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Volume 1, Issue 11
October 2017

**TIPS
FOR
COMING
OUT**

**HAUNTED
HANGOUTS**

**FINDING
FORGIVENESS**

JAKE RESNICOW
AND SOUTH FLORIDA GAY NIGHTLIFE

**A CELEBRATION
OF FRIENDS**

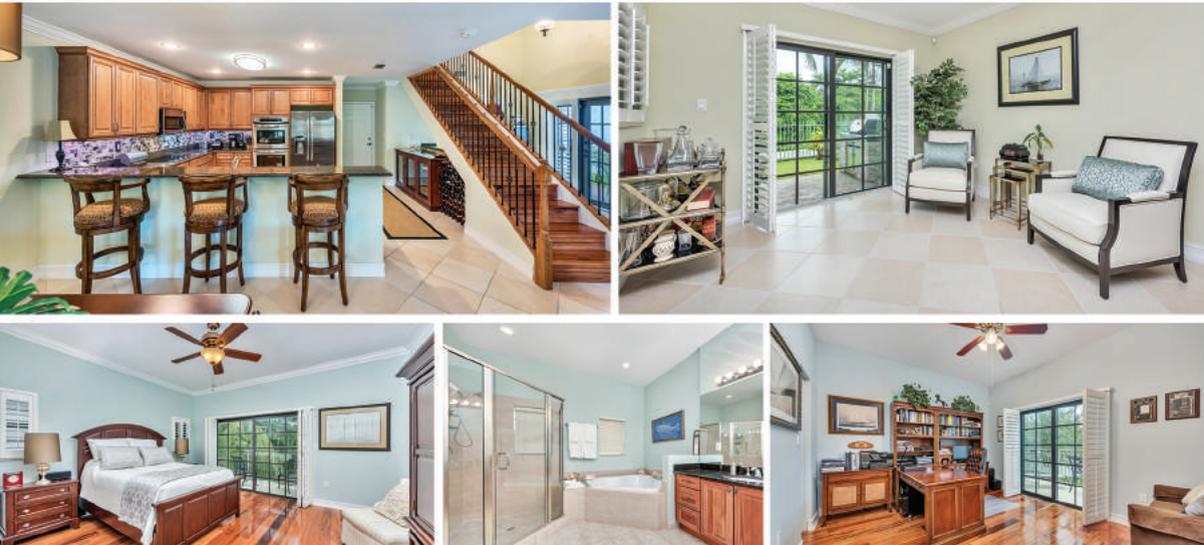
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HAUNTED SOUTH FLORIDA

By Denny Patterson

South Florida may be full of beautiful beaches and plenty of sunshine, but it does come with its fair share of oddities and curiosities. Since October is upon us and we are in the spirit of Halloween, several paranormal fanatics and thrill seekers will be on the hunt for notorious haunted locations. South Florida has plenty. From haunted hotels to demon roads, it's a supernatural paradise that will send shivers down your spine. Listed below are some of South Florida's most popular, and creepiest haunted landmarks. Take a look, and maybe even pay a visit to some of them – if you dare. The unknown awaits.



BILTMORE HOTEL, CORAL GABLES

BILTMORE HOTEL, CORAL GABLES

The Biltmore Hotel is one of the most iconic and haunted landmarks in South Florida. Built in 1926, this sprawling hotel hosted royalty, gangsters, A-list celebrities, and served as a military hospital during World War II. Because numerous soldiers died at the hotel, it is said that their spirits never left. Curious high school students after the war reported seeing apparitions in military uniforms. However, the bulk of paranormal activity occurs on the

thirteenth floor. Guests have witnessed lights flickering on and off and doors opening and closing by themselves. The spirit on occasion has also been known to hold doors open for servers and stop the elevator on wrong floors. Hotel staff believe the spirit who resides on this floor is legendary outlaw and gangster Thomas "Fatty" Walsh. Walsh was shot and killed at the Biltmore in a gambling dispute on the thirteenth floor.

BLUE ANCHOR, DELRAY BEACH

An area of South Florida that is popular for retired folks, Delray Beach is home to the Blue Anchor Pub. A popular London bar that opened in 1864, it was transplanted to the U.S. and re-assembled with its original doors and stained-glass windows at its current location in 1996. However, the building wasn't the only thing that came to Florida. The Blue Anchor is said to

be haunted by a woman named Bertha Starkey who was murdered by her husband when he blew up in a jealous rage. Visitors have reported hearing footsteps across the ceiling at night, and paranormal activity increases around the anniversary of her death. So, the next time you order a pint of beer along with your bangers and mash, just think, you may not be alone.

CITY OF MIAMI CEMETERY, MIAMI

Amidst the hustle and bustle of downtown Miami's Edgewater and Omni neighborhood, take a stroll through the city's oldest cemetery. You may never know what is lurking behind the tombstones and mausoleums. Home to many well-known names, including Julia Tuttle, the "Mother of Miami," the Burdine Family, founders of the Burdines department store, and Carrie

Miller, the woman who was buried in her bed instead of a casket and encased in cement, this cemetery is split into three different sections: Jews, blacks, and military personnel. The City of Miami Cemetery is the final resting place for 66 confederate soldiers and 27 union soldiers. It is said that these Civil War soldiers are the ones responsible for spooking visitors.



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COLONY THEATRE, MIAMI BEACH

Constructed with art deco-style architecture in the 1930s, the Colony Theatre was one of Paramount Pictures' premier chain theatres. It has hosted several events, including films, comedy shows, dance programs, and operas. The theatre is also host to numerous ghosts. Haunted activity reported at this venue includes apparitions of a woman wearing 1930s clothing and a white poodle roaming through the theatre. The stories behind these spirits are a mystery, but they have not been known to cause harm to anyone. People have also heard ghostly voices and footsteps in the backstage area, theatre lobby, and dressing rooms.



COLONY THEATRE, MIAMI BEACH

DEERING ESTATE, PALMETTO BAY

Deering Estate is a hotspot of paranormal activity. An environmental, archaeological, and historical preserve in Palmetto Bay, no one has lived in the Deering Estate since the 1980s. The estate's history stretches back 50,000 years thanks to the variety of prehistoric burial mounds and fossils that have been uncovered over the years. One of the most common reports of paranormal activity is that the spirits will whisper in your ear. Paranormal groups and ghost hunters have collected evidence of disembodied voices, EVPs, phantom footsteps, unexplained shadows, and full on apparitions. It has been reported that a psychic once heard a woman begging for help for a drowning boy.



DEERING ESTATE, PALMETTO BAY

THE DEVIL'S CHAIR, CASSADAGA

Due to its large number of resident psychics and spiritualists, Cassadaga has been dubbed as the "Psychic Capital of the World." Several places through Cassadaga are rumored to be haunted, but many witnesses have reported paranormal activity within Lake Helen Cassadaga Cemetery, particularly near a site called the Devil's Chair. Gravestones within

this cemetery date back to the 1800s, and folks say they have seen shadowy figures lurk around at night. The Devil's Chair is said to have been built for an elderly visitor to use while paying respects to his deceased wife, but stories of much darker happenings have been told. Is Satan himself residing within this cemetery? We may never know.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY, BOCA RATON

When you think about it, more and more college campuses across the countries are becoming known to be haunted. However, that should really be no surprise. The college years are

more often than not filled with broken hearts, nervous breakdowns, and shattered dreams – the perfect recipe for a haunting. At Florida Atlantic University, the Humanities building >

is home to a female spirit who students and security staff have reported seeing crying and sometimes slamming doors on the third floor. Story is, she was a theatre major who did not reach her full potential. Landing minor roles in

college productions, she was underachieving. Now, she lurks around the building and takes pleasure in suddenly appearing and disappearing. Since she could not capture the spotlight alive, maybe she will now in death.

KEY WEST CEMETERY, KEY WEST

A visit to this historic cemetery may offer you more than you bargained for. There are more than 100,000 people buried within this cemetery, and it has been reported that many of them are still lingering. One of the more well-known spirits is that of a Bahamian woman who is considered to be a guardian of the graveyard. She will approach you if she feels you are being disrespectful or too loud. So, make sure to be on your best behavior. Visitors have also reported seeing a ghost that is so angry that it has been known to attack those who visit at night. Other eerie encounters include disembodied voices, shadow figures, strange orbs, and the laughter of children.



KEY WEST CEMETERY, KEY WEST

STRANAHAN HOUSE, FORT LAUDERDALE

Built in 1901 as a trading post and converted into a residence in 1906, this was the home of Fort Lauderdale pioneers Frank and Ivy Stranahan. Today, it operates as a historic house museum and is the oldest surviving structure in Broward County. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. However, it is rumored that Frank's spirit never left the property after he died. Frank was a businessman who fell on hard times during the Great Depression. He drowned himself in

the nearby river. Ivy died much later in 1971 in an upstairs bedroom, and her ghost is said to still reside there as well – along with the ghosts of her father, brother, sister, and a Native American servant girl. Visitors to the museum have witnessed apparitions and other strange occurrences, including disembodied voices and objects moving on their own. Sometimes, there will be an imprint of a body lying on a bed as if someone is truly there.

VILLA PAULA MANSION, LITTLE HAITI

Not only is Villa Paula one of the most haunted places in South Florida, but it also has a reputation for being one of the most beautiful and historic buildings within the area. Built in 1925, this 10-bedroom manse served as the first Cuban Consulate in Miami. It also served as the main residence for Consul Domingo Milord and his wife, Paula. Unfortunately, around six years after moving in, Paula passed away following complications of a leg amputation.

Soon after, paranormal activity started to occur. There have been reports of visitors hearing phantom footsteps, seeing doors and windows open and close by themselves, and smelling Cuban coffee and roses wafting through the air. Witnesses have also reported seeing a full apparition of a one-legged woman in a full-length gown. Villa Paula is now an art gallery exhibiting works by renowned Cuban artists, in addition to Picasso and Renoir.



MAN ON THE STREET

LUCAS SPANGHER

By Denny Patterson

Photography by Images Male | www.ImagesMale.com

Welcome back! It's now time to meet Lucas Spangher. Lucas is a PhD student in Machine Learning at the University of California at Berkeley and a former graduate of Duke University with an avid interest in green energy and climate change. His past research in hydrogen has earned him a silver medal in the International Sustainable Energy Olympiad as well as numerous other scholarships, grants, and awards. Lucas lived in an Indian village conducting research on

solar energy, and in a slum in Rio where he helped establish Brazil's first green energy co-op. Lucas also worked for the Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA-E) in D.C. where he developed classified models for energy use. Outside of work, Lucas enjoys competitive rowing, rock climbing, and meditation. After living in India, he took a vow as a Buddhist monk for three months and got into runway modeling, signing with a Taipei-based agency. ➤

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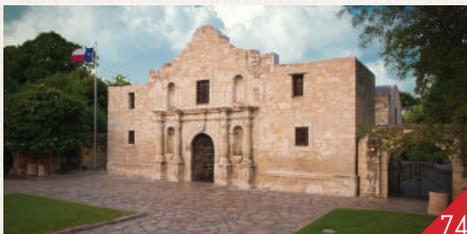
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WHERE TO GO. WHAT TO DO. WHO TO MEET

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Why don't you start off by telling me more about what the ARPA-E is and what you did there.

ARPA-E, which stands for Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy is a grant giving agency under the U.S. Department of Energy that seeks to fund next-generation energy projects too risky for the private sector to invest in. ARPA-E was chartered in 2007 under Bush and funded in 2009 under Obama. It's an amazing agency with bipartisan congressional support that was modeled after the more famous and older DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency. DARPA is known for having funded an early version of the internet. I worked as a data scientist, and my main task evolved to modeling the effects of advanced research succeeding. Most large macroeconomic models that try to predict some metric like GDP or climate change or energy mix treat advanced technological change as either gradations of existing technology or ignore it all together, which is fair, given it is extremely hard to predict the arrival and effect of technological game changers like the airplane and telephone. However, given that ARPA-E's main business was game-changing technology, it was important for us to develop tools to quantify the effects of the research we would fund. So, I developed a set of agent-based simulations to test varying levels of market penetration of new tech like Nuclear Fusion or Electric Vehicles. One of my models was featured in the Obama administration's report, "Mid-Century Strategy for Deep Decarbonization," which I was very happy about.

Where did your passion for climate issues stem from?

When I was growing up, I lived near a nature center, Sweetbriar Nature Center, and every summer before the age of 12, my mom sent me there as a camper in their summer camp. Every summer after 12, I volunteered at the nature camp as a camp counselor. As a result, I found myself interacting with and teaching others about nature. Therefore, I developed a greater sense of urgency on the threat of climate change than my peers did, I believe. I



cannot remember a time when climate change didn't seem like a huge issue that people in my life talked about.

What is your opinion on the Trump administration's stance on climate issues?

I wholly acknowledge that the Trump administration is doing terrible things on many fronts, but as someone who is dedicating their life to climate change, it's the front that makes me the most worried. I think the Trump administration's response to the science of climate change is completely irresponsible and irrevocably damaging. Worse, while on many issues, such as international relations, the Trump administration is wreaking havoc because of sheer incompetence. On climate and environmental issues, it seems like they are causing damage with calculated, surgical precision. For example, Trump's public statements on climate change have been uniformly abysmal, and Scott Pruitt is deregulating the solid environmental protections that the government had spent



decades developing at an unprecedented rate. Pruitt is also apparently a bit of an insensitive boss who doesn't listen to his employees' advice, as I understand from my friends at the EPA.

If climate change and green energy are not taken more seriously, where do you think we will be in the next 10 years?

Honestly, my predictions are quite dire. The United Nations states that if climate change is not addressed, we can expect 200 million climate refugees by 2030 from a combination of climate-related factors including drought, desertification, farmland salinization, and conflict due to resource scarcity. That's a lot of people. By contrast, the Syrian War produced 5 million refugees. The third factor I listed, "conflict due to resource scarcity," is already occurring: many scholars have linked recent world-changing events to climate change related resource scarcity. The Arab Spring is said to have a sharp increase in staple food prices due to drought, the Boko Haram is linked in part to climate change related drought, and the instability in Syria leading to civil war may have been exacerbated by climate change-related drought. We are going to see a lot more large-scale conflict in resource poor areas. The Department of Defense acknowledges this when it says that climate change is a serious

threat to the U.S., as it is a global "conflict multiplier." All these amount to a large, distributed, terrible humanitarian crisis that will largely fall on the poor of the world and is caused by the rich. My personal prediction, which I have not heard many other people talk about, is that more conflict, more climate refugees, and more instability will drive a massive right-ward shift in many countries. I don't think it's an accident that the rise of Trump, Germany's AFD, France's National Front, and even Holland's failed Geert Wilders all happened within the last five years. I think these right-ward shifts are the early signs of democratic governments implicitly struggling to adapt to a changing world. This is especially problematic, as now more than ever we need unified policies that favor green energy and financial assistance to impoverished adapting countries.

Tell me more about your time living in an Indian village and a slum in Rio. Why those locations? What did you do there? What did you take away from your experiences?

Most of college I spent socializing in circles with literature and social science students, and as a result of the numerous conversations I had, I felt that I needed to see how more of the world lived before starting life in some



wealthy U.S. city. So, I applied for a variety of travel grants after graduating. The one I wound up accepting was a NSF traveling research fellowship, and for rather complicated logistical reasons, I chose rural India. I'm glad that I could spend a year in Karnataka, India researching and designing microgrids. It was a valuable learning opportunity and I do feel as though I was able to get to know a completely foreign culture quite intimately. After I finished my work in India, I wrote about my project in a column I have in the Huffington Post. Someone contacted me from Rio asking if they could pay me a small amount to come help with a solar non-profit. I said sure, and got to live in a wonderful favela in the south side of Rio. I wound up helping do some of the foundational sociological research that went into starting Brazil's first urban green energy cooperative.

After India, you took a vow as a Buddhist monk and runway modeled through half of Asia. These two things are way outside the box of climate work. How did you fall into these two areas?

At the end of India, I experienced a rather bad breakup. In the vein of healing, I decided to take some time and immerse myself in some of the rich spiritual infrastructure of the region north of India, as I have long taken an interest in Buddhist literature and teachings. Thus, I obtained a mediation visa for Myanmar and lived for two months at a monastery near Yangon. I had never intended to follow the monastery with a modeling career. However, I was on a month-long pilgrimage with the monks up through Thailand and down through Malaysia, when, while passing through Bangkok, a transvestite with dreadlocks stole my wallet. I was lucky that someone I met that day, a Spanish man named David Dacondo, offered his couch for me to sleep on in Bangkok while my credit cards and IDs came in. So the monks left me behind temporarily, and in the meantime I got to know Bangkok by following around David. It turned out that David was an internationally famous makeup artist, and out of interest, I went to some of his photoshoots. At one of them, a male model they hired never showed up. I volunteered and found I liked it

a lot. I did some work in Bangkok, and then signed with an agency based in Taiwan that sent me to both Taipei and Tokyo. I then tried to do a little something at New York Fashion Week, but that was quite a notch tougher than the previous work. At NYFW, I only landed one small runway show.

What's next for you? I know you are currently pursuing a PhD in electrical engineering at UC Berkeley. What else?

I don't know. I'm consciously trying not to answer the "what's next" question about grad school because I think it's probably tough enough to finish grad school as it is. However, long term in my future, I see myself directing research in some capacity on green energy. Whether that's at a governmental grant giving agency, national lab, or even industry, I can't say.

Are you currently seeing anyone?

Nope, I'm happily single. But I'm accepting applications for prospective dates!



To read more about Lucas, go to
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GETTING TO KNOW COMEDIAN PETER BISUITO

By Joey Amato

Peter Bisuito is not your average comedian. Although he has been making people laugh from a young age, it wasn't until later in life that he decided to quit everything, sell his belongings, and pursue his dream of becoming a comic. The risk paid off and now Bisuito is selling out theatres around the globe. We had a chance to talk with this loveable funny man prior to his performance at the Sunshine Cathedral in October 2017.

What Made You Want To Be A Comedian?

I grew up severely closeted thinking the entire world hated me because I was gay. Making people laugh was my way of gaining acceptance. It's become a way of life. But even though I'm out of the closet, I still have a need for acceptance so I continue to make people laugh. A vicious cycle I know, but everybody wins in the end. Trust me, my therapist still hasn't figured me out.

Have You Always Been A Performer?

I've been performing for over 30 years. I have an extensive musical theater background. However, I decided to make entertainment my "full-time" career only 5 years ago. I quit my job and gave up my income entirely. I put myself on food stamps and even sold my car. Not an easy thing to do when you're in your 40's, so now I'm trying to get famous before I hit menopause. So be sure to follow me on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: @mybigfunnypeter.

At What Point Did You Realize You Can Turn Comedy Into a Profession?

In 2010, I entered Oprah's contest for America's Newest Talk Show Host. I submitted an audition video and made the top 20. The Oprah producers interviewed me but unfortunately I did not win; however, they aired several clips of my video on her show which made the audience laugh. I probably made millions of people all over the world laugh that day so I figured I can do this for a living.

Is Your Audience Diverse Or Mostly LGBT?

My audience is very diverse. I have a lot of mainstream material that is enjoyed by all.





What Can People Expect From You In The Next 12 Months?

Last March I went to LA and met with the producers of The Bachelorette, Joe Millionaire, and Average Joe. Long story short, they are developing my very own tv reality show. There's been some setbacks but they are still pushing forward. I'm also working on an off-broadway show in NYC but need to find a sponsor first. Stay tuned.

How Will Your Upcoming Show In Fort Lauderdale Differ From Your Last 2 Sold Out Shows At The Broward Center?

It'll be funny . . . Ha! Kidding! There will be lots of new material and new musical numbers. Since I'm an award-winning impersonator, you may even see one of my impersonations. Who will it be? Madonna? Bette? Hugh Jackman? I guess you'll have to go and find out!

www.MyBigFunnyPeter.com/Halloween

How Do You Create Content For Your Show?

Are you kidding? I live in Fort Lauderdale. This entire community is a comedy show! Funny characters, lots of drama. It's a comedians wet dream!

Is Your Show Scripted Or More Improv?

I'll never tell. MUUHAHAHAHA!

Do You Ever Get Stage Fright?

Not really. The only thing that scares me are bugs and stupid people.

What Would You Like The General Public To Know About You?

I'd like the general public to know that they're truly not general. You're all pretty specific in my book! But also, the biggest misconception

about me is that I'm unapproachable. That's ridiculous. I'm the most approachable person you'll meet. As long as it's respectful of course.

What Sets You Apart From Other Comedians?

I don't consider myself just a comedian. I'm more of a theatrical entertainer. Due to my extensive experience in musical theater, I like to include musical numbers and funny video presentations. This is why I never perform in comedy clubs. Standing on a small stage in front of a brick wall just isn't "grand" enough for me. I perform in large reputable theaters such as my 2 sold-out shows at The Broward Center last year. I've sold out theaters in 6 different countries which gives me a more serious image than yet another comedy club comedian. I'm not opposed to performing in comedy clubs, it's just not that path I've chosen so far.

Any Last Words?

"Goodbye Cruel World"

Show Info

My Big Funny Peter - Bat Shit Crazy

Monday, October 30th 8PM

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SHE'LL BE YOUR ALIBI

STRAIGHT-SHOOTING SONGSTRESS JENNIFER MCCLAIN TALKS ABOUT FINDING HER NICHE IN WILTON MANORS

By Joey Leslie

She's still on a high from last night's performance when we sit down for coffee outside Java Boys in Wilton Manors.

It's pouring rain and her curly blonde hair is wet from the short walk from her car, but she isn't bothered by it. With her bright blue eyes, sultry voice, and a boisterous laugh that wraps its arms around you like an old friend, Jennifer

McClain has a way of making you feel like everything is right in the world.

While you're most likely to recognize her as the sassy songstress who performs Broadway tunes at Georgie's Alibi in Wilton Manors, she's recently been invited to perform at other venues, as well. Last night's show was at a condo association in Port Saint Lucie and it "went really well," McClain said. "Like really well."



"I usually get asked three questions and the answers are no, yes, and none of your business," she said at the open of the show to a mostly straight, mostly senior audience of about 300. "No, I'm not a drag queen. Yes, I'm single. And how old I am is none of your business."

Quite a deviation from her usual audience at Alibi, she seemed pleasantly reassured to know that her comedic timing and brassy jokes still work in the more clinical setting of a condo auditorium. Fittingly billed as "A Night with a Diva," the show couldn't have gone better.

"They wanted something a bit racy, not too sanitized, which is great because I don't do dirty or crude, but I love a good innuendo," McClain said. "And they enjoyed the little 'wink wink nudge nudge' kind of humor."

That's important to her, because she doesn't just show up to perform. She comes to connect with the audience.

McClain has been performing in South Florida for 20 years, first in theme parks and on cruise ships before a fateful night singing at Howl at the Moon, a small, dueling piano bar, would lead to her becoming a staple in the LGBT community.

"I got up and sang with the guys, 'I Will Survive' I'm sure. And a bartender says you should come to karaoke at Everglades. It's this little gay bar on US 1 that's now a costume shop," she said.

A couple weeks later she went there to check it out, and with song lyrics on one screen and porn playing on another, she had a laugh and belted some songs. "At the end of the night the guys running it offered me a job at a British Pub called Shakespear's, which is now a Starbucks," she said.

From there, she worked all manner of bars and clubs, some still around, some not. Some under a new name or ownership. The history of the community is important to McClain as she recounts her career here.

She did those gigs for about 10 years, while also working from 9-5 as an activities director for a time share resort for a while. These days, she's happy to be performing full time.

Georgie's Alibi is her bread and butter. You can catch her performing show tunes there every Saturday night in the Manchester Room, at Broadway Brunch two Sundays each month, and at her weekly Cast Party on Mondays where, as an added bonus, she sometimes dips into her industry Rolodex and invites her Broadway friends to make an appearance when their tours come to town.

"In Wilton Manors, I can't go anywhere without knowing somebody," she said. "That's from 20 years working in this community." And by working, she means building relationships as well as performing. Being a local celebrity can be tough when she's trying to enjoy a quiet meal alone, or say, be interviewed for this story, as her fans/friends feel comfortable grabbing a seat and striking up a conversation.

Although it can make it difficult to follow a single line of thought, it's a part of the job. And for McClain, it's more of a perk than a hazard.

"You know what? It's worth it," she says with that genuine sparkle of appreciation in her eye. "I've made a career of being accessible and relatable and interested in their lives, and I really am. It's a big part of what I do."

She attributes her success to two things: relationships and timing.

"I got my break at Alibi by filling in for someone who was off [performing] on an Atlantis cruise," she said.

That will be ten years ago next fall, and her ninth year of performing nearly every Saturday, save one or two weekend's when she took off for vacation or a friend's wedding.

When not performing, she's connecting with fans on social media. "I like to know if someone just had a birthday or bought a new car and I'll



talk to them about it next time I see them," she said.

She often thinks about doing a new show on the road, maybe back in New York City where she accomplished a major goal by performing her first truly scripted cabaret show "Lady Swigs the Booze" in 2010. But make no mistake, southern Florida is her happy home.

"I got lucky finding this [LGBT] niche and this [Wilton Manors] community and it's through people I've met being here that I've been able to perform in Key West, Fire Island, and New York City," she said.

She also performs at local fundraisers and charity events and stays engaged with the community, most recently by speaking to high school students at a career fair. She was the voice of reason, explaining that there are ways to make it in the entertainment industry without focusing on a Broadway career.

"I told the kids, the most important thing



is this: don't be a jerk," she said. "Today's understudy could be tomorrow's casting director."

It's priceless advice from one of Southern Florida's favorite divas.



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Botox removes wrinkles between the furrow of your brow, lines on the forehead, or the crow's feet area which are the wrinkle lines forming around the eyes. If you find yourself asking about Botox and wanting see for yourself what all the fuss is about, read more about it's use and supporting information here.

Questions customarily range from, how does it work? How much does it cost? And, how long does it last? Botox is the most popular cosmetic treatment with more than 6 million

treatments administered each year. Botox is an organism found in the natural environment where it is largely inactive and non-toxic. People also use Botox to treat excessive sweating and migraines, in addition to removing wrinkles.

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A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDS

By Denny Patterson



If you like silver daddies, polar bears, and silver foxes, we have the perfect group for you.

A Celebration of Friends (ACOF) is a gathering for mature men and their admirers with the sole mission of providing warm, comfortable, safe, and engaging conventions, or "Celebrations" that promote self-worth, dignity, kindness, and friendship within the senior population. ACOF was founded in 2002 by Tom (Tomcat) Pence, a former U.S. Marine, and a small group of friends when they realized that the majority of the LGBT community was youth-oriented and saw a need for mature men to be celebrated.

"Our target audience is the man who normally does not attend gay functions because he is afraid of being left out in the cold," Pence says. "There's an army of men out there who adore mature men. It's our mission to bring them together."

"After the war my French mother and German father helped a lot of displaced people (DPs) come to this country. My mother was an army nurse who served on the front lines in Europe; while my father was in the Office of Strategic



Service (OSS). I got to know many of these immigrant men and their families who traveled to this country seeking freedom and a better way of life here in America. These men were full of life and unafraid to publicly express themselves with a hug and kiss to their friends and family. They were so alive, colorful and loving that some of them had to be gay, suffering in silence because of the fear of deportation. Like today, many thought of them as not being real Americans. A Celebration of Friends is one way of my repaying all the beautiful men who were nice and accepting of this smart ass kid as I was growing up (even though they're no longer here to see it)."



Operating on a tight budget, the first Celebration was held in New Orleans. Pence later moved ACOF to South Florida, where he now produces semi-annual events.

The 16th Celebration will be the January Jamboree held at the Ramada Fort Lauderdale Oakland Park Hotel, January 25-28, 2018. A typical "Celebration" consists of several hundred men booking into the host hotel, then meeting each morning for fellowship and a hearty breakfast. Afternoons are filled with exploring all Fort Lauderdale has to offer, then sunbathing and swimming, with swimsuit



competitions by the pool. Educational seminars are offered, which are conducted by experts in their given fields. Nights are filled with the fellowships of optional trips to nearby bars and restaurants or lounging around with new friends.

"Participants can expect a lot of fun with like-minded new friends, who won't judge you for being who or what you are," Pence says. "These are people we admire and search for. If you are looking for muscle bears or young studs, then this is not what we're about and probably not the place for you." ➤





"At the first Celebration in New Orleans, we had 100 people show up," he said. "Our largest convention a few years later had just under 1000 people."

According to Pence, Fort Lauderdale in winter is the place to be. "It's where the boys are. This city has more retired gay men than any other city in the U.S. with the possible exception of Palm Springs."

Every year, Pence pushes to make each Celebration better than the last. "There are no restrictions on anything except for behavior," he says. "When you're in public, behave like you're in public. Hotels don't care what goes

on behind closed doors as long as you respect the property and one another."

In addition to holding semi-annual Celebrations, A Celebration of Friends also hosts a weekly Saturday morning "Klassic Coffee Klatch" at the Skolnic Center in the Palm Aire Community. These are opportunities for our seniors to find support and fellowship. No one should start their weekend alone!

Besides being known as an all-volunteer organization, ACOF receives no federal funding. Over the past 15 years, the organization has donated just under \$200,000 to local charities.

For more information visit www.CelebrationOfFriends.org



GENVOYA® does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses, you must keep taking GENVOYA. 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 GENVOYA?

GENVOYA may cause serious side effects:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** GENVOYA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV and stop taking GENVOYA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take GENVOYA?

Do not take GENVOYA if you take:

- **Certain prescription medicines for other conditions.** It is important to ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA. Do not start a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider.
- **The herbal supplement St. John's wort.**
- **Any other medicines to treat HIV-1 infection.**

What are the other possible side effects of GENVOYA?

Serious side effects of GENVOYA may also include:

- **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 GENVOYA.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. If you develop new or worse kidney problems, they may tell you to stop taking GENVOYA.

- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea. 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 GENVOYA?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how GENVOYA works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take GENVOYA with all of your other medicines.
- **If you take antacids.** Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take GENVOYA.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if GENVOYA can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking GENVOYA.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

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 Important Facts about GENVOYA, including important warnings, on the following page.

Ask your healthcare provider if GENVOYA is right for you.

WHAT IS GENVOYA?

GENVOYA is a 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years and older who weigh at least 77 pounds. It can either be used in people who are starting HIV-1 treatment and have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements. These include having an undetectable viral load (less than 50 copies/mL) for 6 months or more on their current HIV-1 treatment. GENVOYA combines 4 medicines into 1 pill taken once a day with food. GENVOYA is a complete HIV-1 treatment and should not be used with other HIV-1 medicines.

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(jen-VOY-uh)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GENVOYA

GENVOYA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** GENVOYA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking GENVOYA. Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

ABOUT GENVOYA

- GENVOYA is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older who weigh at least 77 pounds and have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. GENVOYA can also be used to replace current HIV-1 medicines for some people who have an undetectable viral load (less than 50 copies/mL of virus in their blood), and have been on the same HIV-1 medicines for at least 6 months and have never failed HIV-1 treatment, and whose healthcare provider determines that they meet certain other requirements.
- **GENVOYA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Do NOT take GENVOYA if you:

- Take a medicine that contains: alfuzosin (Uroxatral[®]), carbamazepine (Carbatrol[®], Epitol[®], Equetro[®], Tegretol[®], Tegretol-XR[®], Teril[®]), cisapride (Propulsid[®], Propulsid Quicksol[®]), dihydroergotamine (D.H.E. 45[®], Migranal[®]), ergotamine (Cafergot[®], Migergot[®], Ergostat[®], Medihaler Ergotamine[®], Wigraine[®], Wigrettes[®]), lovastatin (Advicor[®], Altoprev[®], Mevacor[®]), lurasidone (Latuda[®]), methylergonovine (Ergotrate[®], Methergine[®]), midazolam (when taken by mouth), phenobarbital (Luminal[®]), phenytoin (Dilantin[®], Phenytek[®]), pimozone (Orap[®]), rifampin (Rifadin[®], Rifamate[®], Rifater[®], Rimactane[®]), sildenafil when used for lung problems (Revatio[®]), simvastatin (Simcor[®], Vytorin[®], Zocor[®]), or triazolam (Halcion[®]).
- Take the herbal supplement St. John's wort.
- Take any other HIV-1 medicines at the same time.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about GENVOYA. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to GENVOYA.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit GENVOYA.com for program information.

IMPORTANT FACTS

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

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF GENVOYA

GENVOYA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About GENVOYA" section.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of GENVOYA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking GENVOYA.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with GENVOYA.

BEFORE TAKING GENVOYA

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA.

HOW TO TAKE GENVOYA

- GENVOYA is a complete one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine.
- Take GENVOYA with food.



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I'M COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET!

By Denny Patterson



Let's be real. Coming out of the closet and accepting yourself as a member of the LGBTQ community is difficult. There is no point in pretending otherwise. Growing up, we usually tend to think of ourselves as fitting into a certain kind of mold. Falling in love with a member of the same sex or identifying as the opposite gender is simply not in the game plan. However, it happens. It cannot be helped. Coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or even questioning can be a liberating, yet terrifying experience. An assortment of emotions are more than likely going through you, including scared, confused, vulnerable, relieved and uncertainty. There have been both positive and negative results to coming out, but the most important person to think of during this time is - you. Do what you need to do. Your safety and wellbeing should always come first and foremost. In honor of National Coming Out Day, listed below are tips on how to come out in a healthy and positive manner.

DO NOT FEEL PRESSURED

Everyone should come out on their own time. You may feel pressured to tell those close to you, like family and best friends, that you are LGBTQ before you are ready, but don't. Coming out is about you and you alone. If you are more worried about pleasing others, then you will lose sight on what's important - your happiness.

TELL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE FIRST

Speaking of importance, make an effort to tell your family and close friends that you are LGBTQ first before announcing it to the world. There have been several instances where parents find out about their child because they heard the news through someone else. This can be extremely hurtful and they will more than likely become offended and feel that you do not value your relationship with them. So, before updating your social media, talk to the ones you love. Often, when the news comes from you first hand, the response is more positive.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME

Whoever and whenever you decide to tell someone, it is absolutely 100 percent crucial to make sure that you have their undivided attention. Neither you nor the ones you are coming out to should be engaged in any other activity. Sit them down and think about how you want to share the news. It is also recommended that you do not come out during a family event such as a wedding or holiday gathering. This is a private, intimate conversation that deserves the upmost respect. If the person you are telling is not fully present, then it will be difficult for them to fully internalize what you are saying.

ACCEPT THAT YOUR PARENTS MAY NOT HAVE THE REACTION YOU HOPED FOR





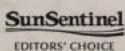
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Just because you may have had time to come to terms with your sexuality, that does not necessarily mean your parents have, unless they somehow secretly knew. It is natural for parents to have preconceived notions or expectations for their children. You just told them some major news that will change not only your life, but theirs as well. It may take some time for them to feel comfortable, so all you can do is give them the time they need. They will come around. Do not judge negatively of your parents if their initial response is not what you had imagined.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN YOUR FAITH AND SEXUALITY

Religion is by far one of the touchiest subjects when it comes to the LGBTQ community.

The fear of God and being exiled from one's faith or family can lead to depression, self-harm, and sometimes suicide. Fortunately, the majority of religions are coming around and accepting LGBTQ people. Most religions now have support groups for their fellow gay and transgender members. All you need to do is go online and find a group near you. And most importantly, do not let anyone try to shove their bigoted and homophobic beliefs down your throat. Preaching that homosexuality is a sin and results in eternal damnation is absolutely hogwash.

FIND OUT HOW OTHERS CAME OUT

People who are in the beginning stages of coming out more than likely feel alone. Well guess what. You're not. Most people go through the same fears and anxieties. No matter what you think, you are not alone, and you never will be alone. Do some research and find out how others came out. How they went about telling their loved ones, how they built up the courage to proudly say, "I'm gay" or "I'm transgender." Hearing other people's stories can relieve

some of that stress on your shoulders.

DO NOT GIVE IN TO STEREOTYPES

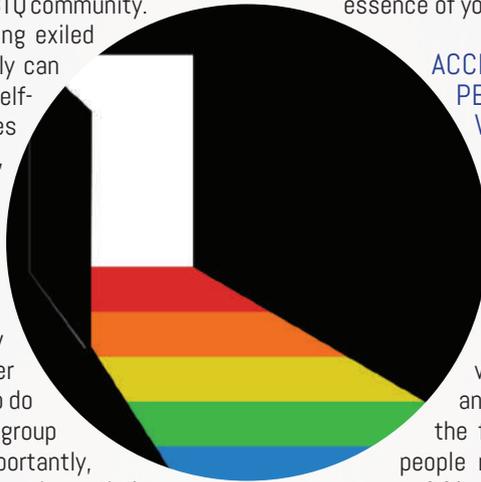
When LGBTQ people first started to appear on television and other forms of media, they were categorized in certain stereotypes that are frankly insulting today. Not all gay men are feminine and girly and not all lesbians wear flannel and act butch. And let's not even get started on transgender characters. Some people, especially those are in the process of coming out, think that fitting into a stereotype is an absolute must. Well, you don't. Stereotypes suck. Being LGBTQ may be a part of you, but it does not define who you are. It's only a small portion of you. Think about the bigger picture that makes up the entire essence of you.

ACCEPT THAT NOT ALL PEOPLE WILL BE OKAY WITH YOU COMING OUT

Although this piece primarily focuses on the positives of coming out, please keep in mind that there are bound to be negatives. There will be people out there who will not accept you, and you will have to face the fact that some of those people may be within your own group of friends or family. It will be a shame, but it happens. Some people have been rejected and exiled, so it is vital for you to have a safety net if things take a turn for the worse. Thousands of people go through these rough patches. So again, you are not alone. There are 24/7 resources and support available.

THINK ABOUT THE POSITIVES

Coming out, or thinking about coming out can stressful, but don't let fear cripple. No matter the outcome, coming out will be one of the most amazing and liberating things you will ever do. You are entering a whole new world of self-love and happiness. You will finally be able to be your true self, and what a relief it will be.





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FINDING FORGIVENESS

By Dr. Beau A. Nelson, DBH, LCSW

For many of us, we are burdened by holding on to hurts, resentments, and past events. We change our level of trust for others, we become wary of entering into relationships, and can even give up on love, all in the name of protecting ourselves and being wary of others. This change in how we relate to others and our world can cause long lasting suffering. I was working with a patient this week and came face to face with this struggle. My patient described decades of holding on to how her parent treated her. She had developed a myriad of coping skills to insulate herself from the pain but ended up making unhealthy choices that led her to feel lost and empty.



When we feel our lives are unmanageable or that we cannot get what we so desire, we often turn to other things to make us feel better. This can be work (not always the most fulfilling part of life), money, sex, food, alcohol or drugs, and any other number of unhealthy behaviors. Many of us are very busy trying to avoid the pain of our past, but we do not deal with the underlying problem. So, what are some ways to deal with the past and open ourselves up to the future? Here are some thoughts that you may use as a starting point. Realistically, the journey begins with honesty. Rather than focusing on the sins of others, the past events, or the current problems, it means being truthful about the pain and the hurt that we want to avoid again.

Honesty is a first step, but after that, we need to be able to develop a new philosophy – one about the past (kind of like recording over an 80's song from high school with the new Taylor Swift song), and one about ourselves – as strong and able to handle hurts, especially when it means opening up to our hopes and dreams, and often to others in our lives.

Humans are great about personalizing hurt. This means that you make some situation,

the treatment you received, or the absence of something you wanted as meaning something about me. The child who is not loved will often interpret this as meaning something about themselves. Rather than placing the responsibility on others we take on the responsibility and strive to be more successful, more pretty, or a people pleaser to get the love, etc. that we so desire. I know that in my life I thought having a great body was the way to overcome my fat kid mentality. I got myself all buff and then found I was a doormat for anyone that called me handsome. It was like it would never get better! That led me to feel disillusioned and lost, which also brought on a lot of compensatory behaviors, most of which were not helpful.

At a point in time I had to learn to be OK with myself. I realized that I was the one shaming me now, nobody else. The negative thoughts were in my head, and when others saw me as good looking, I was still telling myself, "But not good enough." What a mind f#@%, I was creating my own suffering even after trying to overcome my fat kid mental picture. I needed to change. I needed to see myself differently. I had to forgive myself and many people and events in the past. It is what it is. I was able



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to survive (although difficult) when I was 8, so could it be worse at 38? No. But I was making it difficult, because no matter how my body changed, my mind didn't.

I can tell you that when I look back at myself about 26 years old, I was hot! How silly to squander a great time in my life with all the fears and protective coping skills. Time lost, perhaps that is the greatest injustice here. I learned to appreciate myself and started to change the messages that haunted me. I saw myself as more than my looks, I learned to be grateful for what I had, I connected to a larger spiritual sense of goodness in people, and I forgave the past.

Forgiveness is not easy. It is not just words. Forgiveness is an active and deliberate change in how we interpret others, the past, and ourselves. I was tired of holding onto the memories that haunted me about "who I was" and I began to focus on who I am. After many years of not hitting the gym, no longer being buff, and learning to appreciate myself, I feel better. That is not to say that thoughts don't come back in, but now I challenge them. I learned that I do not judge others so negatively. In fact, I can find beauty and appreciate so much in others - even when the cover may not be that attractive. I learned that my negative self-talk was not based on fact. I have one life, one me, I can make choices as how my life is, and I cannot blame the past. I learned too, that I was not relegated to some dark place where others could not love me for myself. I stopped trying to compete for attention, I learned to appreciate myself.

I was reading a book recently as I was working with another patient and it had some nice ideas. The book is Radical Forgiveness by Colin Tipping. Tipping has created a kind of therapy for learning to forgive. He realized how this holds us back. He has a spiritual bent in his book, but he shares the idea that maybe

there is a spiritual reason we are confronted by challenges and hurts. He relates that we can choose to forgive and see something in a larger view of our life (such as something we can grow from) rather than just focusing on the hurt. I found this to be helpful for me. I liked the thought that we can more so overcome hurts, grow from them, learn from them, and move on. But forgiveness means that we understand that others and the past have to be let go, let bygones be bygones, and live in today, not yesterday.

I know that there are many traumatic events in our lives that are hard to give up. I am not saying this is easy, but I do want to encourage you to seek out new ways of looking through the lens of your life. The injustices done were not all about you. You don't have to fear that there is danger around every corner and in each new relationship. The past does not always repeat itself. Sometimes it's repeating itself in our minds and in reality, we are able to honor our former selves for getting through difficult situations, we can recognize our humanness of trying to get our needs met, and acknowledge that others are doing the same.

My patient who was dealing with the poor treatment from her father came to see her father's faults, difficult childhood, and fear as being more reasons to explain his behavior rather than her being not good enough. We thought about what he might say if he watched her suffering when she thought of her childhood, and we came up with "I'm sorry." Maybe he would say this or maybe not. But when we pieced all the pieces together, that really didn't matter. What mattered is taking charge of today, unpacking the fears, learning to accept the past and more forward to the future. It means forgiving the past, not excusing it, but seeing it as something that happened to us, not something about who we are - or have to be.

Dr. Nelson maintains a private practice in Ft. Lauderdale and helps people to live their best life. Information about his practice is at improveyourmood.com and you can email him at drnelson@improveyourmood.com

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EVERYTHING'S JAKE!
AN INTERVIEW WITH JAKE RESNICOW
By Gregg Shapiro

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At The Panama Club Condo, Fort Lauderdale Beach

Gay party promoter Jake Resnicow is breathing new life into nightlife. Whether it was when he was in his early teen years spinning at weddings and other such functions or presently with his current array of party productions, including the popular *Matinée*, Resnicow's years of experience have taught him the way to give the people what they want and keep them moving from the wee hours to sunrise. Jake was kind enough to take time out of his schedule while he was in Ibiza to answer a few questions.

Gregg Shapiro: Some kids want to grow up to be doctors or lawyers. As one of the leading LGBTQ promoter/nightlife producers, when did you know that this was what you wanted to do with your life?

Jake Resnicow: When I was 14, I started my own company DJing and MCing weddings and bar mitzvahs. I loved it. I remember when I first DJed my middle school dance, loading up my Toyota 4Runner with speakers and lights, pumping up the crowd on the mic with everything from "California Love" to the "Casper Slide." It paid my way through college, but I always saw it as just a hobby.

In fact, I studied Government at Georgetown, thinking I was going to one day become the Chief of Staff to the President. I got my first job out of school with Deloitte Consulting, specializing in human capital. It wasn't until I traveled to Barcelona on holiday and first experienced *Matinée*'s massive WaterPark event that I knew this was my calling. I wondered, why don't we have anything like this in the states, and then my entrepreneurial spirit took over. I challenged myself to create a truly unique event during NYC Pride - the first-ever on Governors Island - and the U.S. debut of *Matinée*. It all started with an amateur promo video I made on iMovie that teased, "The biggest party in the world comes to the greatest city in the world for the first time ever." I was blown away by the turnout; 4,000 guests and over-the-top production with fireworks. From there,





my passion came full circle.

I've always focused on special events. That is, we never just open the doors. There needs to be a reason to come and be wowed! From 3D visuals and pyrotechnics, to Broadway theatrics and signature DJ sets, I always challenge my team to think outside the box and do something you've always dreamed of. I'm grateful to have incredibly creative partners that have helped grow each event to magical levels, including Derek Vazquez, Jason Ojeda, Zac Merahn, Nick Rubertas, Paul Nicholls, Patrick Crough, Alex Maravilla, Justin David, Anthony Raia, and Brandon Pereyda.

In retrospect, all my experiences have helped shape who I am today. I'm never satisfied. I love traveling the world and finding new inspiration. I always want to go bigger.

GS Naming an event is a crucial act. What can you tell me about the genesis of the names for your events, including Matinee, M.E.A.T., U-NITE and VERS?

JR Great question. I credit my partner Jeroen for helping come up with VERS. Here, we had an incredibly versatile venue in Space where guests could party on two levels, from the RoofTop to the bottom.

With regards to U-NITE, for years, there was division among promoters and crowds were split. People were often told, "You can't go to that party." It was time for us to shake things up and all come together. It's in our roots. I'm so proud of U-NITE. I teamed up with John Blair (Roxy), Alan Picus (BoiParty) and Joe Roszak (Matinée) to produce this special event once per month at mega club Stage 48, where everyone is always welcome on the same dancefloor.

M.E.A.T. is a sexually-charged party, where we encourage our guests to strap on their leather and unleash their darkest desires. It's one of my favorite events to produce because our venue is a blank canvas: we bring everything in, from the lights, lasers and LEDs to a full sound system, every event from scratch.



JR You recently produced the official Life Ball after-party in Vienna. How does such a party in Vienna compare with those you produce in the States?

GS There is absolutely no other event like LifeBall. It's magical and cutting-edge. I really encourage everyone to buy a ticket and go experience it at least once in their lifetime. Gery (founder) and Amir (director) inspire me; they have raised over 22 million euros to fight AIDS.

JR Life Ball is one of many AIDS fundraisers still running. What does it mean to you to donate your time and talents to such a cause?

GS I'm truly passionate about giving back. It's one of the most important things you can do in life. When I was young, my parents instilled in me the importance of philanthropy. The greatest reward is realizing you've made a positive change in someone's life.

JR What's the most daring song you ever added to your DJ playlist?

GS I particularly love when DJs successfully incorporate elements of techno, trance, and disco into their sets. DJing really is about taking you on a musical journey. I'm grateful to work closely with so many great DJs including Paulo, Aron, Dani Toro, Phil Romano, Cindel, Nina Flowers, Joe Gauthreaux, Chris Bekker, Tom Stephan, Billy Lace, Isaac Escalante, Dan Slater, Danny Verde, Taito Tikaro, Nacho Chapado, and Ivan Gomez, among others.

JR Is there one song that you can't live without spinning?

GS I haven't personally DJed in years, but it would be fun to make a cameo one day. I definitely have a passion for music. I love Thomas Gold's, "Sing 2 Me." There are so many great acapellas you can mash it up with live.







GS What song do you never want to have to spin again?

JR Honestly, the beauty of DJing and production is you can bring any song back to life. I just heard DJ Paulo mash-up "Gimme Gimme Gimme" from ABBA with Britney Spears' "Gimme More." That's the magic of music - you can evoke so many amazing feelings.

GS Have you written or do you have plans to write original musical material?

JR I do enjoy coming up with new concepts. Each party for example, we feature a presentation when all the dancers appear on stage with dramatic choreography to custom music, all in line with the party's theme. I love being a part of the creative process to develop this intro track.

GS You obviously devote a great deal of time to working out. What do you listen to when you are at the gym?

JR I love the Matinée Radio Show. They always have great sets by different DJs each week.

GS You recently posted a pic of you and your mother on the Pride Cruise. Please say something about your relationship with your mother.

JR My mom is my everything. So much of who I am today is because of her. My father passed when I was 17 and it was very hard on all of us. She has been by me through my darkest days and brightest moments. I was so happy she could see my work in action during Pride.

My mom always told me to follow my dreams and that she would support me no matter what path I take. Back in my teenage years, she helped me draft run-of-shows for weddings and even load up my truck with DJ equipment. This time on the Pride Cruise, I insisted she relax and enjoy, although I could see how badly she wanted to lend a hand.

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STORK'S CELEBRATES 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By Joey Amato



This year, Stork's of Wilton Manors celebrates its 20 year anniversary. The much-loved establishment has become both a local gathering place for the community as well as a favorite among the visitors to South Florida.

Founded by Jim Stork in 1997, the restaurant began as a bakery. It's a four-time recipient of South Florida Gay News' "Best Bakery" award, voted on by their readers.

What many people don't realize is that even though Stork's is active within the LGBTQ community, its current owner, Peter Dekaj, is actually an "ally."

Peter began his South Florida career in 1996 as a baker at Gran Forno on Las Olas Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale. In 1997, he became part of the opening team at Stork's. Ten years later in 2007, Jim Stork decided to pursue another endeavor, passing the reigns to Peter (who at the time was a managing partner). After Peter assumed ownership of the business, he began offering a food menu to compliment their delectable desserts. "I wanted to create a place where people could pick up prepared foods and take them home for dinner," Peter told OutClique magazine in our recent interview. "We also wanted to offer lunch for the local business community. We brought on Chef Rose Klein, who came from a



distinguished eatery off Las Olas. The rest is history."

It was also at that time when the restaurant really began embracing Wilton Manors' LGBTQ community. "Peter's philosophy is that we give without question to LGBTQ organizations because we are part of the community here in Wilton Manors and we always help each other out as much as we can," stated John Emmet, Catering Manager for Stork's. Organizations such as the Poverello Center, Pride Center at Equality Park, SunServe, Kids in Distress, and SMART Ride have all benefited from Stork's generosity.

For the past seven years, Stork's has provided 700 SMART Ride participants with complimentary coffee each year for both mornings of each event. For several years, Stork's has also donated continental breakfasts to the annual gay, Senior Health Expo held at the Pride Center, an outreach to hundreds of local LGBT participants. The shop also continuously donates food items to our local Kids in Distress organization.

Emmet launched the restaurant's catering business in 2011. Since then, it has grown to account for a large percentage of the company's business. "I was allowed the privilege of creating my own little corner of Stork's," recalls Emmet. "I did not hold very optimistic hopes for it, but I was wrong and have seen it grow successfully."

Today, Stork's catering business has become very popular and has expanded throughout Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties. Emmet says, "There seemed to be few challenges to growing this part of the business, as I am a bulldozer when it comes to sales. Stork's was already a recognizable brand in our local market. Early on, we pursued potential clients in the medical field. We acquired three loyal organizations whose help was invaluable in initially growing the catering enterprise. As Peter and I continued to meet



new clients, we worked to build relationships, while they helped us expand our vision for the catering outreach. And, boom! It worked." Today, Emmet continues to love his job. He is quick to say that Stork's is the "main reason I am still in South Florida."

Over the past decade, Stork's has seen enormous growth due to the addition of both their food and catering services. "We are continually busy throughout the entire year. The catering enterprise has moved us beyond the boundaries of our zip code. Because of this, it has generated more traffic within the store," Emmet says.

Some of the items found on the catering menu that are well received include their chicken

parmesan with linguine, lasagna, churrasco with chimichurri sauce, and pasta rustica. For those who choose to dine in or carry out, the popular items include the Mykonos wrap, the Pilgrim, the club sandwich, and their delicious homemade soups. And of course, Stork's is well-known for their housemade desserts such as the lemon white chocolate mousse, fresh baked fruit and cream pies, and a selection of cookies that will take you weeks to sample. Emmet mentions, "We are extremely proud of everything. I have never had any complaints with our catered food in the past six years." Most recently, Stork's came to the rescue of a local same-sex couple, Sean and Bobby. The venue for their wedding reception cancelled their booking, just days before the event, because of the impending Hurricane Irma. The





couple decided to relocate their ceremony to a private residence. In need of catering services, they quickly called on Stork's in hopes of having food for their once-in-a-lifetime celebration.

Emmet explained that, "When the call came [to us] that their wedding had been pushed out of the hotel, both Peter and I felt very honored that they thought of us. With the hurricane looming and only 36 hours notice - we pulled it off. Whenever we see an opportunity, we grab it. In this case it wound up being very rewarding to see the looks on their faces when they were able to have a wedding after all. Their gratitude towards us was amazing."

As the team at Stork's celebrates their 20th anniversary this year, they are looking forward to a very exciting 12 months, including launching a new website, beginning an online ordering service, and participating in UberEats. Emmet also continues to grow his catering team and services.

If you haven't had a chance to visit Stork's, please take the time to stop by the restaurant and thank them for being a South Florida institution and for their giving back to our community for the past 20 years.



For more info, visit www.StorksBakery.com

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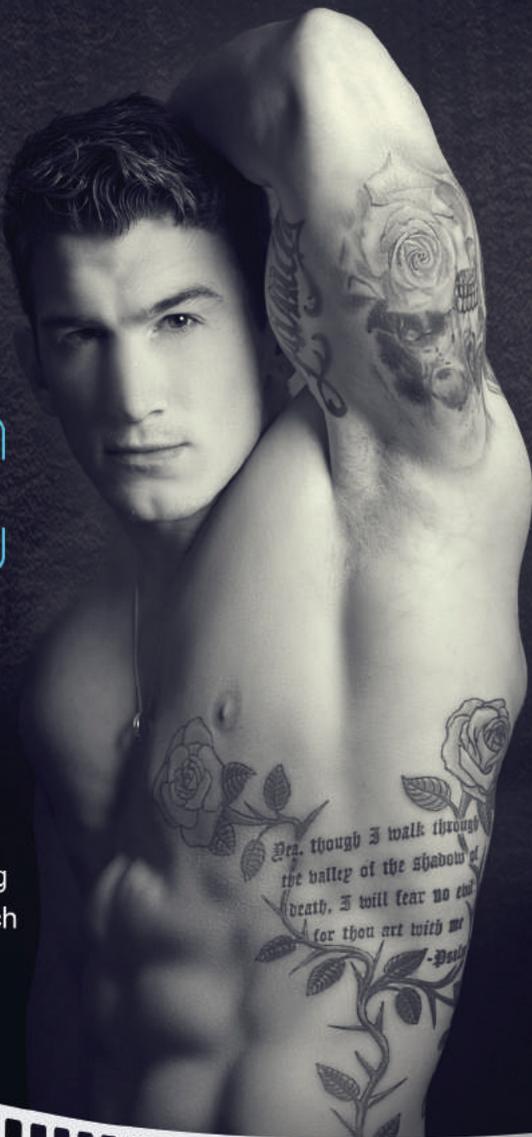
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TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

By Rev. Patrick Rogers, MDiv.



My favorite part of each week, other than Sunday worship, is our church's Thursday outreach to those in need. It began decades before I arrived as the Senior Pastor and was born out of an 80-year-old woman named Ruth giving a young lady who was hungry a peanut butter sandwich. Over the years it has flourished into our Ruth Ministry.

Each week on Thursdays at 10:30AM the service started with six people in attendance. Now most weeks it has over 90 gatherers. On an annual basis, over 7,000 meals are served through Ruth Ministry. A delicious hot meal has been prepared and is lovingly served. The dessert tables overflow with special treats for the guests. Clothing is available for those who are in need. There are numerous organizations

from our community present also to provide everything from HIV/AIDS testing provided by the Pride Center, referrals, shelters/temporary housing, and many other services. Poverello now donates some items of clothing. Every guest who leaves also receives a "goodie" bag to remind them of God's love and presence. The best part is the "All Are Welcome."

Where does this abundance come from that we are able to share with those in need? It comes from the community in which we exist. Local organizations and nonprofits all over Fort Lauderdale, Wilton Manors, and Broward County donate food and supplies to Ruth Ministry. Some people donate money so that the food can be purchased, while others donate food. Some churches hold fundraisers



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for Ruth Ministry. The 25 to 30 volunteers who come each week to cook, clean, serve, and care for others aren't just our church members. Over half of them don't attend worship at our church. They are people who care about people. That is the commonality among them. And it is family. We love our community.

So last fall, we renovated our main sanctuary chancel (stage) and got rid of the old wooden pulpits and wooden walls in order to make the chancel more open to worship through the arts including dance and drama. Veterinarian Pierre Bland, who attends our church, was opening a practice on Commercial Blvd. He approached me and asked if he could have some of the pews from the chancel renovation for his office waiting room. I immediately thought of all the years where people sat in these pews and the holy experiences and prayers which had occurred in them and I agreed to deliver some of the pews to his new office. What comfort it was to know that people who are concerned about their beloved pets may find comfort just sitting in them.

My sidekick from the church, Jim Sargent, and I loaded up one of the church pews into my 15-year-old truck to deliver it to its new home. The pew was sitting on top of the tailgate as it all would not fit in the bed of my truck. My plan was to follow Jim on the way to the vet's new office. We stopped at the stop light at Commercial and Dixie. The green arrow came on and Jim pulled away with the traffic. I heard a loud crash and the pew had compromised the tailgate and had fallen out of my truck on to 5PM rush hour traffic and out on one of the busiest streets in Fort Lauderdale. Jim was nowhere to be found, so I got out of my truck and went to assess the damage. The man in the expensive car behind me got out of his car and started yelling and waving his arms.

I took a breath and told him that if he helped me move the pew to the median, then he and all the other traffic would be able to pass. He obliged (although with choice words). We got the pew moved to the street median and the man got back into his car still mumbling profanities.

I continued to the Vet's office and there was Jim. He asked, "Where's the pew?" I told him it was back on Commercial Blvd and I needed his help to go back and retrieve it. We drove back and I explained to Jim what had happened and he laughed so hard that he left a wet spot on my passenger seat.

As we approached the intersection we could both see the pew sitting in the middle of Commercial Blvd. I pulled into a gas station across the street and we retrieved the pew from the median, carried it across rush hour traffic, and put it back in its place.

As we did this, a homeless man approached and said that he had seen the entire episode go down. He helped load the pew onto my truck. The homeless man said, "I know you! You are from Ruth Ministry." We told him yes. The man then shared with us that a friend of his had been hit by a car and killed the night before on the very spot in the street that the pew crashed. He then asked if we could pray for his friend Mike. We did.

We then completed the delivery of the church pew to its new home. We realized then that it had a stop to make on the way. Church is indeed about community.

This is a true story and telling it again makes me think of the song "Takin' it to the Streets." That's how God works!

Rev. Patrick Rogers, MDiv. – Community Activist and Senior Pastor
at United Church of Christ Fort Lauderdale



GOOD SPORT

AN INTERVIEW WITH F(L)AG FOOTBALL'S SETH GREENLEAF

By Gregg Shapiro

In 2017, it's more common than it used to be to hear about a professional male athlete coming out as gay. That doesn't necessarily make the process any easier, especially in the notoriously homophobic world of pro sports. In fact, as of this writing, Ryan O'Callaghan, who played for the New England Patriots and Kansas City Chiefs, is trending on the internet with his story about being a gay football player who once considered suicide.

With his documentary, F(l)ag Football, producer/director Seth Greenleaf hopes to shine a different kind of light on being gay and playing sports. Focusing on three teams – New York Warriors, LA Motion and Phoenix Hellraisers – competing to take part in the Gay Super Bowl tournament, F(l)ag Football features prominent figures in the world of gay sports, including Wade Davis (formerly of the Tennessee Titans) and sports authority Cyd Zeigler. The doc's message of camaraderie, companionship, compassion and competition, intended for a wider audience than football fanatics, is one to which the LGBTQ community

should be able to connect. I spoke with Greenleaf about the film shortly after its theatrical release and just before it became available for home video viewing.

Gregg Shapiro: What was it about gay flag football that you thought would make it a good subject for a doc such as F(l)ag Football?

SG Everything about it. Great characters, unique stories. Forces to conquer outside and within, all held against the backdrop of a football tournament, which in and of itself is dramatic and exciting. It was a story that I felt needed telling, and I knew it was going to be compelling, but it came together even better than I expected.

GS Before starting F(l)ag Football, had you seen other LGBTQ sports docs, such as Ronit Bezalet's A Day on the Force?

SG No. I've really only got into watching documentaries after starting this one. But I've seen every football movie ever made [laughs]!

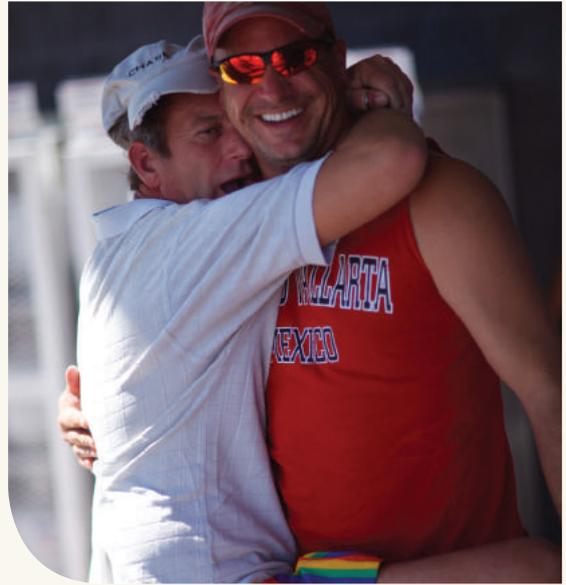


GS How much did pro football player Michael Sam's coming out in 2014 impact your decision to make F(l)ag Football?

SG I had started the film long before I knew of Michael Sam, but as we were finishing the editing right around when he was drafted, it seemed like the completion of the story. Or at least a new chapter.

GS What was involved in the process of finding teams willing to be featured in the doc?

SG I had played in the league for years and so I had a lot of friends who knew and trusted me. They vouched for me with the national board, and I think they also had a sense that this was a story that should be shared. I had to assure them that I wasn't looking to exploit the league or create some kind of silly reality show, but I have a pretty good track record of work so that wasn't too much of a block. Cyd Zeigler was such a strong force in the creation of the league, and knowing me from New York, he was an advocate right from the start. Then, when Jared Garduno and I connected, he got it right away and as the tournament organizer, his support really helped the process go smoothly. I don't know if I could have done it without Cyd and Jared.



GS One of the more interesting moments occurs when New York Warriors teammates "Tall" Paul and John talk about having been a couple, something that is obviously not an issue on a team in which the members identify as straight.

SG It's one of the comments that often comes up when you speak with straight players about the possibility of a gay teammate – "Will they be attracted to me?" "Will they be looking at me in the locker room?" It's childish, because obviously we all work in environments with opposite sexes and it's not an issue, but I think showing John and Paul address it head on and say, it never affected their play on the field, shows why it shouldn't be a problem for anyone. And to that idea that having a gay teammate means he's going to love you and lust for you, and stare at you in the shower, Ha! Get over yourself. One thing I know about football players, is that football always comes first.

GS You divide your time between Fort Lauderdale and New York and I wondered if you were aware of a gay flag football team here in South Florida.





SG I knew there was a team, but I didn't know much about them until I started spending time in the area. They quickly became one of my favorite teams, and while they were too new to be featured in the film at the time, they've grown up a lot since then and are one of the more talented leagues around now, if not one of the larger ones. I love those guys and gals.

GS F(l)ag Football was screened at LGBTQ film fests. Was it also screened at straight film fests, and how was the film received at film fests in general?

SG It was an obvious choice for LGBTQ festivals, but it's been to a few "straight" ones as well and it's been popular at both. I think even within the gay community, this group of athletes is surprising, and then of course it's downright shocking to the straight community who has never had to reconcile gay + athlete before, so the reaction is more celebratory on the one side, and more surprising on the other.

GS Now that the film is complete and debuting on DVD, was there a team – the Warriors, the Motion or the Hellraisers – that you found yourself rooting for more than the others while making the doc?

SG I think we were all rooting for the Hellraisers during the process because they're such a likable group, and because they're underdogs, but in getting to know all the players, it was hard not to fall in love with all of them. We cringed the first

time they had to play one another because it feels like a family fighting and you don't want anyone to lose.

GS What do you think you brought to the project as a straight filmmaker that might be different from that of a gay filmmaker?

SG Because I couldn't direct a gay film if I tried [laughs]. I think what you have here is a very genuine sports film about athletes who are also gay. I hope that quality allows it to cross-over, because I do think it's straight audiences that most need this film.

GS Even though you are primarily known as a producer of Broadway musicals, have you thought about directing another film, and if so, would it be another doc, or perhaps a comedy or drama?

SG My training is actually as a director, which I still do from time to time, but producing allows me to work on more projects at a time and my interests are so vast it's a good fit for me, but directing is always an option, especially when I think I have a unique vision for something, or don't think I can get anyone else to do it. I've enjoyed this, but I'll have to be a lot richer, or really moved by a subject before I direct another documentary. They're a big undertaking and it was not easy on my ADD [laughs]! That said, I'm really glad I got through it, and with the help of an amazing team, we're all very proud of how the film came out and what it has to say.

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HOW A LITTLE BOY IN SILVER BALLETT FLATS GAVE ME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

By Joey Leslie



I saw a little boy at Publix the other day wearing silver ballet flats. The kid was pushing his little brother around in a cart and stopping here and there to belt out “Let it Go” from Frozen.

His mom called out to him, “Maxwell!” or something cool like that, and I thought for a minute, she was going to try to rein him in the way mothers and fathers do when you’re causing a ruckus or - ehem - drawing too much attention to yourself.

That’s code, I learned along the way, for “acting like a girl” or for “being too gay.” But instead she presented him with two decorated birthday cakes and asked which one they

should take to the party. He assessed and, without doubt, pointed to the blue one and with a flourish was off to find the best candles to match.

I didn’t mean to stare but I was completely taken in by this family’s interaction. When his mom and I made eye contact, I smiled embarrassed for having been caught, only now realizing that I’d voyeurized their ordinary shopping experience, and I gave a little apologetic nod for having intruded. She just smiled.

I couldn’t help but look around to see what other people’s faces were saying. Where were the disparaging looks judging the mom for



letting her little boy wear girl's shoes? Where were the couples glancing knowingly at each other like "we know how that's going to turn out?"

I was projecting my baggage, looking for those same, subtle, negative social cues I started noticing when I was about his age, when you start to realize that you're different and start getting the idea that different is bad. But I didn't see any of that.

And I stood there for a minute processing all this. Between cans of green beans and bottles of olive oil, I was a little choked up. A little envious even. And also hopeful and proud. Proud of him for being himself, and his parents for letting him, and of everyone in the store for not being a dick about it. (At least, not that I saw.)

His silver shoes caused me to have a full on moment in the grocery store and got me thinking: Wouldn't it be great if he never had to come out at all?

I think my parents must have known when I was his age. My babysitter took me shopping for shoes once and I chose a girl's pair. They weren't silver ballet flats, just a sleek and sensible white tennis shoe the likes of which were not offered in the boy's section. I was embarrassed to ask for them but she had me try them on, and I lied and said they fit perfectly even though they were a little tight. She was unsure, but she bought them for me and probably figured my mom could return them if they weren't "appropriate."

I don't know what happened to those shoes. But they might have been my only win in

adolescence when it came to being myself. In third grade, a teacher told me to start hanging out with boys instead of girls because "people would talk." The next year I joined the dance team and gave the mean kids enough fodder to pick on me throughout middle school. Learning from that mistake, I started suppressing the "inappropriate" parts of myself. But no matter what, it was always like I had on sparkling silver shoes. And there was always someone who had an opinion about it.

My freshman year in college, my mom asked me if I was gay. Actually, she said "You're not gay are you?" It was obvious what she hoped the answer would be, and obvious that she already knew she was about to be disappointed. "Do you really want to have this conversation?" I asked her. She said yes and I said yes and we didn't talk about it again for a long time.

Several years later, I had "the talk" with my dad. He and my stepmom were coming to stay with me in the house I had recently bought.

I caught myself sanitizing my gayness in preparation for their arrival and that's when I realized I was tired of compartmentalizing my life. "You're an adult! A homeowner! You've got your shit together," I said to myself. "What are you ashamed of?" So I called my dad and officially, and nervously, came out.

"Well, we kinda figured that," he said. "And I'm not going to throw a parade about it, but we've loved you for 25 years and we're going to love you no matter what." I asked why they never brought it up and he said he's more of a "don't ask, don't tell" kind of guy. My stepmom later told me she was upset about it. "I wish you'd





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have told me first," she said supportively.

Even though they all knew, the onus was on me to make the official statement. It was awkward and horrible in a lot of ways, and I'd put it off for way too long because I knew they already knew, and I was afraid that their reaction would hurt me and cause a rift. Ignoring the issue was easier and safer. But it also meant it was "an issue." And I needed to know that it wasn't. So I had the tough conversations, and I got lucky because the conversations weren't too tough. My parents didn't kick me out or disown me the way some parents have.

I wasn't shamed or sent to therapy or conversion camp as many teens have been. I was lucky. I wonder if it will be that way for Sparkle Shoes?

He's a lucky kid already. He reminded me of me, so I'm going to assume for the sake of this article, that he's gay and he'll never have to come out, because his parents have already

embraced the fact that "he's different" and they're letting him be himself. Or hell, maybe he already came out. Maybe the cake was for his coming out party.

Whatever the reality, I hope that this is a trend as more and more people are realizing that so many things in life that matter do so on a spectrum, and at neither end is there right nor wrong. There's just this and that and a million wonderful ways to be human.

I've learned to love myself along the way, but it took a lot of unlearning to get here. Growing up with a secret shame screwed with my head and my heart. The isolation of being "different = bad" was a lonely reality made better only by finding more people like me and discovering that different = good. I now know I'm not alone in all of that.

This kid and his family give me hope for the future. I wish for his journey to be full of love. And I really wish I'd told him how much I like his shoes.



Joey Leslie is a writer and brand strategist living in Miami. Need killer content? Contact him via cleverest.fyi.

TOP 4 REASONS YOU AREN'T GAINING MUSCLE

By Bobby Jackson, BA, CSCS

It can be extremely frustrating and discouraging to have trouble putting on muscle. I have worked with a countless number of clients who were at an absolute stalemate when it came to building the slightest amount of muscle tissue. Most of them had already been spending hours in the gym each week and still were not able to make any measurable gain. Luckily, after looking at some major factors in their routines both inside and outside the gym, it was easy to find and correct the errors. Here are the 4 most common reasons why people have trouble gaining muscle.



1 NUTRITION

Nutrition is absolutely the number-one reason why most people have trouble building muscle. It is impossible to gain muscle without taking in an increased number of calories from our normal daily requirement. In fact, each pound of muscle tissue is equivalent to 2,500 calories itself. This means 2,500 calories, in addition to our normal daily requirement. Luckily this does not apply to a single day's intake. Typically, these extra 2,500 calories are distributed over

a week. Your new daily caloric intake should only increase by approximately 350 calories. You also need to focus on high protein foods, as protein is the primary building block of muscle tissue. We start our clients out with a goal of "half their bodyweight in grams" of protein. For example, if you weigh 180 pounds then your goal should be at least 90 grams of protein per day, distributed throughout your meals and snacks, starting with breakfast.

2 EXERCISE LOAD & VOLUME

Exercise load refers to the amount of weight and resistance used for each exercise within your workout. Exercise volume is the total number of sets and repetitions of each exercise. Muscle building, also known as hypertrophy, requires a significant amount of weight while still achieving relatively high repetitions (6-12) with each set (3-6). The error I find in most people's workouts, especially when they work out alone, is that

they don't use enough weight. Simply completing 3-6 sets of 6-12 repetitions on each exercise is not enough to cause hypertrophy. Once you master the correct form on each exercise, you should be using an amount of weight heavy enough to prevent you from significantly surpassing your target repetitions. For example, if your target is 6-12 reps, don't select a weight that is so light you could complete 20 or more.

3 EXERCISE SELECTION

Another easily recognizable error in someone's workout routine is an abundance of isolation exercises (example: bicep curls or tricep

extensions). Although these are great muscle groups to work on, and when trained properly have a great effect on our overall



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appearance, that is not the most efficient way to add muscle. Our primary focus should be on compound exercises (example: dumbbell rows or chest press). An isolation exercise is movement at one joint to concentrate on a single muscle group. Compound exercises

incorporate 2 or more joints and multiple muscle groups in a single movement. With multiple muscle groups being used, these movements are typically much stronger, breakdown much more tissue, and have a greater overall effect on hypertrophy.

4 REST & RECOVERY

The last issue I see most frequently is that the client has not been getting enough sleep to allow their body to recover from their workouts properly. Whether it's a chronic sleeping condition or an over-active social life, a lack of sleep is detrimental to general workout recovery, especially muscle building.

Several hormones vital to hypertrophy are produced during sleep, so limited sleep will decrease the amount of time our body has to rebuild. This effect can compound into what is referred to as overtraining, in which you have low energy and feel fatigued even days after your last workout.

Any one of these errors alone can significantly decrease your success in the gym. You start to combine two or three of them and you will have serious limitations in your physical development no matter how much time you spend working out. Our suggestion is to start by organizing the way you eat so you have a better idea of your general calorie count and protein intake each day. Next, you will want to develop a well-rounded workout routine and apply the correct load and volume to each exercise within. Last, make sure you're getting sufficient sleep each night and are feeling well-rested each morning. If you can master these four cornerstones of muscle building on a consistent basis then you will be well on your way to making some serious muscular gains.



Bobby is a graduate of Minnesota State University with a degree in Biology, emphasis in Health and Medical Sciences. Certified as a strength and conditioning specialist, Bobby is the owner and director of The Custom Fitness Institute, a private training facility in Pompano Beach

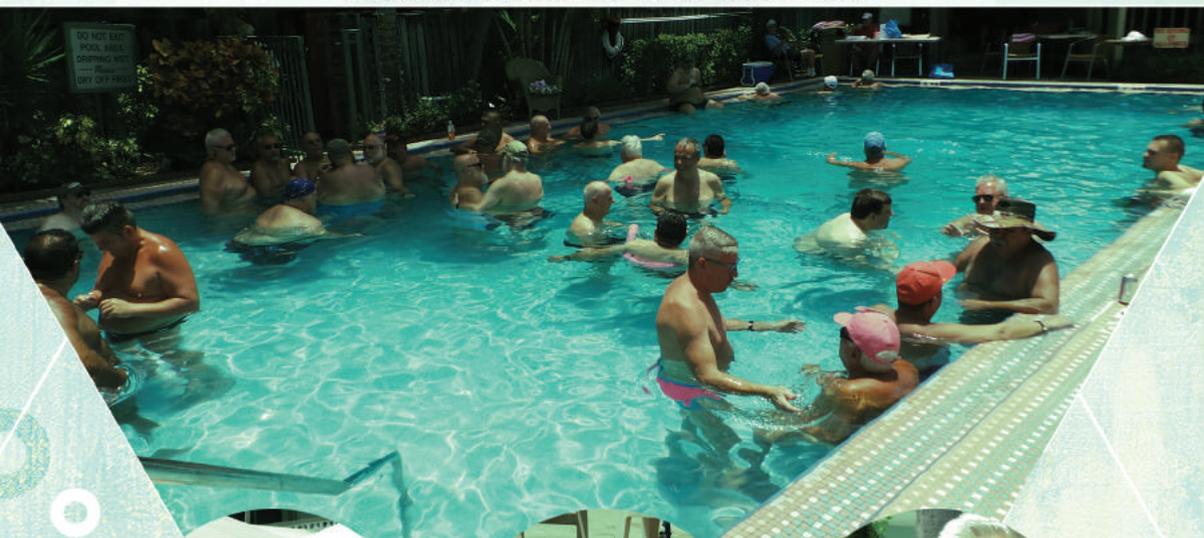
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PRIDE JOURNEY: SAN ANTONIO

By Joey Amato

My recent visit to San Antonio began with not knowing if I was even going to be able to go. It was at that time in the path of Hurricane Harvey, which ultimately took a turn towards Houston as we all now know, I was debating whether or not I should even attempt to visit the city. If I did go, would I be able to visit all of the attractions I wanted to see? Would it be raining and miserable? Would the city be flooded as predicted? Well I decided to roll the dice and flew into San Antonio a day early to arrive before the storm hit. It would be my first time visiting the city, so I didn't want to lose this opportunity.



My home for the next few days was the beautiful Westin Riverwalk, located along one of the city's most stunning features. Riverwalk stretches for miles, dotted by hotels, shops, museums, and cafes. Walking along the trail is one of the most beautiful ways to see the city. My room at The Westin Riverwalk was spacious and luxurious, but still felt like home. A separate sitting area boasted a sofa and arm chair in addition to a large desk situated beneath a flat screen television. The views off the balcony were breathtaking and the bathroom was large enough to have a cocktail party in.

My first day in San Antonio was a bit rainy, so I chose to visit The Shops of La Cantera, a beautiful outdoor shopping center about 25 minutes north of the city. At the time, they were exhibiting the works of iconic pop artist, Peter Max. This month they are welcoming renowned Miami-based artist, Romero Britto. The indoor-outdoor experience was the perfect way to spend the day and escape the sporadic outer bands of Hurricane Harvey as they travelled through the region.

The following afternoon, I was joined by pop/

edm musician, Joey Suarez, for a lovely Sunday drag brunch at Paramour Bar. Paramour offers stellar views of downtown San Antonio. Joey and I decided to go all out and order a bottle of Prosecco along with a few items off their small but tasty menu curated by local chef, Jason Dady. Drag brunch at Paramour takes place the last Sunday of every month. The theme of that afternoon was Broadway Babes, and the babes brought it. It was really a fun experience.

Without a doubt, one of the city's most popular sites is The Alamo. Most people know the story of The Alamo, but what is interesting is that British rocker Phil Collins amassed one of the largest privately-owned collections of Alamo artifacts. In the summer of 2014, Collins generously donated his collection to the Texas General Land Office, guardian of the Alamo on behalf of the people of Texas. Collins built the collection over several decades, purchasing some items and even discovering some others just steps away from the Alamo itself. Collins fell in love with the Alamo's inspiring story as a 5-year-old boy, when he saw the Disney production of Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier. When other children were out playing





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cops and robbers or other childhood games, Collins says that he was re-enacting the Battle of the Alamo.

Not too far away is the city's tallest attraction, the Tower of the Americas. Located in Hemisfair Park, the 750-foot structure was built for the 1968 World's Fair and offers panoramic views of the city. One floor below the observation deck is a great restaurant which offers one of the best happy hours in town.

For dinner, I decided to head to Market Square, a three-block outdoor plaza and currently the largest Mexican market in the United States. There was no shortage of restaurants to choose from. I actually visited Market Square two nights in a row for dinner, opting to try Mi Tierra on the first night and then Viva Villa Taqueria the second night, where I had one of the best tacos I've ever had in my entire life. On the way to Market Square, be sure to stop by San Fernando Cathedral.

Gay nightlife in San Antonio is abundant. One of my favorite spots was Pegasus, a friendly neighborhood bar, or should I say complex of bars, all under one roof. There really is something for everyone here and after a few shots, I built up enough liquid courage to jump on stage for some karaoke. Luckily, to my knowledge there is no video recording of me rocking Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart."

On my final day in San Antonio I visited The

Pearl District, a historic brewery that's been transformed into a mixed-use complex filled with chef-owned restaurants and independent retail stores. Pearl has a rich history dating back to 1883 and is one of the coolest neighborhoods I visited during this trip. My lunch guest and I decided to stop by Cured, a beautiful restaurant featuring the widest selection of cured meats I've ever seen. We began our meal with a selection of three meats, my favorite being the Smoked Duck Ham. For my entree, I opted for something a bit lighter, the Crabmeat Ravigote with avocado, tomato, citrus and beets. The sweet crab paired very well with the creaminess of the avocado and firmness of the beets to make for a healthy, but filling dish.

Finally, I had time for one last stop before my journey home. I heard that the Witte Museum had a cool dinosaur exhibit, so of course I had to visit. While there, I got a chance to see the skeleton of Acrocanthosaurus, Deinosuchus (giant crocodile), and a full-size Tyrannosaurus Rex.

San Antonio really does have a little bit of something for everyone. It's great for budget conscious travelers and the people are extremely warm and friendly. My friends told me about a cave system which I didn't have time to explore this time around, so I guess it warrants another visit. Time to plan my next visit back to san Antonio, Texas!





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