I have a little dreidl. They made it in China out of plastic. And when it’s dry and ready. Then dreidl I shall play.” Repeat. Repeat. Keep repeating til you can’t stand the damn song anymore.

And just how do you play dreidl? A dreidl is a four-sided top with a letter on each face. As you spin the top, place bets on which letter will land face up.

Yes, one of the joys of Hanukah is teaching little children to gamble. I guess had little Bugsy Seigel, Meyer Lansky and the rest of the Jewish mafia not learned gambling at Chanukah, there may never have been a Las Vegas.

And traditionally, Hanuka isn’t the gift-giving holiday. Purim is.

Channukah became the gift-giving holiday sometime after World War II in suburban America, so little Jewish kids wouldn’t feel left out.

Funny, I never felt left out. I always thought I could celebrate and enjoy my friends’ holidays with them and they could celebrate my holidays with me.

We always have non-Jewish friends at our Passover seder, Sukkot dinner and Purim party. And we do our non-Jewish friends a great favor by not subjecting them to 10 hours of Yom Kippur services.

This year, Channuka begins on Dec. 16, so the annual Jewish Christmas Eve ritual of eating Chinese food, as mandated in Leviticus, takes place just as Hanukah ends.

This year, Congregation Beth El Binah’s biblically ordered Christmas feast takes place at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 24 at Thairrific in Oak Lawn. Yes, we know it’s Thai and not Chinese, but God spoke to us and said it is better for an LGBT congregation to feast on Cedar Springs and the basic concept that pork is kosher only when wrapped in a wonton still applies.

And for the record, here’s how the holiday should be spelled in English taken from the Hebrew spelling: חנוכה .

The first letter is a guttural KH as in — well, we don’t have that sound in English. But not a CH as in chocolate and not an H as in “holy shit everyone spells this holiday wrong.”

Hebrew words don’t have double letters, so no double N or double K and there is a final H in the Hebrew spelling. And sometimes in Hebrew the word has the OO as the middle letter. Some spellings leave it out.

Long story short about Hebrew vowels — they’re traditionally understood, not written. You know which vowel to use going by a long set of rules.

So the correct spelling of the holiday, the one no one has ever used and no one — except me — suggests we begin to use, is KH not CH, one N, a long OO, one K and a final H: Khanookah. ■

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Violence and nationwide protests in the wake of a Missouri grand jury's decision not to indict a white police officer for the shooting death of a black teenager in August reveals the depth of the racial divide in this country and the distrust of our criminal justice system.

Despite weeks of preparation by government officials and civic leaders to avoid a riot, the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson erupted in a street war Nov. 24 as mostly black protesters set fire to buildings and police cars, broke business windows, looted stores, fired guns and threw bottles and rocks at police officers, firefighters and reporters. The deployment of smoke and tear gas by law en-

Ferguson: No easy answers

forcement officers and the presence of National Guard troops failed to quell the civil unrest.

A shocked nation watched live coverage of the chaos on network television stations.

Soon after St. Louis County prosecutor Robert P. McCulloch announced the grand jury rejected any indictments against Ferguson policeman Darren Wilson, hundreds standing in front of the Ferguson Police Department began yelling insults and pelting a line of police officers standing guard with various objects.

The destruction escalated during the night after the tearful breakdown of Michael Brown's mother who cried that the grand jury of nine whites and three blacks denied her "justice" for the shooting of her 18-year-old son on a residential street. Brown's stepfather jumped up on a platform with his wife, embracing her before he turned to the crowd and began yelling, "Burn this motherfucking place down."

In St. Louis protesters blocked traffic on Interstate 44, and Lambert-St. Louis International Airport suspended flight traffic as a precaution against automatic gunfire striking airplanes. The fires burned through the night because of fears firefighters might be shot by protesters and the inability of law enforcement officers to control the situation.

Although accustomed to violence and riots, many Americans feel they witnessed a night of mayhem in Ferguson like no other one before it.

Only a small percentage of Ferguson's black population participated in the rioting, but their community as a whole will suffer from the actions of the agitators. Black business owners experienced significant losses, and the community lost service and shopping venues.

Now, protests continue in cities nationwide, and arguments on social media sites such as Facebook flourish between advocates of law enforcement officers and activists who view the killing of Brown as an act of police brutality.

Civil rights leaders urge calm and lawful behavior, but the debate continues to rage about whether a police officer executed a teenager suspected of stealing tobacco products on Aug. 9, or if he justifiably shot an assailant who threatened his life with his fists and bulk. The police officer said the



teenager refused to obey a command to get out of the street and walk on the sidewalk.

Further exacerbating the national tension, a New York City grand jury on Dec. 3 no-billed a police officer who strangled a 43-year-old black man with a chokehold when a group of policemen attempted to arrest him in July for the illegal sale of cigarettes on a Staten Island sidewalk. Thousands of people marched in the streets to protest that evening in a more peaceful assembly, but unrest across the nation began to brew over the new development.

Many prominent members of the LGBT community and their friends have joined both sides of the debate. Hostile arguments frequently break out, followed by "unfriending." The video of Brown strong arming a store clerk and carrying unpurchased merchandise out of the door minutes before he came into contact with the policeman leads many to view him unsympathetically. They perceive him as a bully whose actions led to his own death.

The protesters' rioting reinforces biases some have against black people as a whole. Others fear the start of a race war in the nation, and they blame the media's coverage of the protests for exacerbating the situation.

Southern Poverty Law Center President Richard Cohen writes in an editorial that observers should not be second-guessing a grand jury that had access to voluminous information about the events leading up to Brown's death. He attributes the protesters' distrust of police officers to "a gulf that's been formed by the history of discrimination in our country, a gulf that has been deepened by the systemic biases in our current criminal justice system."

Cohen speculates the nation will likely experience more disastrous instances of civil unrest until there is reform to the criminal justice system and a healing of the racial wounds of the past that created

the racial division. "It's a gulf that breeds suspicion and mistrust, a gulf that undermines the very legitimacy of our system of justice," he said.

Meanwhile law enforcement officers fear a pattern of resistance to authority might begin developing that could interfere with their ability to maintain order. Wilson has resigned from the Ferguson Police Department with the knowledge that his law enforcement career is over.

Ferguson's Police Chief Tom Jackson vows to remain at the helm of the police department, and he is promising to recruit more black police officers and increase sensitivity training for the predominantly white police force working in a majority black community. Plans are also underway to install body cameras on all police officers so there will be a video recording of all law enforcement interactions.

All of the administrative solutions being examined by government officials on the local, state and national levels have merit. But ultimately it will require participation by all citizens in an effort to obey the law and respect each other regardless of their cultural differences for our nation to resolve this internal conflict.

Reporters who cover crime and examine police reports know that law enforcement officers witness and must contend with the types of violence that the average person cannot begin to comprehend. Often, it arises unexpectedly, and anyone coming into contact with police officers should be considerate of their apprehension.

It is a tragedy that Brown died as the direct consequence of a relatively minor crime. But the violence that ensued during the riots is inexcusable. All groups of people need to give a little, try to understand each other better and even extend a helping hand to the disadvantaged. The underprivileged need to try harder to improve their lot through education and hard work.

More importantly, cooler heads need to prevail. We face too many threats from beyond our borders to be fighting with each other. ■

David Webb is a veteran journalist with more than three decades of experience, including a stint as a staff reporter for Dallas Voice. He now lives on Cedar Creek Lake and writes for publications nationwide

Changing traditions

Much gets left behind when you transition, so treasure the things and people that go along for the journey

I don't think I'm alone in my love of the familiar. There is comfort in that, a predictability that doesn't exist in this unpredictable world. Maybe that's why we tend to be creatures of habit — getting up at the same time, taking the same route to work, eating at the same few restaurants.

My love of the familiar is strongest around the holidays, with all of the traditions that have been passed down through the years.

Growing up, it just wasn't Christmas until my dad hung those tacky Christmas stars from the ceiling with string and thumbtacks. When I was little, my dad would pick me up so I could touch them gently, causing them to sway.

I lived in the same house in Southern California until I was grown and moved out on my own. I kept some of those traditions with me and started a few new ones along the way with my own children. The stars ended up with my brother after my parents passed.

Things are different now. I've had to let go of so many things — familiar things, traditions and even people. This has been perhaps one of the more emotionally difficult parts of gender transition.

This will be my third Christmas since I came out. Each one has been special and each one very different.

I will never forget the Christmas of 2012; my first Christmas since coming out to my family and friends as a transgender woman. I was in the midst of a divorce (things were spiraling downward, even though I didn't know it for sure at the time) and emotionally drained. My oldest daughter invited me to Atlanta to spend Christmas with them.

I packed my car with enough clothes and shoes for a month (even though I was only staying four days), loaded Christmas presents for their family and then tried to sleep. I was excited but also scared. My daughter and son-in-law had never seen me as anyone other than "Dad." How would they react?

After a 12-hour drive to Atlanta, that question was answered when I knocked on the door and was greeted by my 3-year-old granddaughter with "Grandma Leslie!!" and a great big hug.

Let that sink in. She had never met or seen me as "Grandma Leslie." This came not from her, but from my daughter. That told me all I needed to know. I was accepted, even in my awkwardness.

That means more to me than I can ever explain. My tears told the story.

Still, the traditions from before were left behind. I was with her family now. Her husband has a huge extended family, and they have their own way of doing Christmas. So I blended in.

I had a great time, but it was all new. I felt

loved, but also like a curiosity, especially to the older members of my son-in-law's family. They just didn't quite know what to say to me.

The following year, I spent Christmas with my other daughter in Phoenix. She lives with her boyfriend in a pretty house that she loves to decorate for the holidays — lights outside to rival the Griswolds and really cute and tasteful decorations inside.



Leslie McMurray
Contributing Columnist

She really went all out. Hanging by the chimney with care were the Christmas stockings.

I'd had my Christmas stocking since childhood. It was green with white trim and had candy canes glued to it. It had my birth name on it and I'd had it longer than

my memory can recall.

But no longer.

When I looked at the stockings lovingly hung under the mantle, there was a new one there among the others. It was pink with white trim, with a green Christmas tree and a glitter snowflake. "LESLIE" was written in glitter along the top.

Once again, I felt the blessings of love and acceptance from my daughters, even as they struggled with their own sense of loss, change and new traditions.

This year will be different once again. I am staying home this Christmas.

I now share a townhouse with my girlfriend, who I love very much. We are doing Christmas together for the first time. Recently, the thought occurred to me that if we go get a tree, I have no ornaments to put on it. Most all of the Christmas stuff went to my ex-wife. I'm OK with that.

Still, there were ornaments that were accumulated over decades, some from childhood.

Gender transition is hard. I've said that before. Going into it, there is no possible way you can foresee all you will have to encounter.

The best advice I can offer is this: Be prepared to lose everything. Then celebrate the things you don't lose and treat them as the most valuable gifts you have ever received.

Treasure the things and people that are familiar that you are able to bring along for your journey. Start new traditions and build from there. Remember the past, but be ready to let it go; there is so much that you just can't take with you.

As for the people who stand by you through this journey — these people love you for you. Isn't that the most precious gift of all? ■

Leslie McMurray, a transgender woman, is a former radio DJ who lives and works in Dallas. Read more of her blogs at lesliemichelle44.wordpress.com.

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Keeping the yuletide gay

You can be of good queer this Christmas with our rundown of seasonal classics, old & new

Christmas is a time for family (and sometimes recovering from family), cheer, alcohol, more alcohol and finding things to do indoors where ugly sweaters are welcome. And there's no reason you can't gay it up, whether it's watching hot men in tights (*The Nutcracker!*), seeing plays with gay plotlines (*The Santaland Diaries!*), enjoying some campy musicals (the British panto!) or just taking the folks out to a family-friendly show with a longstanding tradition of good will, preferably with man named Ebenezer leading the way (*A Christmas Carol!*).

We've rounded up most of the Christmas-themed plays, musicals and ballets, and added in some fundraising performances (Uptown Players gets candy caned! Leslie Jordan is back!) plus some community events that help you keep the yuletide gay.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

Dance and theater

The Nutcracker. Tchaikovsky's celebrated ballet — beautiful romantic music throughout — is perhaps the most revered of holiday traditions. The Texas Ballet Theater mounts its annual version from Sir Ben Stevenson, once again with performances both in Dallas and Fort Worth.

Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Dec. 5–7.

Bass Performance Hall, 525 Commerce St., Fort Worth. Dec. 12–27. TexasBalletTheater.org.

The Beulaville Baptist Book Club Presents a Bur-Less-Q Nutcracker. Think every dancer knows how to do "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies?" Well, this small-town women's auxiliary does, which is how they screw up and hire a team of strippers to mount Tchaikovsky's masterpiece in the reprise of MBS Productions' award-winning comedy.

Stone Cottage Theatre, 15650 Addison Road. Through Dec. 28. BurlesqueNutcracker.com.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. Ballet isn't the only way a show can go wrong. A couple try to stage a holiday show in their church, but things go hilariously amiss in this stage version of the comedic book.

Theatre Arlington, 305 W. Main St., Arlington. Through Dec. 21. TheatreArlington.org.



LIFE+STYLE

holidays

DEPARTMENT STORE SANTAS, TIMES 2 | A disgruntled gay elf (Garret Storms, above) recounts the horrors of working for Macy's in WTT's 'The Santaland Diaries,' while in DCT's 'Miracle on 34th Street,' Kris Kringle (Francis Fusilier, left) transforms a family. (Photos by Karen Almond)

The Santaland Diaries and The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical. WaterTower revives two favorites: The return of the one-man show *The Santaland Diaries* (again with Garret Storms) about a gay Macy's elf and his travails earning money for the holidays (based on David Sedaris' brilliant memoir); and the sequel to the hit *The Great American Trailer Park Musical*, this time set during December when the rednecks are out in tacky force.

Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road. Santaland, Dec. 5–28; Trailer Park, Dec. 5–Jan. 4. WaterTowerTheatre.org.

Yes, Virginia Woolf, There Is a Santa Claus. Jeff Swearingen does some screwed up children's theater, from an all-pre-teen-girl adaptation of *Glengarry Glen Ross* to a kiddie version of *Game of*

Thrones, but what could be more theatrical — and holiday-centric — than combining the structure of Edward Albee's dark domestic drama of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* with the heartwarming message of *Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus* by moving it to the North Pole, where Jolly Ol' St. Nick ain't nearly so jolly when dealing with Mrs. Claus. Sick. And certainly hilarious.

Plano Children's Theatre, 1301 Custer Road, Plano. Dec. 5–13. FunHouseTheatreAndFilm.com.

Miracle on 34th Street and Frosty and Friends. Dallas Children's Theater is going the more traditional route for kids with two shows: *Frosty and Friends* is a quaint puppet show appropriate for theatergoers as small as 4, and *Miracle on 34th Street* is a stage



OH FUUUUDGE! | Ralphie copes with the family and his love of a new BB gun in 1940s Indiana in the musical adaptation of 'A Christmas Story' at Fair Park.

version of the film about how a department store Santa transforms a city.

Rosewood Center for Family Arts, 5938 Skillman St. Both through Dec. 21. DCT.org.

Beauty and the Beast. Still traditional, but with a sense of high camp, is Theatre Britain's annual Christmas panto, an English favorite where a fairy tale gets gayed up with double entendres and cross-dressing comic relief (Ivan Jones as a saucy maid). As is often the case, there's a strong message about generosity and good will toward one's fellow man triumphing over materialism.

Cox Building Playhouse, 1517 H Ave., Plano. Through Dec. 28. Theatre-Britain.com.

A Christmas Carol. Like Theatre Britain, the Dallas Theater Center's family outing has long been a reverie on the true spirit of the season: an adaptation of Dickens' haunting tale of Christmastime redemption. Chamblee Ferguson returns as Scrooge in a revival of the piece written last year by DTC artistic director Kevin Moriarty, but this time directed by Lee Trull.

Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. Through Dec. 28. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Ebenezer Scrooge. Pocket Sandwich Theatre has worked the Victorian angle even longer, with the 33rd staging of its version of the Dickens' novella. This one doesn't have any popcorn tossing though — it's truly designed to be heart-warming.

Pocket Sandwich Theatre, 5400 E. Mockingbird

Lane. Through Dec. 23. PocketSandwich.com.

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge. Richardson Theatre Centre is going at the story its own way with Marc Brown's comic play about Scrooge suing the ghosts for taking him on his journey.

Richardson Theatre Centre, 518 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson. Dec. 5-21. RichardsonTheatreCentre.net.

A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical. Set around the same time as *Christmas Carol*, but with an American bent, is this tuneful play by Pulitzer Prize-winner Paula Vogel.

Theatre 3, 2900 Routh St. Through Dec. 14. Theatre3Dallas.com.

A Christmas Story, the Musical. A Christmas Story has become a TV-watching staple for 20 years, but you don't have to wait until Dec. 25 to watch the marathon — you can just head over to Fair Park for the stage adaptation by Pasek and Paul (*Dogfight*), which arrives in North Texas courtesy of Dallas Summer Musicals. Watch Ralphie, The Old Man, Scot Farkis and the rest deal with family and firearms in middle America.

Music Hall at Fair Park, 901 First Ave. Through Dec. 14. DallasSummerMusicals.org.

Jubilation II: The Colors of Christmas. Jubilee Theatre in Fort Worth gets into the spirit with this impassioned revue show, featuring songs and a celebratory atmosphere.

Jubilee Theatre, 506 Main St., Fort Worth. Through Dec. 28. JubileeTheatre.org.

■ CHRISTMAS Next Page

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CHRISTMAS THEIR WAY

Uptown Players mounts its first-ever holiday fundraiser with Broadway Our Way taking on a campy Christmas flavor.

(Photo by Mike Morgan)



CHRISTMAS, From Previous Page

Fundraising performances and music

Christmas Our Way. Uptown Players' is back with their annual Broadway Our Way revue, featuring songs from musicals sung by the opposite sex from the one intended. But they got started early this year, for the first-ever Christmas Our Way. B.J. Cleveland wrote, directed and hosts this holiday extravaganza.

Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. Dec. 11-14. UptownPlayers.org.

Ring in the Holidays with Leslie Jordan. The Emmy Award-winning scamp with the droll Southern charm returns for his annual one-night-only Dallas show, with stories and "holiday frivolities" ... all to benefit Legacy Counseling Center.

Theatre 3, 2900 Routh St. in the Quadrangle. Dec. 21. 8 p.m. LegacyCares.org.

Celebrate the Holidaze! The Women's Chorus of Dallas celebrates the season with a new spin of favorite carols — some touching, some hilarious. Styles from gospel to jazz to pop will really help break the iceberg.

City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. Dec. 13. 7 p.m. TWCD.org.

Jangled. The Women's Chorus isn't the only gay-led choir taking over City Performance Hall.

A few days later, the Turtle Creek Chorale takes over the space with its annual show of holiday music, this year called Jangled. There will be four concerts with all the saucy fun you've come to expect from the TCC, plus a fifth performance that's meant for the whole family.

City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. Dec. 18-20 at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 21 at 2:30 p.m.; family concert Dec. 20 at 2:30 p.m. TurtleCreek.org.

It's a Cabaret Christmas. Diva darling Denise Lee is joined by friends Terry Loftis, Sara Shelby-Martin and Carolyn Lee Jones for her celebration of the season with music, raffle drawings, appetizers and more.

Uptown Theatre, 120 E. Main St., Grand Prairie. Dec. 9. 7:30 p.m. UptownTheaterGP.com.

Anton's 13th Annual Christmas Party Extravaganza. Dallas diva Anton Shaw performs with some of her friends at this gayborhood tradition which also raises money for the Women's Chorus and Everman Animal Shelter.

Sue Ellen's, 3014 Throckmorton St. Dec. 14. 6 p.m. PartyAtTheBlock.com.

Honey Pot Midwinter Dream. Just because Dec. 25 is over doesn't mean the fun is! Honey Pot, the bearish party and fundraiser, rocks the Dallas Eagle on Friday after St. Nick comes down the chimney with DJs Woofy and Perry spinning and you dancing the night away.

Dallas Eagle, 5740 Maple Ave. Dec. 26. 9 p.m. ■

Snowmosexuals



Our 9th annual guide to gay ski week events across North America in 2015

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Executive Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

The cliché is that gay folks have great bodies they love to show off in the summer with skimpy bikinis. That's false. Many, many gays also have great bodies they like to cover in ugly sweaters while showing their prowess shushing down the slopes.

Gay ski weeks have been around nearly 40 years, and continue to grow in popularity. Whether you're an experienced skier or snowboarder, or merely a cold-loving après-skier who likes to cuddle by the fire and attend the many social events gay ski organizers offer, there's something for you. Here's our annual rundown of the major North American gay ski weeks for 2015.

Aspen Gay & Lesbian Ski Week, Aspen, Colo. Jan. 11–18. The granddaddy of gay ski weeks takes place (for the 38th time) in Aspen, kicking off the season when the new year is still in its infancy. Featuring a “four mountains, one ticket” deal for as little as \$250, you can hit a different slope all weekend long with the “mountain du jour” plan. Keep this in mind, though: The \$375 black diamond pass is all about unfettered access to the parties, not the lifts. Every day also features an après ski hot tub party, as well as dance parties, a screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, fashion events, whiskey and costume contests. GaySkiWeek.com.

Winter Rendezvous XXXI, Stowe, Vt. Jan. 21–25. On the other side of the continent, Stowe, Vt.'s Winter Rendezvous party touts its “five days of wintry bliss” for the 31st time. From the

■ SKI Page 34

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What is STRIBILD?

STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. It combines 4 medicines into 1 pill to be taken once a day with food. STRIBILD is a complete single-tablet regimen and should not be used with other HIV-1 medicines.

STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses you must keep taking STRIBILD. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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

STRIBILD can cause serious side effects:

- **Build-up of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual (not normal) muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold especially in your arms and legs, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and fatty (steatosis). Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice), dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored bowel movements (stools), loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking STRIBILD for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and stop taking STRIBILD, your hepatitis may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking STRIBILD without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health. STRIBILD is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take STRIBILD?

Do not take STRIBILD if you:

- **Take a medicine that contains:** alfuzosin, dihydroergotamine, ergotamine, methylergonovine, cisapride, lovastatin, simvastatin, pimozide, sildenafil when used for lung problems (Revatio®), triazolam, oral midazolam, rifampin or the herb St. John’s wort.
- **For a list of brand names for these medicines,** please see the Brief Summary on the following pages.
- **Take any other medicines to treat HIV-1 infection,** or the medicine adefovir (Hepsera®).

What are the other possible side effects of STRIBILD?

Serious side effects of STRIBILD may also include:

- **New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do regular blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with STRIBILD. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking STRIBILD.
- **Bone problems,** including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- **Changes in body fat** can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking STRIBILD.

The most common side effects of STRIBILD include nausea and diarrhea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don’t go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Do not start any new medicines while taking STRIBILD without first talking with your healthcare provider.
- **If you take hormone-based birth control** (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc).
- **If you take antacids.** Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if STRIBILD can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking STRIBILD.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breast-feed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk. Also, some medicines in STRIBILD can pass into breast milk, and it is not known if this can harm the baby.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Brief Summary of full Prescribing Information with **important warnings** on the following pages.



STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used as a complete single-tablet regimen to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.

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Brief summary of full Prescribing Information. For more information, please see the full Prescribing Information, including Patient Information.

What is STRIBILD?

- **STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before.** STRIBILD is a complete regimen and should not be used with other HIV-1 medicines.
- **STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.
- **Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.** Do not share or reuse needles, injection equipment, or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them. Do not have sex without protection. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

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

STRIBILD can cause serious side effects, including:

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

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

2. Severe liver problems. Severe liver problems can happen in people who take STRIBILD. In some cases, these liver problems can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis).

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

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

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking STRIBILD for a long time.

3. Worsening of Hepatitis B infection. If you have hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection and take STRIBILD, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking STRIBILD. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.

- Do not run out of STRIBILD. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your STRIBILD is all gone
- Do not stop taking STRIBILD without first talking to your healthcare provider
- If you stop taking STRIBILD, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your HBV infection. Tell your healthcare provider about any new or unusual symptoms you may have after you stop taking STRIBILD

Who should not take STRIBILD?

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

- adefovir (Hepsera®)
- alfuzosin hydrochloride (Uroxatral®)
- cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid Quicksolv®)
- ergot-containing medicines, including: dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), and methylergonovine maleate (Ergorate®, Methergine®)
- lovastatin (Advicor®, Altoprev®, Mevacor®)
- oral midazolam
- pimozone (Orap®)
- rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®), when used for treating lung problems
- simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®)
- triazolam (Halcion®)
- the herb St. John’s wort

Do not take STRIBILD if you also take any other HIV-1 medicines, including:

- Other medicines that contain tenofovir (Atripla®, Complera®, Viread®, Truvada®)
- Other medicines that contain emtricitabine, lamivudine, or ritonavir (Atripla®, Combivir®, Complera®, Emtriva®, Epivir® or Epivir-HBV®, Epzicom®, Kaletra®, Norvir®, Trizivir®, Truvada®)

STRIBILD is not for use in people who are less than 18 years old.

What are the possible side effects of STRIBILD?

STRIBILD may cause the following serious side effects:

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

The most common side effects of STRIBILD include:

- Nausea
- Diarrhea

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

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

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?**Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including:**

- If you have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis B infection
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if STRIBILD can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking STRIBILD.
 - There is a pregnancy registry for women who take antiviral medicines during pregnancy. The purpose of this registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can take part in this registry.
- If you are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you take STRIBILD.
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - Two of the medicines in STRIBILD can pass to your baby in your breast milk. It is not known if the other medicines in STRIBILD can pass into your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements:

- STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works.
- Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you take any of the following medicines:
 - Hormone-based birth control (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc)
 - Antacid medicines that contain aluminum, magnesium hydroxide, or calcium carbonate. Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD
 - Medicines to treat depression, organ transplant rejection, or high blood pressure
 - amiodarone (Cordarone[®], Pacerone[®])
 - atorvastatin (Lipitor[®], Caduet[®])
 - bepridil hydrochloride (Vascor[®], Bepadin[®])
 - bosentan (Tracleer[®])
 - buspirone
 - carbamazepine (Carbatrol[®], Eptol[®], Equetro[®], Tegretol[®])
 - clarithromycin (Biaxin[®], Prevpac[®])
 - clonazepam (Klonopin[®])
 - clorazepate (Gen-xene[®], Tranxene[®])
 - colchicine (Colcrys[®])
 - medicines that contain dexamethasone
 - diazepam (Valium[®])
 - digoxin (Lanoxin[®])
 - disopyramide (Norpace[®])
 - estazolam
 - ethosuximide (Zarontin[®])

- flecainide (Tambacor[®])
- flurazepam
- fluticasone (Flovent[®], Flonase[®], Flovent[®] Diskus[®], Flovent[®] HFA, Veramyst[®])
- itraconazole (Sporanox[®])
- ketoconazole (Nizoral[®])
- lidocaine (Xylocaine[®])
- mexiletine
- oxcarbazepine (Trileptal[®])
- perphenazine
- phenobarbital (Luminal[®])
- phenytoin (Dilantin[®], Phenytek[®])
- propafenone (Rythmol[®])
- quinidine (Neudexta[®])
- rifabutin (Mycobutin[®])
- rifapentine (Priftin[®])
- risperidone (Risperdal[®], Risperdal Consta[®])
- salmeterol (Serevent[®]) or salmeterol when taken in combination with fluticasone (Advair Diskus[®], Advair HFA[®])
- sildenafil (Viagra[®]), tadalafil (Cialis[®]) or vardenafil (Levitra[®], Staxyn[®]), for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED). If you get dizzy or faint (low blood pressure), have vision changes or have an erection that last longer than 4 hours, call your healthcare provider or get medical help right away.
- tadalafil (Adcirca[®]), for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension
- telithromycin (Ketek[®])
- thioridazine
- voriconazole (Vfend[®])
- warfarin (Coumadin[®], Jantoven[®])
- zolpidem (Ambien[®], Edlular[®], Intermezzo[®], Zolpimist[®])

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine. Do not start any new medicines while you are taking STRIBILD without first talking with your healthcare provider.

Keep STRIBILD and all medicines out of reach of children.

This Brief Summary summarizes the most important information about STRIBILD. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can also ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about STRIBILD that is written for health professionals, or call 1-800-445-3235 or go to www.STRIBILD.com.

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Xmas, discmas



Plenty of (out) recording artists — from Dave Koz to Johnny Mathis to Michael Feinstein and more — want to be your new favorite for holiday music

Admit it: You have Christmas albums from The Carpenters, Nat King Cole, Trans-Siberian Orchestra and maybe Garth Brooks, but otherwise your collection of holiday standards isn't updated nearly as often as it should be. There *have* been Christmas songs written since "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," as a host of artists hope to prove with a slate of new CDs — some with standards, some with new music but all in the spirit of the season.

For his first holiday album, *A Michael Feinstein Christmas* (Concord), Great American Songbook specialist Michael Feinstein doesn't stray too far from his roots. Accompanied by acclaimed jazz pianist Alan Broadbent, Feinstein's renditions of Christmas classics are sources of endless joy. The arrangements allow both Fein-

stein and Broadbent to shine like the lights on a Christmas tree. Sure, we know these songs — including "The Christmas Song," "There's No Place Like Home For The Holidays," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "I'll Be Home For Christmas" and "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" by heart — but Feinstein touches our hearts with these simple and pleasing renditions. Leave it to a nice, gay Jewish boy to refresh these timeworn classics in the way that Feinstein has.

Gay smooth jazz sax man Dave Koz's annual holiday music tour, billed as Dave Koz & Friends, has hit the road this holiday season. Some of Koz's friends (musicians and singers) join him on his latest holiday recording *The 25th of December* (Concord). In fact, a cover of the

WHATEVER, CAROL | Gay and gay-popular artists like Dave Koz, above, Johnny Mathis, opposite top, and Idina Menzel, opposite bottom get into the spirit of the season with new CDs of holiday music.

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Beatles standard "All You Need Is Love," features Stevie Wonder, Gloria Estefan, Richard Marx, Heather Headley and Mr. Christmas himself, Johnny Mathis. Mathis can also be heard on "It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year." India.Arie is joined by Trombone Shorty on "I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm." And it's a battle of the nice Jewish boys on "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow," with Koz going toe-to-toe (or is that horn to horn?) with Kenny G.

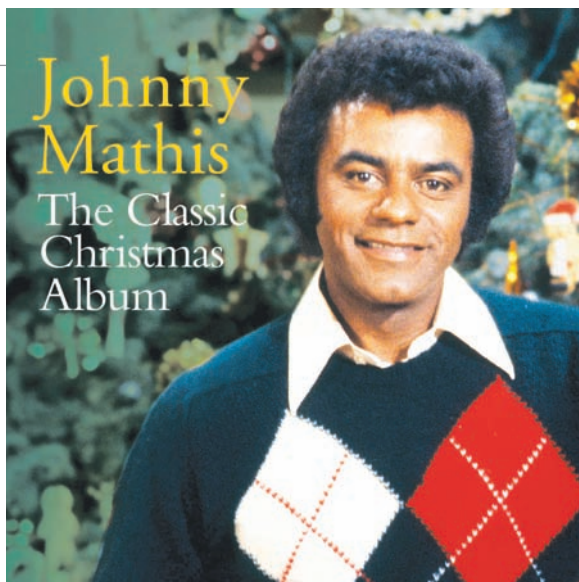
The Classic Christmas Album (Columbia/Legacy), a re-release by the aforementioned Mr. Mathis, consists of selections from the crooner's considerable cache of Christmas albums, dating as far back as 1958's mega-best-selling *Merry Christmas*. It also features Mathis' duet with Bette Midler on the "Winter Wonderland/Let It Snow!" medley, as well as two previously unreleased numbers, "Ol' Kris Kringle" and "Give Me Your Love For Christmas, both from 1961.

Australian vocal group Human Nature will be familiar to anyone who watches PBS and has seen its Motown show featuring Smokey Robinson. The foursome, featuring gay member Toby Allen, gets festive on *The Christmas Album* (HN Entertainment). With the exception of a pair of a cappella numbers, including "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" and the bonus track "Mary's Boy Child," Human Nature is backed up by a band on holiday favorites such as "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)," "Winter Wonderland" and "This Christmas." The guys are joined by HLN anchor Robin Meade (!) on "Sleigh Ride" and the previously named Robin-



son on "Please Come Home for Christmas."

Human Nature isn't the only vocal group to feature an out gay member. A cappella favorite Pentatonix boasts openly queer Mitch Grassi among its ranks. For the quintet's first full-length holiday album *That's Christmas To Me* (RCA), they give their vocal muscles a workout and throw in a few delightful surprises. A cover of "Let It Go" from *Frozen* is a pretty inspired choice. The group also earn points for including an original tune – the cheerful title track – which



is a nice addition to the holiday songbook. Pentatonix spark "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" into a hand-clapping, foot-stomping gospel experience and take "Silent Night" to church.

Gays love their divas and this year the hottest diva around, Idina Menzel, releases her first Christmas album *Holiday Wishes* (Warner Brothers). She makes sure we hear her on "Do You Hear What I Hear" and out-Mariahs Mariah Carey on her blazing rendition of "All I Want For Christmas Is You." Menzel raises the standard on the holiday standard "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?," adds her own touch with the original "December Prayer" (co-written with Walter Afanasief and Charlie Midnight), tips her fur-lined hat to her Disney clan with a cover of "When You Wish Upon A Star" and adds her name to the list of artists who have interpreted Joni Mitchell's modern Christmas classic "River."

Frumpy TV talent show diva Susan Boyle's new album *Hope* (SYCO/Columbia) isn't exactly a holiday album. However, religious-oriented numbers such as "Abide With Me," "Oh Happy Day," "You Raise Me Up," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken" and "I Can Only Imagine" (originally performed by Christian rockers MercyMe) certainly give the album a specific bent. The real holiday gift here is Boyle's reading of Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here." Not Kidding.

Hipster gays love their divas, too, and they have four to choose from when it comes to The Living Sisters. Growing from a trio (Inara George, Eleni Mandell and Becky Stark) to a quartet with the addition of Alex Lilly (of Obi Best), The Living Sisters present *Harmony Is Real* (Vanguard), the best holiday album of 2014. What

makes it so? First, The Living Sisters's harmonies are pure perfection. With the exception of the gals' interpretations of "Jingle Bells" (which must be heard!) and "Little Drummer Boy," The Living Sisters *Harmony Is Real* is a stellar set of new songs for the season, as lovely and lively as the Sisters themselves. Mandell's "Kadoka, South Dakota," "Baby Wants a Basketball For Christmas," "Hanukkah" and "Neon Chinese Christmas Eve" are especially brilliant. ■

—Gregg Shapiro

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Out in the country

On one historic day last month, 2 country music stars came boldly out of the closet. We chat with Ty Herndon and Billy Gilman about what this step means

GREGG SHAPIRO | Contributing Writer
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Country singer Ty Herndon, who began topping the country music charts nearly 20 years ago, came out publicly as a gay man a week before Thanksgiving 2014. That's something for which country music fans, gay and straight, can be thankful. A country chart-topper in the 1990s, Herndon's hits include "What Matters Most," "Living In A Moment," "It Must Be Love" and "Loved Too Much," to mention a few. Now an out and proud gay man, with a partner of five years named Matty, Herndon is one of the LGBT artists in Nashville working to make the country music capital a safe and productive place for queer musicians and queer followers of the popular musical genre. I spoke with Ty about coming out, his career and more in late November 2014.

Dallas Voice: As we talk, it's been just five days since your coming out story broke. How has the experience been so far? Ty Herndon: I feel so incredibly blessed. I have struggled with being

gay my entire career and life. Of course, I've had so much support from my friends and close family that supported me, that knew I was gay. But it's been so freeing for the fans to know — the fans in country music, especially. They have really been supportive and awesome. There are always going to be the naysayers and we've had a few of those, but 99 percent of the feedback from the fans and in Nashville has been incredibly supportive. It's blown my mind, to be honest with you. I feel extremely happy. And I feel extremely excited about the future because, really, at the end of the day I just want to be authentic and continue to make great music. That's what I was what put on this planet to do, that's my gift. I'm singing better than I ever have. There's lots of music coming in the new year. That really makes me happy.

You performed at the Grand Ole Opry after coming out! How was that show? I was nervous walking into it. To my knowledge, no openly gay man has ever walked on the Ryman stage and performed. That is the Mother Church. I have so much respect for it. I've performed at the Grand Ole Opry 25 times in my career, but this one was a big deal to me simply because I am a part of the fabric of country music and I was hoping that I would be accepted. I told my manager last night,

"If there's security at the back door, I hope they're just there to shake my hand and say come on in." That's exactly what happened. All of the artists were extremely supportive. We walked onstage to a full house and a big, loving, cheering crowd.

Did you consult with other out country artists, such as Brandy Clark or Chely Wright, before making your decision to come out? Chely Wright and I have been friends for many years. Our paths are so similar in country music. We went to great lengths to hide the fact that we were gay. Five or so years ago, when Chely came out, I was so incredibly blown away by her bravery and courage. About six months later, we started talking about it. I didn't want her to be alone out there. It took a while for me to get my courage up, just to wrap my brain around it. I was really fearful about being able to continue working and doing my job, working 200 tour dates a year. That was my main fear. If I don't get to continue to do my job that I love, my passion, I don't know what I'd do. Through Chely, I was able to get educated about all of the fans out there and the new landscape of what my life would be like. I became very comfortable with the fact that I wasn't going to let who I authentically am stop me from making the music I love. God gave me great courage and Chely was

my godsister through all of it — we did it together. **Shortly after she came out, Chely was invited to be the grand marshal at the Chicago Gay Pride Parade. What would it mean to you to be the grand marshal of a Pride parade in any city?** I would be incredibly honored. Just to know that my LGBTQ brothers and sisters would welcome me in that. I would be extremely blessed and honored to be a part of something like that. It would be very humbling.

Billy Gilman, who came out the same day you did [Nov. 20] — and who we interviewed for this same story — credits you with helping him with the coming out process. Tell me about that. I have known Billy since he was 12. We were on the same record label, Epic/Sony. I had had a few hit records when they signed Billy. He has been like a kid brother over the years. We had lost contact and all of a sudden he's 26 years old. Last year, he reached out to me and we started talking about his sexuality. I began mentoring him a small amount because ... Chely was mentoring me. I was trying to pay it forward. It's a big decision to take that step. I was really happy that he chose to [come out] two hours after I did. That we could take this journey together and be a support system is pretty awesome. Between Billy

BREAKING THE TY | Ty Herndon, who in 1995 was arrested in Fort Worth for indecent exposure with another man in public, officially came out Nov. 20 ... followed hours later by fellow Nashville star Billy Gilman.

and Chely and me, who knows? Maybe we'll do us a little world tour next year.

Do you see this as starting a potential domino effect or more of an anomaly in country music and Nashville? I think country music's growing up. Nashville, in general, is growing up a lot now. Country is so big now, they're on the world stage. If you're going to be on the world stage, you have to be able to have a different mentality. I credit Nashville a lot now. They're moving forward at a great pace. I know one of the things I would love to see happen, and Chely would too, is starting a better coalition here in Nashville of affirmative hearts so we can get an LGBT center open, that we can see Pride and GLSEN come to town. All of these kids, in these Southern states that we're surrounded by in Nashville, when they're kicked out of their homes and the churches, that they have a place to go, that suicide is not an alternative, that they know that they can come and find love and acceptance. That coalition is important to a lot of us in Nashville behind the scenes as well as the few that have bravely come out.

You mentioned people being kicked out of their homes and churches. How much influence did your religious background have in the process?

I grew up in a great church, with a lot of affirming people. I never had to worry about being kicked out of anything. I grew up in bluegrass and gospel and country music. I had this amazing grandmother who had her own radio show on WPRN in Alabama. I have these strong women in my family. My grandmother was broadcasting live from the senior citizens' center at 90 years old, talking about controversial things. She was awesome. You didn't mess with Grandma Myrtle. But I had no one to talk to about my feelings of being gay at 10 years old. I was 20-something when I came out to my mom. I think moms always know. My mother was more concerned about the profession I had chosen to be in. Her main concern was that I live an authentic, good life and that I was healthy. Of course, I went down some roads and that was not the case. She was right to worry about that. But, to answer your question, I grew up with a very loving God in my life and that's something I want to pass on to these kids that don't have that.

I'm glad you mentioned your mother's concern with the career. You released your major label debut almost 20 years ago and have been a country music mainstay since that time. Was there ever a point that you considered recording and performing in a genre, such as dance or pop, where there are more openly LGBT artists? I considered doing a pop record. I actually went to my record label and talked about it. But when you're a country artist through-and-through and it's in your blood, all you accomplish is a pop-sounding record with a country singing fella. It just didn't fit for me. I just had to buckle down and fight harder. The harder I fought, the more lies I created and it was uncomfortable to be in my own skin. At that point, I made a lot of mistakes, a lot of bad choices, and I take full responsibility for those choices. Looking at it from today,

the addiction and the hard stuff I put myself through, it is now a part of the fabric of my story. God bless the broken road that has led me to sit here talking to you today. If it's fair to say, sometimes I'm grateful for my mistakes because I don't think I'd be the man I am today if it wasn't for them.

If there was a movie version of your life story, who would you like to portray you? There are very few actors who have great singing voices. I think Hugh Jackman or Neal Patrick Harris would do a great job playing me in a movie about my life. We would have to bring them to Nashville and teach them the cowboy ways [laughs].

You are embarking on a 2015 concert tour with Andy Griggs and Jamie O'Neal. What are you most looking forward to about that? [First of all,] I love those two. We're three very different people. Andy's very much the bow-hunting, beer-drinkin', redneck fella. He's got a great girlfriend, so he's not the woman-chaser. Jamie, on the other hand, is definitely our diva. She's not a diva-in-training; she's a full-blown diva. And I'm the gay guy who's probably just about as country as they come. The dynamic is the crazy friendship. Those guys will play a Pride festival with me, they'll go anywhere I go. And I will go anywhere with them. I feel protected and loved.

As same-sex marriage continues to make strides across the country, if you and your boyfriend Matty were to marry, to what song would you like to walk down the aisle? That's an easy question for me. There's a Rascal Flatts song that I referred to, "God Bless The Broken Road That Has Led Me Straight To You." That would be our wedding song. And if I had my wish, I would have my friend LeAnn Rimes come and sing it.

■ COUNTRY Next Page



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L+S music

AND BILLY MAKES TWO | Billy Gilman came out just hours after Ty Herndon.



■ COUNTRY, From Previous Page

National Coming Out Day seemed to move from October to November this year, as two country music artists waited until Thanksgiving week to share their good news. Following Ty Herndon on Nov. 20 by two hours, was Billy Gilman. Possessing a powerful voice and impressive range, Gilman released his major-label debut CD *One Voice* in 2000, at the age of 11. In addition to the titular hit, the album featured a shockingly spot-on reading of Tammy Wynette's "Til I Can Make It On My Own." That cover, sung with amazing authority, might qualify as an early clue that Gilman would someday come out as gay. Seriously, listen to the song. Gilman, who's in the process of mounting a comeback, spoke to us last week.

How does a Rhode Island native, a New Englander, become a Nashville star? Billy Gilman: I grew up singing country music. Country music is so huge in my neck of the woods, believe it or not. People find it hard to believe, but country music is big around here. There's no memory of not having country music in my life. The Grand Ole Opry and

watching the awards shows that would come on and listening to Garth Brooks and Pam Tillis, it was just part of my life and always has been. It's easier than you think [laughs].

As someone who got his start as a child star in country, did you ever cross paths with LeAnn Rimes, another country music child star, and was she someone you looked to as a role model? Absolutely! LeAnn Rimes was so great to me, and we are still great friends to this day. I met her first when I was 11. I'm sure she took a liking to me because she saw me going through what she went through a few years before being a child herself. There's a common factor with her and whatnot. She's always been a great support system.

Do you have any advice for budding child stars? The one thing I always go back to is that you really have to love it. It has to be what you are; because there are going to be many wonderful opportunities. There are going to be huge ups and corresponding downs to a career. You have to love it to sustain yourself and to put up with what you're going to have to put up with. If it's what you are and you live and breathe it, like I have my whole life, you'll be fine. You're going to do well because you have what it takes. You can't just wake up one day and go, "I'm going to be a singer!" It's tougher

than that.

Nov. 20 was historic in Nashville when you and Ty Herndon both came out as gay. You cited Ty in your coming out message. How did he help you through this? It was amazing! I've known Ty for a while. He was on the same record label as I was a few years back. He's a great singer. This was something that I have been going back and forth with for about a month. I was nervous and reluctant. You never know what's going to happen. I was set to do it that day and was reading Twitter and read the he had come out. I was like, "Oh, wow! This is very coincidental and very odd." But things happen for a reason. [Ty] really helped me push the pedal to further it. He put me into high gear. He gave me enough confidence to do what I needed to do. He's a very brave person and a courageous artist. He did help immensely in my situation. My hat's off to him and my thanks to him always for that.

How has the response been from your fans? My fans have been amazing. Even people that kind of followed my career a little bit have been amazing. No matter what you do in life, it doesn't matter if it was this situation or I wanted to change genres, whatever — someone is always going to have an opinion. You have to brace yourself for a good opinion or a bad one. Everyone is entitled to whatever they feel. You have to keep a positive head and do your thing. So far, the comments and support has been amazing and I'm so grateful for that.

How did your family react to your coming out? My family was nothing but supportive. That was really amazing to me. They have not changed. Their support has stayed the same. I am so grateful for that. It's been nothing but positive in that respect. I've always been surrounded by support and nothing has changed.

When I interviewed Ty, I asked him this same question: Was there ever a point you considered recording and performing in a genre where there are more openly LGBT artists? I never thought of it because country is what I love. But having it be so difficult a situation, you have to be tough. If they still don't understand, you have to move on. That's just life and business. I would be saddened to know that country isn't ready. Luckily my music does lean toward country-pop, so there is the potential for crossover if that should happen. But my love is for country and always will be. Hopefully, one day, this won't be a problem. Pop music and dance music are great, too. They all cross paths now. Pop music is vital in country music now. It all meshes together. But I think I will continue to make the music I'm making.

What would it mean to you to be invited to ride in a place of honor in a Pride parade? I would, of course, be grateful. The important issue for me is to be a voice for so many young adults my age and older adults that are struggling, going through this situation, that may not have the love and support that I have. To advocate for a young woman or young man going through this in a part of the country that's maybe a little more conservative or something. That is always my main goal, my main focus. To be a grand marshal or this or that, that's an added bonus. The core of it is to be an advocate for people who don't have a significant or big voice in the situation. It's about coming together and creating one voice.

You mentioned your partner in your coming out video. If the two of you were to marry, to what song would you like to walk down the aisle? One of mine! I hadn't thought about that. "At Last," maybe. No, I'm kidding. ■

Peter A. Schulte

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■ SKI, From Page 23

opening night party to entertainment by Bianca del Rio and Dixie Longate to an ice sculpture carving competition to performances from DJ Mary Alice and the unexpected indoor pool party (hey, those bikini bodies will be useful after all!), there's fun for all. *WinterRendezvous.com*.

WinterPride, Whistler, British Columbia, Canada. *Jan. 24–31*. For the 23rd time, Whistler's big ski week welcomes tons of entertainment in what organizers call a festival, not just a ski party. The fest includes Margaret Cho, the hilarious Ballets de Tockadero de Monte Carlo (The Trocks for short), a cowboy party, movie screen-

ings, a Bollywood party and more. DJ Abel performs, too. *GayWhistler.com*.

OutBoard Gay and Lesbian Snowboard Week, Steamboat Springs, Colo. *Feb. 17–22*. This gay party that opens its doors primarily to snowboarders has often moved, but has returned for a sixth time to Steamboat Springs for its 20th year — and it moved up about a month as well. Experience what they call the “most laid back” ski event under the sun. *OutBoard.org*.

Elevation: Utah, Park City, Utah. *Feb. 19–22*. The baby of the bunch is Park City, Utah's Gay Ski Week, celebrating just its fifth year in the same city as the Sundance Film Festival. Music-making will come from seven DJs at seven par-

ties spinning over the course of the weekend in the breathtaking facility. *Utah-GaySki.com*.

Telluride Gay Ski Week, Telluride, Colo. *Feb. 21–March 2*. The 11th annual party at Telluride's Mountain Village again runs for 10 days with many parties (often with no cover charge, and others free with your t-Pass). If you notice Dick's Happy Hour sounds a lot like a Dallas event, that's because Dallas' Scott Barretto and John McGill run the week, which includes a fashion show and big gay wedding party featuring two of the men responsible for getting Prop 8 over-



turned. *TellurideGaySkiWeek.com*.

Elevation: Mammoth, Mammoth Lakes, Calif. *March 18–22*. The same folks who do the Park City ski weekend host this California incarnation, which celebrates 13 years in 2015. Expect 2,500 fellow skiers and snowboarders to attend some of the 11 DJ'd parties, as well as a comedy night and wine reception. *MammothGaySki.com*.

Last year, **Lake Tahoe WinterFest**, in Lake Tahoe, Nev., took place March 2–9 with guests including Bruce Vilanch, but as of press time, they had not confirmed dates for 2015. Check out *LakeTahoeWinterfest.com* for more information.

Happy trails! ■

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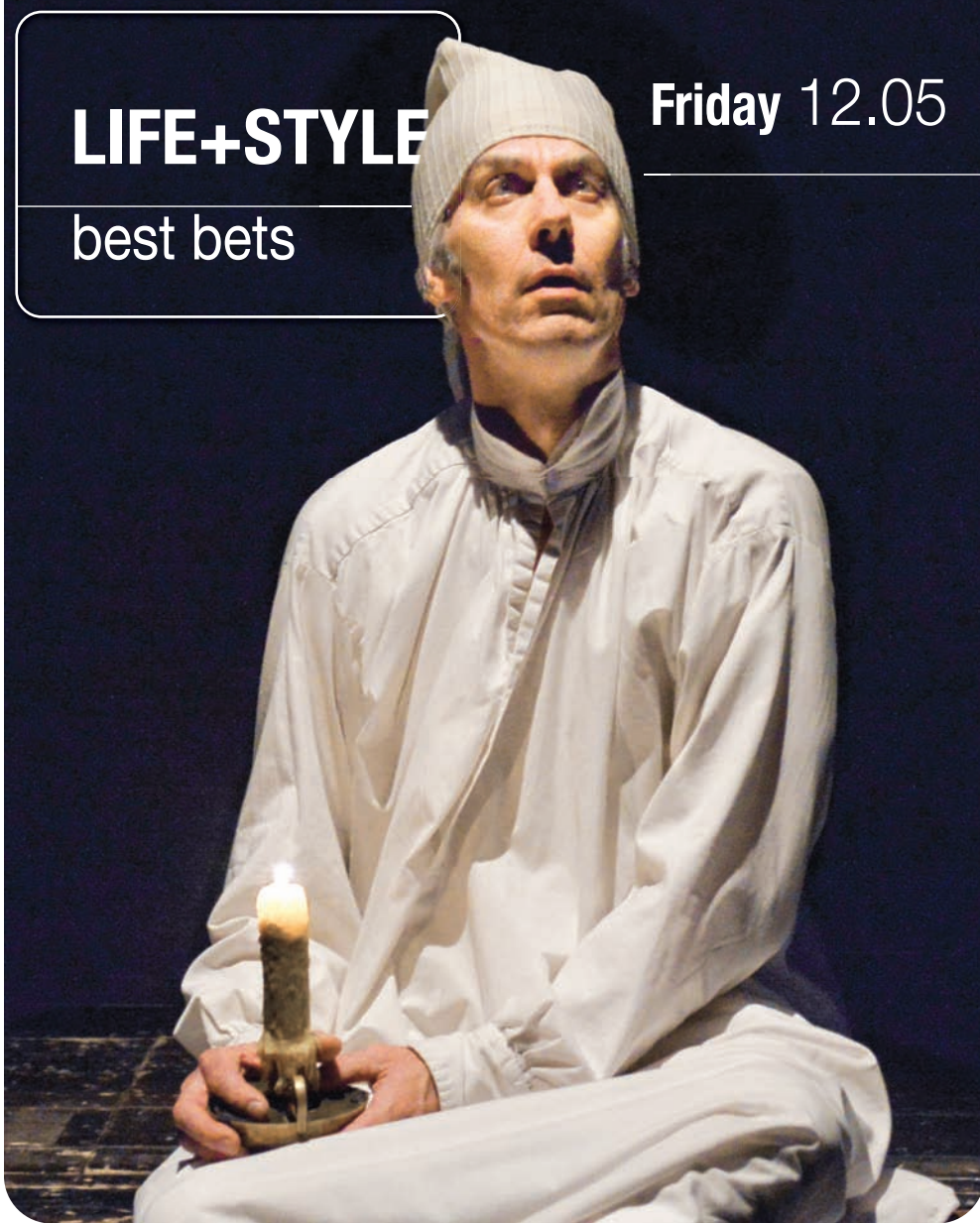
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LIFE+STYLE

best bets

Friday 12.05



DTC opens its annual good-will extravaganza 'A Christmas Carol'

The Dallas Theater Center has performed a version of *A Christmas Carol* almost every year since the late 1970s, and it has become a celebrated December tradition, even when it gets a little untraditional. Last year, DTC's artistic director, Kevin Moriarty, took his hand at adapting the haunting tale, with a decidedly humanistic bent. That's the version staged again this year, this time with Chamblee Ferguson back in the role of Scrooge and a new director in Lee Trull. Don't be a humbug! See it!

DEETS: Dallas Theater Center, 2400 Flora St. Through Dec. 28. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Friday 12.05 —
Sunday 12.07

Tower Antique Show opens

The line "one man's trash is another man's treasure" only applies to collectible hounds in this way: Everything is a potential treasure. The Tower Antique Show, at Fair Park this weekend, specializes in Texana, tchotchkes, and period furnishings, but easily the things we like the most are the early-to-mid-century tin signage promoting everything from tobacco with a huge cock on it (we love a huge cock) to ointments and elixirs. And hey, it's almost Christmas — and this is a good way to track down one-of-a-kind items.

DEETS: At the Embarcadero at Fair Park. Dec. 5–7, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. \$6. RalphWillard.com.



Monday 12.08
Wednesday 12.10

Oral Fixation closes 2014 with story of sexual fluidity

Dallas Voice contributor Jenny Block gained acclaim (and a Lambda Literary Award) for writing about her open marriage to a man ... while having a full-time girlfriend. Block has turned her experience into a spoken word performance, which she'll perform this week at the two final events of the Oral Fixation Show this year — Monday at the Wyly and Wednesday at the Texas Theater.

DEETS: Wyly Theatre Sixth Floor Space, 2400 Flora St. Dec. 8 at 7 p.m. \$25. Texas Theater, 231 W. Jefferson Blvd. Dec. 10. 7 p.m. \$15–\$20. OralFixationShow.com.



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Christina Hamilton Snow won the "major award" of *A Christmas Story* leg lamp for sharing our give-away post.



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calendar highlights



SYMPHONY CLAUS | One of the many Dallas Symphony Orchestra concerts this season includes Santa Claus as a special guest, as well as performance on the Lay Family organ. (Photo courtesy Mark Kitaoka)

ARTSWEEK: NOW PLAYING

HOLIDAY SHOWS: CONCERTS, BALLET, THEATER
Christmas at the Dallas Symphony. Holiday concerts with Lawrence Loh conducting and the Lay Family Concert Organ played by Mary Preston. Meyerson Symphony Center, 1601 Flora St. Dec. 5–21 (Dec. 5–6, 12–14 at 7:30 p.m., 7, 12, 14, 20–21 at 2:30 p.m.). MyDSO.com.

The Nutcracker. Tchaikovsky's holiday classic, presented by Texas Ballet Theater in both Dallas and Fort Worth. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Dec. 5–7. Bass Performance Hall, 525 Commerce St., Fort Worth. Dec. 12–27. TexasBalletTheater.org.

The Beulaville Baptist Book Club Presents: A Burlesque-Q Nutcracker! A local tradition, this comedy from Mark-Brian Sonna pokes fun at small-town Texas life, pole dancers and Tchaikovsky. Stone Cottage Theatre, 15650 Addison Road, Addison. Through Dec. 28. BurlesqueNutcracker.com.

A Christmas Story, the Musical. The popular film, adapted for musical theater. Music Hall at Fair Park, 901 First Ave. Through Dec. 14. DallasSummerMusicals.org.

A Christmas Carol. The Dallas Theater Center's annual tradition, with Chamblee Ferguson as Scrooge and Lee Trull directing Kevin Moriarty's 2013 adaptation. Wylly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. Through Dec. 27. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

Ebenezer Scrooge. Presented annually by Pocket Sandwich Theatre for more than 30 years. 5400 E. Mockingbird Lane. Through Dec. 23. PocketSandwichTheatre.com

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge. A comic twist on A Christmas Carol. Richardson Theatre Centre, 518 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson. Dec. 5–21. RichardsonTheatreCentre.net.

A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration. Lesbian playwright and Pulitzer Prize winner Paula Vogel (*How I Learned to Drive*) wrote this show, with music by Daryl Waters, about the holidays while all of the union was at war with itself. Theatre 3, 2800 Routh St. in the Quadrangle. Through Dec. 14. Theatre3Dallas.com.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. Theatre Arlington, 305 W. Main St., Arlington. Through Dec. 21. TheatreArlington.org.

Jubilation II: The Colors of Christmas. A family-friendly holiday revue. Jubilee Theatre, 506 Main St., Fort Worth. Through Dec. 28. JubileeTheatre.org.

Beauty and the Beast. A traditional British Christmas pantomime, with a cross-dressing comic foil. Cox Building Playhouse, 1517 H Ave., Plano. Through Dec. 28. Theatre-Britain.com.

The Santaland Diaries. Adaptation of David Sedaris' short story about being a gay Macy's elf. Studio Theatre of Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road. Dec. 5–28. WaterTowerTheatre.org.

The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical. Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road. Dec. 5–Jan. 4. WaterTowerTheatre.org.

Miracle on 34th Street. Dallas Children's Theater stages this adaptation of the seasonal movie favorite. Rosewood Center for Family Arts, 5938 Skillman St. Through Dec. 21. \$15–\$28. DCT.org.

Frosty and Friends. A puppet version of the classic, especially for smaller kids. Rosewood Center for Family Arts, 5938 Skillman St. Through Dec. 21. DCT.org.

Yes, Virginia Woolf, There Is a Santa Claus. A dark take on Kris Kringle by Jeff Swearingen. Plano Children's Theatre, 1301 Custer Road, Plano. Dec. 5–13. FunHouseTheatreAndFilm.com.

THEATER

The Arsonists. A new translation of the dark comedy by gets its regional premiere, courtesy of Kitchen Dog. The MAC, 3120 McKinney Ave. Through Dec. 13. KitchenDogTheater.org.

The Fairytale Lives of Russian Girls. The glitz and corruption of modern Russia are satirized in this modern dark fantasy. *Final weekend.* Undermain Theatre, 3200 Main St. Undermain.org.

The Explorers Club. A knockabout farce set in the age of exploration at the end of the 19th century. With Mark Shum, John-Michael Marss and others. Presented as a co-production of Stage West and WaterTower Theatre, it runs presently in Fort Worth Stage West, 821 W. Vickery Blvd., Fort Worth. Through Jan. 4.

StageWest.org. WaterTower Theatre, 15650 Addison Road. Jan. 16–Feb. 8. WaterTowerTheatre.org.

FINE ART

Isa Genzken: Retrospective. The German modern artist gets a rare and dazzling retrospective. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 Harwood St. Through Jan. 4, 2015. Special exhibit fee. DMA.org.

Bouquets; French Still Life Painting from Chardin to Matisse. A reexamination of the painting of flowers in the 19th century. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 Harwood St. Through Feb. 8, 2015. Special exhibit fee. DMA.org.

Mario Testino: Alta Moda. The famed fashion photographer turns his lens on the ordinary, indigenous residents of Peru. Dallas Contemporary, 161 Glass St. Through Dec. 20. DallasContemporary.org.

The Mary Baskett Collection of Japanese Fashion. Stunning couture from three of Japan's most iconic fashion designers: Miyake, Yamamoto and Kawakubo. Crow Collection of Asian Art, 2010 Flora St. Through Feb. 22, 2015.

FRIDAY 12.05

DANCE

Legends Never Die: Everything Old Is New Again. Rhythmic Souls performs this tribute to the glorious traditions of tap, recreating famous dance numbers from the movies and more. The Kessler, 1230 W. Davis St. 7 p.m. doors, 8 p.m. curtain. \$20–\$30. TheKessler.org.

DIGS

Tower Antique Show. Collectibles exhibition. At the Embarcadero at Fair Park. Dec. 5–7. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. \$6. RalphWillard.com.

SATURDAY 12.06

SPORTS

FrontRunners. Gay jogging group meets at 8:30 a.m. at the statue in Lee Park for a run along the Katy Trail.

SUNDAY 12.07

WORSHIP

Dignity (LGBT Catholics). Worship the first Sunday of each month, led by ministers Cliff and Jon Garinn. Interfaith Peace Chapel (lower level), 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6 p.m.

MONDAY 12.08

THEATER

Oral Fixation Show. Final show of the season where people tell stories from their own lives about crises and triumphs. This edition includes gay content from Dallas Voice contributor Jenny Block. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. 7:30 p.m. OralFixationShow.com.

TUESDAY 12.09

FILM

Die Hard. The modern classic of action (a guest programmer selection). Screens as part of the Tuesday New Classic series at Landmark's Magnolia in the West Village, sponsored by Dallas Voice. Screens at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

HOLIDAY SHOW: CONCERTS

It's a Cabaret Christmas. Denise Lee, Terry Loftis, Carolyn Lee Jones and Sara Shelby-Martin performing this cabaret of seasonal and jazz favorites. Uptown Theatre, 120 E. Main St., Grand Prairie. 7:30 p.m. UptownTheatreGP.com.

WEDNESDAY 12.10

BROADCAST

Top Chef. This season, in Boston, with Padme, Tom, Gail and Richard Blais. Airs on Bravo at 8 p.m.

American Horror Story: Freak Show. The creepiest season yet of the anthology series. Airs on FX at 8 p.m.

THURSDAY 12.11

HOLIDAY SHOW: THEATER

Christmas Our Way. Uptown Players' annual fundraising show moves to the holidays. Directed by B.J. Cleveland. Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. Dec. 11–14. UptownPlayers.org.

BROADCAST

Project Runway All Stars. Returning contestants compete. Airs on Lifetime at 8 p.m.

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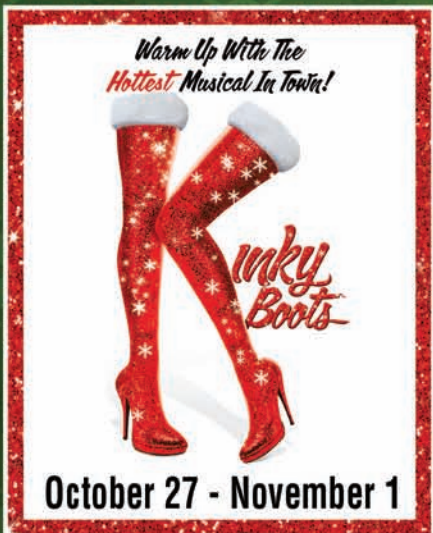


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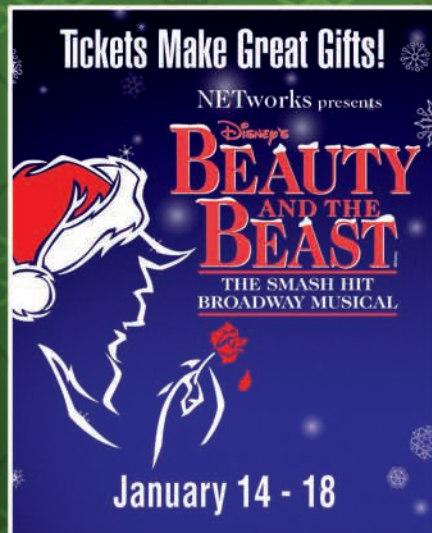


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Billy Masters

Michael Phelps' trans paramour

Joan Rivers' favorite holiday was always Thanksgiving. Each year, she would begin the day by delivering food for God's Love We Deliver (in more recent years, she was joined by her grandson, Cooper). She'd return home in time to welcome dozens of friends and colleagues to her home for a sumptuous spread. Last week, daughter Melissa continued the tradition. She and Cooper did the morning food deliveries and then had Joan's regular posse to the Upper East Side penthouse one last time for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner — this year, giving thanks that Joan had touched all of their lives. Classy, classy.

Have you read about Olympian **Michael Phelps** and his self-proclaimed girlfriend, **Taylor Lianne Chandler**? She gained attention after revealing on Facebook that, "I was born with male genitalia with no testicles, but I also have a uterus and no ovaries." The name on her birth certificate is David Roy Fitch. From her earliest memory, she behaved and dressed as a girl. She went on testosterone blockers and estrogen as a teenager. She legally changed her name to Paige Victoria Whitney. Eventually, she had gender reassignment surgery in her 20s. Fast forward to this year: Taylor claims that she met Phelps on Tinder (which is kinda like Grindr for straight people). Michael invited her to his Baltimore home to watch a football game — because, apparently, that's what straight people do when they're cruising for sex. According to Taylor, "We made love during halftime" —

well, who hasn't? She continues, "Later, we had sex again. The intimacy with him was amazing! It was the first time in my life that someone has made me feel like a true woman."

What Taylor neglected to do was explain her "situation" to Phelps. "I never lied to him. We were together for such a short period of time, I never had a chance to tell him about my life." Or did she? In a later interview, she says, "I told my story to Michael a day before I posted it on my private Facebook and then public." Seems to me that she has a rather fluid grasp of facts. Days later, she posted this: "Heard from Michael he is out of rehab and back home." Then she told a reporter that she has *not* heard from him.

Critics point out that there are no photos of the two of them together, nor has Phelps ever mentioned her name. Is this all a fantasy? Taylor insists that she has what she describes as "forensic" proof of their relationship. While I'm sure you have visions of a blue dress dancing in your head, it's nothing quite so prurient. "My phone with the messages between Michael and I is locked up in a safety deposit box in Florida. I also have a 17,000-page forensic report showing everything — all the geo scans, the cell-phone tower signals, the pings. And they're coming from his phone." How dull!

Now, time for the first of my annual Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions.

If you find yourself in NYC at some point over the holidays, I cannot recommend anything more thrilling than seeing the legendary **Lypsinka**, except for seeing the legendary Lypsinka in *three* shows. Yes, running in repertoire is *Lypsinka! The Box Set* (her greatest hits show), *The Passion of the Crawford* (where she seamlessly portrays Joan Crawford being interviewed), and *John Epperson: Show Trash*

(where Lyppie's alter ego regales with bon mots from his travails). This is the first time all three shows have run in repertoire, aptly called *Lypsinka! The Trilogy*. Seeing some of the pieces that really put her on the map was a special treat — *This Is My Life* with the box of cereal, the drunken "12 Days of Christmas," the phone calls ... it was a joy to behold. The Crawford show is a study in nuances, which is riveting. As always, Lypsinka's attention to detail is hysterical. If Faye Dunaway closed the coffin on how Crawford would be remembered, Lypsinka nails it good and tight! Special mention must be paid to **Scott Witman** (half of the team that wrote *Hairspray*), who plays the interviewer with eerie aplomb. To call Lypsinka unique is an understatement; she stands head and shoulders above all others.

My second gift suggestion doesn't require any traveling. I'm sure you've heard about kegels, an exercise women do to strengthen their pelvic floor. But there's not been an exercise for your penis ... until now. Filling that void is the Private Gym, the pelvic muscle exercise system for men. Their package (such as it is) includes a book, a DVD, and a specially designed weight that you attach to the end of your erect penis. Using your penile muscle, you raise and lower this weight — basically you're flexing your penis. It's hard ... as it should be! Believe it or not, this system is actually the first FDA registered men's kegel regimen.

I'm sure you're asking yourself, why do I have to exercise my penis? What if I told you that using this product will help you maintain an erection, reduce premature ejaculation, and even give you a better orgasm? There's a video on their website featuring gay porn stars **Johnny Hazzard** and **Austin Wilde** demonstrating the versatility of this device. Take it from Billy: the Private Gym is the perfect gift for that



e-mail: acoupleofguys@qsyndicate.com



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special someone ... or yourself.

Perhaps the people at the Private Gym should try to get their product stocked in 7-11. It might be a good fit. After all, what does one make of an employee of the convenience store whiling away the hours by pleasuring himself, videotaping it, and circulating the video? You can check him out on BillyMasters.com.

Our Ask Billy question comes from Thom in Denver: "I recently saw some hot photos of that guy Ashley from O-Town. He looks amazing. What is he doing these days, other than working out?"

For those of you who can't place him, **Ashley Parker Angel**, pictured, was a member of the pop group O-Town, featured on the reality show *Making the Band* (usually filmed naked in the shower — on order of **Lou Pearlman**, no doubt). When O-Town reunited earlier this year, Ash decided he didn't want to go backwards. OK, so his solo album didn't really go anywhere. But he had quite a bit of success in the Broadway production of *Hairspray*. Since then, he's continued to court interest with a number of provocative photos, letting us know that even if he wasn't working, he was definitely working out. And it all paid off. Ashley has just joined the national touring company of *Wicked* playing Fiyero. So perhaps you'll soon see him in a city near you.

When I'm getting a hankering for a 7-11 hot dog and a Big Gulp, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. Ah, the holidays are here. Time for making merry, being gay and bright. If you've got a question, feel free to send it along and I promise to get back to you before Ashley Parker Angel becomes the Private Gym spokesman.

Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

Have a question for Billy? Send an email to him at Billy@BillyMasters.com.

LIFE+STYLE

scene



Buck Wylde on The Strip.



Edna Jean and Alana at JR.'s Bar & Grill.



Girls' night out at Sue Ellen's.

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Alexandre's: *Girls Night Out* featuring Miss Marcy at 10 p.m. on Friday. **Andrea Dawson Band** at 10 p.m. on Saturday. **Mi Diva Loca** at 9 p.m. on Wednesday. **Alicia Silex** at 9 p.m. on Thursday.

Changes: *Wall of Food* on Thursday at 8 p.m.

Club Reflection: *Cowtown Leathermen Annual Christmas Party* at 4 p.m. on Saturday. *Cowtown Leathermen cook out* at 4 p.m. on Sunday. *Imperial Court d'Fort Worth/Arlington and Cowtown Leathermen Game Night* at 7 p.m. on Wednesday.

Dallas Eagle: *SCORE by Purple Party* at 9 p.m. on Friday. *TGRA Hard Candy Christmas fundraiser* at 7 p.m. on Saturday. *Dallas Bears Club Night and Leather Knights Club Night* at 9 p.m. on Saturday. *Dallas Girls of Leather Monthly Meeting* at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Pekers: *Totally Twisted Karaoke* has a \$700 cash prize at 9:45 p.m. on Saturday. ■

To view more Scene photos, go to DallasVoice.com/category/photos.

Scene Photographer: *Kat Haygood*.



Tim and Jake on The Strip.



Friends' night out on The Strip.

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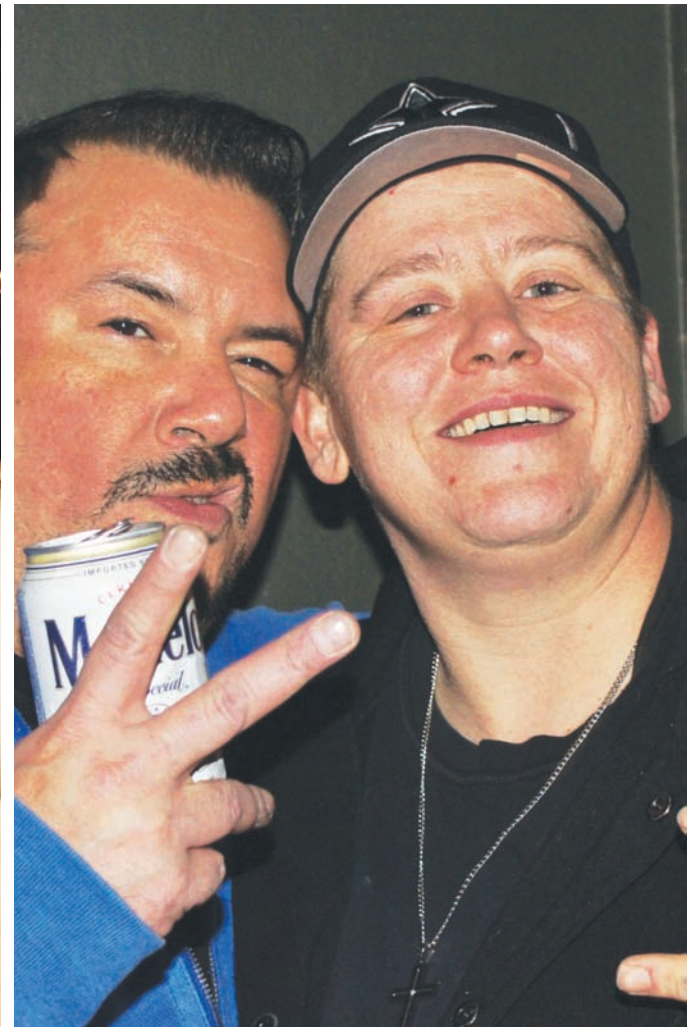
Katheleen and Laura at the Dallas Eagle.



Chanel and friend on The Strip.



Onyx and 'Santa' at JR.'s Bar & Grill.



Tom and Joan at the Hidden Door.



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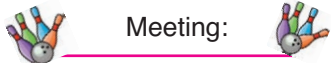


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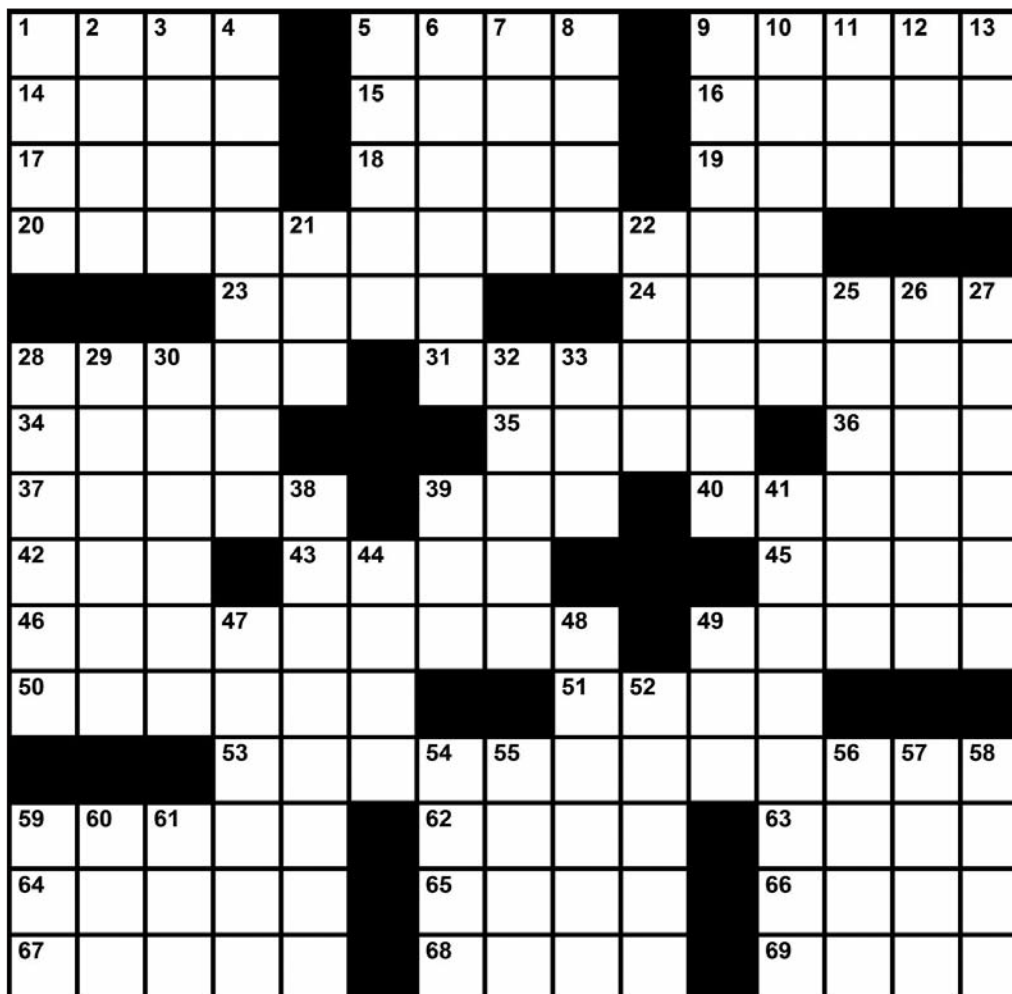
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q-puzzle



Actor with Dexter-ity

Solution on page 37

Across

- Deer, or without a dear
- Verdon, who played Lola
- Hollywood Squares choice
- ___ Alto, California
- Estimate ending
- Intense desires
- Doug Mattis leap
- Male escort
- Hamlet's father, e.g.
- TV series with "dexter-ity"?
- Branch of math, briefly
- Cher's portrayer in *Clueless*
- Comic-strip Viking
- With 39- and 46-Across,
Broadway show with "dexter-ity"?
- US citizen
- Dramatist Williams, for short?
- P on fraternity row
- Chiwetel Ejiofor's *Kinky* ___
- See 31-Across
- Part of a daisy chain?
- NATO turf
- River in an Alec Baldwin film
- Oliver Twist request
- See 31-Across
- Nathan and family
- High-spirited horses

51 Oral votes

- Dexter* star
- "In Russia, Party will always find you" comic Smirnoff
- Bone by the humerus
- Georgetown athlete
- Use a gifted tongue
- Chose not to swallow
- Roadside stops
- One who works his shaft
- Part of a vacuum that sucks
- Student's book

Down

- Sites for three men in a tub
- Jodie Foster's ___ *Driver*
- Glenn, in *Fatal Attraction*
- Vehicle for Patty Sheehan's sport
- Old TV comedian George
- Pitiable person
- Hairy twin
- Verb, for example
- She played tomb raider Lara
- Lou of Glenn Burke's sport
- Vintage wheels
- Wood and more
- Hrs. in Rehoboth Beach
- Stud site

22 First light

- It's got milk
- Words from a closet, perhaps
- Is nuts over
- Writ of ___ corpus
- Check information
- Takei of *Star Trek*
- Moral code
- "Look at Me, I'm Sandra ___"
- One who's hobby is just
plane risky?
- Spank
- Les Miz, for example
- Cheesehead's st.
- Couch potato's tool
- The Lion King* voice roles for
Whoopi and others
- Lake, to fifty million Frenchmen
- Make heady
- Kind of money
- Food on the floor, maybe
- Tops
- Mountain cat
- Bringing up the rear
- ___ Kippur
- Paul Newman role in *Exodus*
- Toto's home state



ideal dental

**NOTHING
BETTER
ON A COLD
NIGHT THAN
A WARM
SMILE**

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(Value of \$250!)

*Healthy mouth cleaning only in
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