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Volume 2, Issue 8  
July 2018



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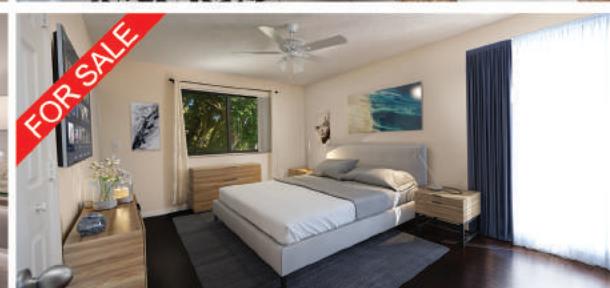
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WHAT TO DO. WHERE TO GO. WHO TO MEET

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# A PIONEER OF LGBT+ TOURISM

## RICHARD GRAY AND THE GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

By Denny Patterson

Fort Lauderdale has always been a thriving travel destination. But Richard Gray has very much been a key factor in it becoming the number one destination for LGBT+ tourism here in Florida and the #5 LGBT+ destination in the U.S. As the Vice President at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, Gray is now recognized as a global pioneer to LGBT+ travelers. He is credited in helping to attract over 1.5 million LGBT+ visitors to Greater Fort Lauderdale annually, while boosting the local economy a whopping \$1.5 billion in travel dollars.

### What is the Fort Lauderdale CVB and how essential is it?

It stands for the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau and our function is really a sales and marketing organization to promote Greater Fort Lauderdale as a travel destination. We want to fill all the hotels here in Broward County. We want travelers from around the world to be familiar with this destination that I am very proud to call my home. I have the best job in the world.

### When did the Fort Lauderdale CVB begin to cater towards the LGBT+ traveler?

I developed the initiative in 1995. We were one of the very first CVBs in the U.S. to target the gay market. In 1996 when we launched our campaign we didn't have the courage to use the word gay then so we used rainbow. Very quickly we found gold at the end of the rainbow and then we had the confidence to use the word gay. Then we said GLBT, then LGBT, then LGBTQ and now we say LGBT+ because I feel that LGBT+ is more inclusive and accepting. We also have a Transgender landing page,



Photo by Dennis Deahn Images

[www.Sunny.org/TLGB](http://www.Sunny.org/TLGB). I purposely put the T in front of LGB to show our commitment to Transgender travelers. Twenty years ago we also became the first CVB in the US to have a gay guide to Greater Fort Lauderdale and we were also the first CVB in the US to have a gay microsite.

### Why do you think Fort Lauderdale is such a great travel destination?

Most people don't realize that Greater Fort Lauderdale is this extraordinary oasis in a conservative state. We know who we are and we believe in diversity and inclusion. It is in our DNA. We want our new destination marketing campaign #GreaterTogether to rock people's socks off and show the whole world that everyone is welcome to Greater Fort Lauderdale. It doesn't matter the color of your skin, your religion, who you choose to love, or how you identify. We want the world to know that this is a destination that welcomes ALL travelers. We are so cosmopolitan and so inclusive, and I think that is why Fort Lauderdale has become such a gay mecca.

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So, would you say Fort Lauderdale is not only an ideal vacation spot, but also a great place to live and raise a family?

Absolutely! When we did our lesbian and gay family study before launching that campaign, the number one thing I learned was that lesbian and gay families love to go to the beach. There are also a lot of small and affordable lodgings that lesbian and gay families like to stay at here in Broward County, like in Pompano Beach and Hollywood for example. I would say that more and more lesbian and gay families are choosing this destination for their vacations. There is a relaxing cool vibe here.

The Fort Lauderdale CVB has been credited for working closely with the Transgender community. Tell me more about that?

The Southern Comfort Transgender Conference will be held again at the Riverside Hotel located in the heart of Las Olas Boulevard on September 5-8, 2018. This is a very important conference for us to host. I am so proud to be their host city.

The Transgender Community presents a unique and complex challenge to the society that we all live in. It is much harder for Trans people to come out and be accepted by their family, friends and employers due to lack of knowledge and understanding in what it means to be a Transgender person. Education is key in being able to understand Trans people followed by acceptance and respect. I am especially proud that the United Nations recognized us last year as being the global leader in the Trans market.

Now it was time to push the envelope and make history, yet again. In 2017, on New Years Eve in Times Square in New York City we became the world's first destination to launch a mainstream marketing campaign that featured Transgender, lesbian, gay, and yes, straight people. Later on that year the United Nations recognized Greater Fort Lauderdale as being the global leader in this platform. Amazing recognition!

Have any other destinations followed your lead in adding LGBT+ tourism and landing pages?

Well, we are still the only CVB tourist board in the whole world that has a designated department where the sole responsibility is to develop and grow LGBT+ tourism. We are pioneers and no one else in the industry has accomplished as much as we have. We have lead the way globally for LGBT+ travelers. I am especially very proud of that.

Well, if any other CVB starts to target LGBT+ tourism, how do you plan to stay number one?

I think literally by being marketing savvy, staying ahead of the curve and always pushing the envelope. That is why we have been so successful. I have built some incredible relationships and that is an important part of my job, besides being visionary and thinking out of the box. I want to be the best Ambassador possible for this destination and Broward County.

What do you and the Fort Lauderdale CVB have in store for the rest of 2018 and 2019?

We are going to showcase our new Greater Together campaign. It pushes all envelopes and highlights diversity and inclusion. There is not a destination in the world that is producing a creative and a marketing campaign like this. We want to welcome people here who blend in with our local community. We are proud to be global pioneers and are excited about what the future holds for Greater Fort Lauderdale as a unique, diverse, and inclusive safe travel destination. For me visibility creates awareness, awareness leads to acceptance and widespread acceptance ends discrimination. You can't change hearts, minds and attitudes if you are invisible. Visibility advances acceptance . . . and I never intend to be invisible. Rest assured Greater Fort Lauderdale will always push the envelope. I look at it like this. Diversity is being invited to the dance. Inclusion is being asked to dance. This is how I see Greater Fort Lauderdale, a destination where everyone feels they are being asked to dance.

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A photograph of four people on the deck of a sailboat. A man in a white shirt and tan shorts stands on the left, holding a drink. A woman in a white lace-trimmed dress sits next to him, also holding a drink. In the foreground, two other men are seated; one wears a pink shirt and holds a drink, while the other wears a blue patterned swimsuit and sunglasses, also holding a drink. The boat is on a dark blue ocean under a clear sky.

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# FORT LAUDERDALE TO HOST THE SOUTHERN COMFORT TRANSGENDER CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER 2018

Richard Gray rolls out the Fort Lauderdale red carpet for the Southern Comfort Transgender Conference.

By Tony Adams



Fort Lauderdale will host the next Southern Comfort Transgender Conference September 5 - 8, 2018 at the Riverside Hotel, located in the heart of Las Olas Boulevard. The 2017 conference was cancelled due to the (pardon the pun) transgression of Hurricane Irma.

The conference was held annually in Atlanta from 1991 through 2014 when it accepted an invitation from Richard Gray who directs the LGBT+ travel marketing initiative for the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The Southern Comfort Transgender Conference ([www.sccfla.org](http://www.sccfla.org)) aims at inclusiveness and has built a reputation as a safe event for LGBT people with a familial atmosphere. It attracts people from all over the United States, offering the opportunity for education, sharing, and socializing. When the Conference board

of directors announced the move to Fort Lauderdale, it explained that goals and priorities would continue to be education and community building, but with the added "fun-in-the-sun" element of vacationing in an alluring LGBT destination. ([www.sccfla.org](http://www.sccfla.org))

In the process of creating his initiative, Gray became schooled about the T in LGBT. He says, "The transgender community presents a unique and complex challenge to our world. It is much harder for trans people to come out, and to gain acceptance."



"Diversity is a meandering journey and love knows no boundaries and it is absolutely critical for all of us to use our own personal platforms to maintain the rhythm and drumbeat for advocacy, global rights, equality and inclusion. Inclusion is what makes the mix work, and it is always a work in progress."

"The hospitality industry is the first to feel the impact of unrest and uncertainty in the world. The traveling public looks for value and safety when making its travel decisions. Our industry is facing this challenge more than ever in the United States under our current administration in Washington, DC.

"In Greater Fort Lauderdale, we are making sure we let the traveling public across the world understand that WE have an open-heart and open-door policy to ALL people across the world, regardless of the color of their skin, what religion they believe in, who they choose to love or how they choose to identify.

"We want them to enjoy our beaches, shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants and stay in our hotels. We want to make sure that our message gets through despite much of the negative clutter that they see on their nightly news every day.

"On World Tourism Day, we released a beautifully crafted, inclusive, and diverse video and supporting marketing campaign called #GreaterTogether that pushes back on negative perceptions that unfortunately seem to grow with every news cycle.

"For me as a global tourism leader I follow this mantra, 'Visibility creates awareness.' You



can't change hearts, minds and attitudes if you are invisible. I never intend to be invisible. Rest assured Greater Fort Lauderdale will always push the envelope of visibility.

"Diversity is being invited to the dance. Inclusion is being asked to dance. This is how I see Greater Fort Lauderdale, a destination where everyone feels they are being asked to dance."

If Richard Gray has his way, there won't be any wallflowers at this year's Southern Comfort Transgender Conference. Mark your calendars for September 5 - 8, and visit [www.sccfla.org](http://www.sccfla.org) for more information.



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# DO EXTENDED SERVICE PLANS MAKE CENTS?



**O**ne of the questions I get most often from friends and family is whether they should purchase an extended service plan. My response is always the same, it depends. Let's consider a few options and walk through the steps you should consider before buying an extended service plan.

**1** Understand the terms of any manufacturer warranty and the length of coverage. Any additional coverage should complement and not duplicate what you already have from the manufacturer.

**2** Is the product likely to need repair or replacement beyond the lifetime of the manufacturer warranty? If the product has a good track record for durability and you are an owner who also has a good track record taking care of your products, buying additional coverage may not be a good investment. This is especially true for items you like to routinely update (e.g. computers, phones, etc.). If you are like me, you like to upgrade to the newest technology so I usually put myself on a three year plan to upgrade products and I set aside

money to pay for the purchase when it is time. Putting money aside that you might otherwise use toward an extended service plan is an option some financial planners suggest for people who prefer to "self-insure" products.

**3** Carefully review the coverage and costs associated with any plan. Does the purchase of the extended service plan and related fees offset likely expenses you will incur? As you work through the numbers, include the cost of deductibles and service visits. Some people like the protection of an extended service plan to protect against the need to replace a product. This can be especially important if you do not have reserves to replace an air conditioner or a car. Your ability to cover these unexpected expenses should be a major part of your decision.

**4** Not all plans are created equal, so if you are considering an extended purchase plan, find one that works for you. Some of the key variables to look at include:

➤ A. Deductibles, Service Visit Fees and Shipping

**Fees:** The cost to use a plan needs to take into account the fees you will pay to use it. Compare not only the initial cost of plans, but also other fees you will likely incur as well.

► **B. Service Levels:** While some repairs can wait, for those of us in South Florida, being without an air conditioner is not a good thing. Working through an extended service plan can add a layer to scheduling since you have to work with the technicians in the plan. Review the service level agreement and how emergency repairs are handled. You may want to limit the purchase of extended service plans to products where the agreement provides service levels acceptable to you and not for products where it does not.

► **C. Quality Provider:** An extended service plan is only as good as the company standing behind it. Do your research to find a business that provides good service and makes use of the extended service plan easy for its customers. Check the online reputation of the business at [bbb.org](http://bbb.org), Google, Yelp and other online resources. Read the complaints and reviews to see how the business supports the extended service plan and resolves complaints.

An extended service plan is an agreement between you and the provider of the plan. Inherent in most plans are requirements on

the customer. Be careful to review and follow requirements so that you don't throw away your investment. Check for any maintenance requirements imposed on you under the plan. Keep documentation for any maintenance.

Most plans require you to contact the provider to initiate a claim and obtain service. Keep records of the interaction with your provider. Consult your plan document so you know the fees you will be charged and make payments consistent with the plan. If a repair is not satisfactory, document the problem with video or photographs so you have objective information to support your position. Contact the provider immediately if the problem is not resolved. If you experience a problem that you can't resolve directly with the extended service plan administrator, consider filing a complaint with BBB at [bbb.org](http://bbb.org).

Now you can understand why I say, it depends. Some people like the security blanket against a large unexpected expense and other people prefer to more directly control repairs and service without working through a plan provider. The product can also make a big difference on whether an extended service plan is a good purchase. I hope this information will help you make the right decision the next time you have to decide whether an extended service plan is a good purchase.



## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

### What is the most important information I should know about BIKTARVY®?

#### BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects:

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

#### Who should not take BIKTARVY?

##### Do not take BIKTARVY if you take:

- dofetilide
- rifampin
- any other medicines to treat HIV-1

#### What are the other possible side effects of BIKTARVY?

##### Serious side effects of BIKTARVY 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 BIKTARVY.
- **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 BIKTARVY.
- **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 effects** of BIKTARVY in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (5%), and headache (5%). 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 BIKTARVY?

- **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, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements. BIKTARVY and other medicines may affect each other. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist, and ask if it is safe to take BIKTARVY with all of your other medicines.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if BIKTARVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking BIKTARVY.
- **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](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch), or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults. It can either be used in people who 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.

**BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

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## IMPORTANT FACTS

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

## MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT BIKTARVY

**BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects, including:**

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

## ABOUT BIKTARVY

BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults. It can either be used in people who 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.

**BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

**Do NOT take BIKTARVY if you also take a medicine that contains:**

- dolutegravir
- rifampin
- any other medicines to treat HIV-1

## BEFORE TAKING BIKTARVY

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

- Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- 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, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that interact with BIKTARVY.

## POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF BIKTARVY

### **BIKTARVY can cause serious side effects, including:**

- Those in the “Most Important Information About BIKTARVY” 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 effects of BIKTARVY** in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (5%), and headache (5%).

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

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

## HOW TO TAKE BIKTARVY

Take BIKTARVY 1 time each day with or without food.

## GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Dr. Beau A. Nelson, DBH, LCSW



There are powerful ways we can make our lives better and more meaningful. One is making the choices for ourselves and the other is making lives better for others. Humans all have basic needs that we can cultivate in order to live our best lives. We need a sense of purpose, we need to be social, we need to give and receive love, and we seek to maximize our enjoyment of life. How we do this makes the difference in our quality, and even the quantity, of the lives we experience.

We get to make decisions throughout our life. We decide how we get our needs met. I meet with many people who come to see me when their choices do not pan out to maximize happiness. We can either focus on instant gratification, feeling good in the moment, or we can choose delayed gratification, happiness in the long-run. Unfortunately, we seem to be wired more to instant gratification and our world is fixated on feeling good now. We choose in the moment and often do not think about the consequences in the long term. It's the difference of cashing your paycheck and going out all night and buying lottery tickets and eating out at an expensive

restaurant, only to find at the end of the month you do not have money for rent. Which truly gives us more life quality?

It's fun to see somebody put themselves on a budget. When they do, they kick and scream over how bad it will be. When you have a couple of months of paying bills, have money in your account, and still survive, you start to feel better, your stress is less, and momentary spending sprees (although that purse seems like it will make your life so much better when you see it in the window) just don't seem as important. You get to make choices with the time you have, the choice to go to the gym or sit on the couch, eat at home or at McDonalds, etc. Remember, the delayed gratification is where it's at. When things are on track in your life, there will still be times when you can go out with friends and buy that purse, but everything you need to take care of will also be covered. Think about holding back one weekend, think about what that new shiny gift for yourself will really give you, stick to making healthy decisions and you can make your life different in a good way. Try it.



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We can also make a difference in the lives of others. Humans, in addition to what I have already said, are also self-interested. That does not mean selfish (often taken negatively). We are designed to survive. We make choices for ourselves, even if that means something bad to someone else. We often say, do, or make choices, based on what we want. Just think of someone cheating on their partner, they decide their need is much more important than how it will affect their partner. That's a combination of instant gratification and self-interest. It hurts and in the end, will that 30 minutes with a stranger make your life so much better, no it will not.

You can make a difference in someone else's life by having the quality of integrity. Do what you say and be the person who cares about others. This can play out in how you treat your friends. I had a friend at one time that would text three or four people early on Friday to see "what was going on" that night. He would literally take the first offer (in order to not be bored) and then if a better offer came in, he would text back that he couldn't make it. After months and months of this, he got no responses to his texts. Everyone got sick of it. In case you were wondering, if he did show up, he would be gone in a heartbeat when he

met someone new at the bar and would be gone the rest of the night.

You can also make a difference by donating your time for someone else. This could be helping a friend move, volunteering to help others, or getting involved in a good cause. These make a real difference in our communities. Studies have shown that when people are depressed and they volunteer, their depression symptoms are less. Now you may not be diagnosed with depression, even when we are feeling disconnected, when we are just doing the same thing day-after-day we lose that sense of purpose in our life. Remember that is important, too. It feels good, it has a positive effect on someone else's life, and we are doing more than just taking care of ourselves. It gives new perspectives on life and often makes you appreciate what you do have when you help those who may be dealing with problems greater than yours.

Make a difference in your life, those close to you, and in the larger world. It is an investment in all the things that drive us as human beings. In the end, when you look back at your life, you will like who you were, and who you have become, from these experiences in making a difference.

Dr. Nelson practices psychology in Fort Lauderdale and he is Clinical Director at The Florida House Experience, an innovative healthcare facility in Deerfield Beach, treating substance abuse and mental health issues. Information about him can be found on his website at [www.ImproveYourMood.com](http://www.ImproveYourMood.com).

Read more by Dr. Nelson at [www.OutClique.org/Articles](http://www.OutClique.org/Articles)

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

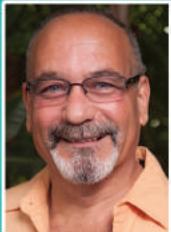


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# A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDS: JULY SUMMER SPLASH

## By Denny Patterson



### For those who have never heard of A Celebration of Friends, tell us about what to expect!

A Celebration of Friends is a convention for the mature man and his admirer. As we get older, we lose our place in society. Where do we go after acquiring the scars and extra poundage of age? What do we do when we get pushed off center-stage by the next generation of younger men? A Celebration of Friends welcomes all who are happy with themselves no matter their age.

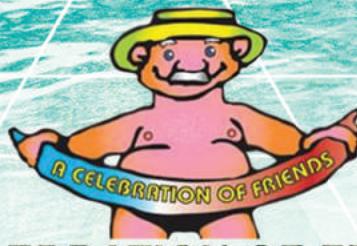
### Talk to me more about the July Summer Splash. What can attendees expect?

The July 19-22, 2018 event at the Ramada Fort Lauderdale - Oakland Park Inn (3001 N Federal Hwy, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33306) will be the hottest and most attitude-free Celebration on record. With more smiling faces, more costumes and more fun to be had, it will be a

few days that changes many lives forever. The hotel will provide breakfast for overnight guests, while the ACOF will provide daily lunches and happy hour. We'll have contests that will allow those attending to let their hair down and be themselves. Many of the local bars and restaurants will provide discounts and specials for registered ACOF attendees.

### How will this July Summer Splash be different than last years?

Have you ever gone in costume for Mardi Gras in New Orleans? Have you ever run from a bull in Pamplona? This year, the attitude will be the same, carefree and thrilling with old friends getting together again and making new friends. Attendees will be sharing the weekend jousting with many mature bulls in and out of costume. (A special invite was sent out to Pope Francis & Tom Selleck this year.)



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I know you like to host contests at these events. What kind of contests will be happening?

Togas will be back this year as well as the "Village People Knock-offs." Every year is a surprise in fashion and fun. Our contests will consist of our most popular: "Sexiest Senior Speedo," and "Sexiest Senior Swimsuit," "Best Bootie," "Prettiest Package," "Most Huggable Senior," along with "Most & Least Experienced Senior," plus more. One thing I will guarantee you is that all attendees will be wearing a smile.

#### Why should a person attend A Celebration of Friends event?

If a man is looking to meet mature men, he should attend. If a man just wants to just be himself, he should attend. If a man likes to meet good people and have fun, he should attend. If a man can breathe, he should attend. (Did I mention I sent out special invitations to Pope Francis & Tom Selleck?)

#### What do you have in store for the upcoming January Jamboree?

On Jan. 27, 2019, A Celebration of Friends is hosting a six-night Western Caribbean cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean International.



Departing from Fort Lauderdale, we'll be doing some fancy cruising and following the sun during the coldest time of the year. We'll be checking out George Town, Grand Cayman, Puerto Costa Maya, and Cozumel, Mexico.

#### What do you think your life would be like if you never found A Celebration of Friends?

First off, it wasn't just I who started the ACOF, but a group of good friends. ACOF continues its great work yearly because of the strong boards we're fortunate to maintain every year. That said, I am the luckiest man in the world and have been blessed because of the many great life-long friends and experiences ACOF has brought into my life. Hundreds of couples are together right now because of ACOF.

#### Do you still have the Klassic Coffee Klatch?

Yes, after four years we still have our weekly Klassic Coffee Klatch. We started the KCK when there were a few suicides in the community and we knew we had to do something about it. The whole point of our Saturday morning meetings is to prevent any one from being alone Saturday mornings, regardless of what happened to them Friday night. Everyone is welcome; come and be with your friends.

For more information about the Summer Splash, January Cruise, weekly Klassic Coffee Klatch, and other upcoming events, go to [www.CelebrationOfFriends.org](http://www.CelebrationOfFriends.org)

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# THE FORT LAUDERDALE GAY MEN'S CHORUS

By Denny Patterson

Photos By Connor Wilkinson (@HonorConnor)

Over 26 years ago, Dr. Gary Keating had a vision of starting a gay men's chorus for the state of Florida. So, he founded the original Gay Men's Chorus of South Florida, which later changed their name to the Fort Lauderdale Gay Men's Chorus (FTLGMC) years later out of respect for other South Florida area groups. The FTLGMC was the first established gay arts organization within the state and has gained colossal respect and admiration not only from the LGBTQ community, but also heterosexual audiences as well. The chorus is constantly welcoming new members, so

if interested, please visit [www.TheFTLGMC.org](http://www.TheFTLGMC.org) for audition info, or email Contact@TheFTLGMC.org.

## Meet Dr. Gary Keating.

As the founder of the FTLGMC, why did you want to start the organization?

In 1986, after learning about gay choruses from attending a New York City GMC concert, I started working on a gay chorus for South Florida. At that time in South Florida, there were no openly gay organizations until I started the chorus. It was the first organization to

form openly since the Anita Bryant event. I thought it would be the perfect opportunity for the chorus to be an out representation for our community. In hindsight, I'm very grateful for this direction. The chorus began doing concerts in both Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

#### When applicants audition for the chorus, what qualifications must they possess?

With this ensemble, I don't do an extensive audition. I have them sing with the chorus, and I can pretty much hear what I'd like to hear in their voice. It is as important to me that they fit into the ensemble emotionally so that we don't deal with the drama. We deal with a community that wants to sing together and wants to make music. They need to come every week with a positive attitude to make that music. I am fortunate to also have a board and a president that follows those guidelines very strongly.

#### What do you hope chorus members take away from being part of the FTLGMC?

I am confident that I am a very fine conductor, but I am also very aware that I am an educator at heart. I want the members of my chorus to continue to learn to be better singers and to experience different styles of music. To understand the ability of music to change

people's hearts and minds and the importance of the entertainment value of music. Those are the things that I have wanted my chorus members and my students to take with them for a lifetime.

#### What is the number one lesson you have learned?

To cherish life. In the first four years of the chorus, 1986-91, we sang at 41 funerals and created 41 quilts for our members that died of AIDS. That is a great deal of loss for people to deal with, and it certainly teaches you the value of life.

#### What are some upcoming concerts we should be on the lookout for?

Christmas will always be a little on the traditional side, but audiences can expect a moving tribute to Matthew Shepard who died 20 years ago this year, plus some uplifting music and some comedy. I have lots of ideas and look forward to sharing them with their audience over the next several years!

#### A word from the President...

Justin Knight

Year Joined: 2007

Vocal Range: Baritone



Dr. Gary Keating



Justin Knight



William Kennedy



#### Why did you audition for the chorus?

I auditioned for the chorus because I had met several member and they all had so much fun. I wanted to be part of that and the sense of family that the group provides.

What would you say has been the most challenging part about being president? Balancing everything I want to do as President with my personal life and career is the biggest challenge. There's never enough time to do everything I envision, so I constantly struggle with finding that balance.

#### Your biggest accomplishment?

Having my vision realized through all the hard work of the FTLGMC chorus and board members. I don't do any of this alone and they are incredible to work with. I probably feel the most pride though hearing from people how much they loved one of our shows. We work intensely for months on creating each show and to see fans have an emotional reaction makes it all worthwhile.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned?  
Delegate, delegate, delegate. Anyone who knows me, knows this isn't a strength of mine, but I work on getting better at it every day because it really does take a village.

#### Introducing the chorus members.....

##### William Kennedy

Year Joined: 2014

Vocal Range: Baritone

#### Why did you audition for the chorus?

When my partner found out that I was a singer, he was insistent that I find a group to start singing with again. I hadn't performed publicly for several years, so it was time.

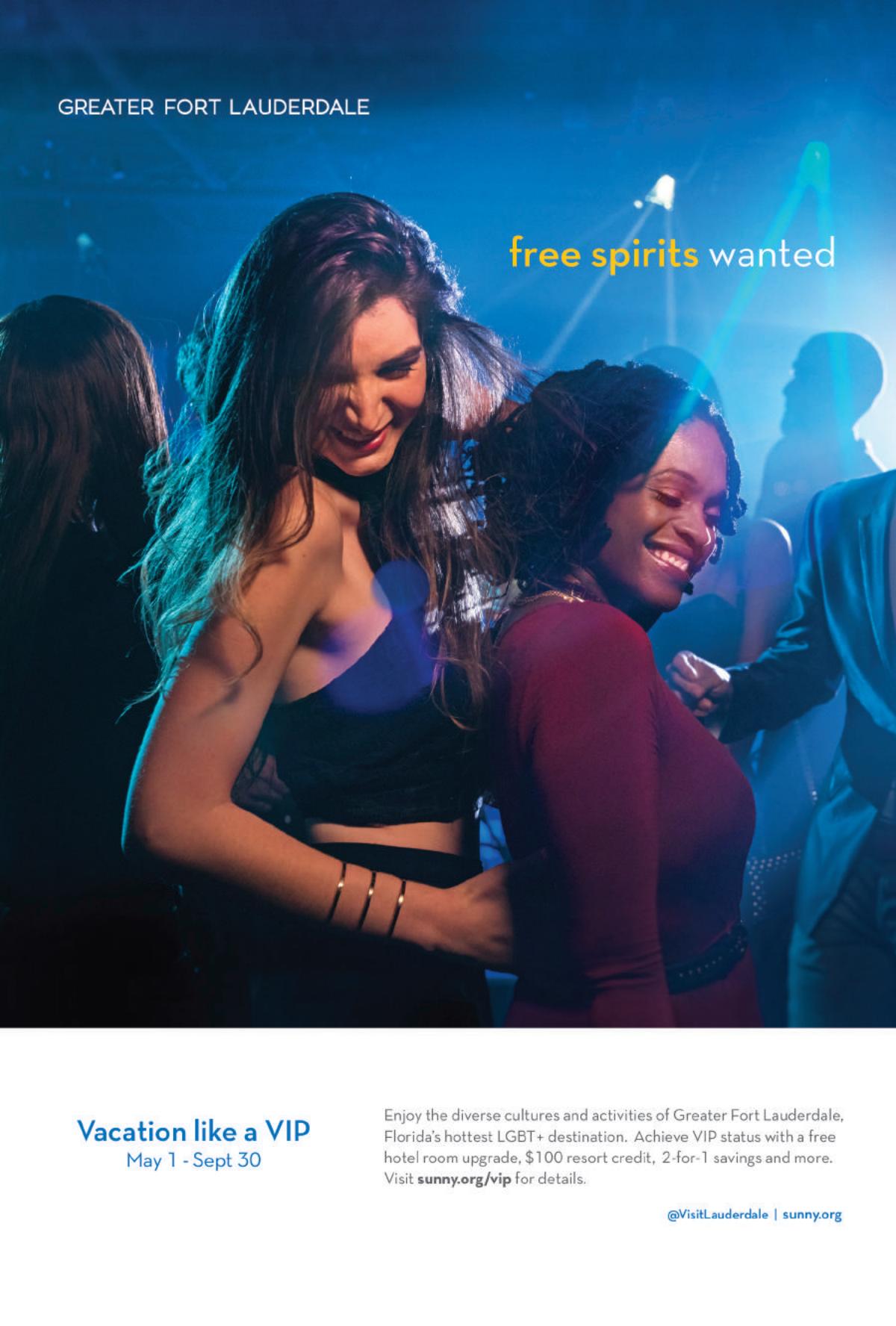
#### What would you say was your most memorable performance?

That's a hard one! I've had so many wonderful opportunities to perform with this group, but one that sticks out for me was "Officer Krupke" from our Sondheim show this year. That song really gave me the chance to show off my comedic side. It was so much fun!

Tim Haymon



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A photograph of two women dancing in a club. One woman has long dark hair and is wearing a black crop top, smiling broadly. The other woman is partially visible behind her, also smiling. The background is dark with blue stage lights.

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**Where did your passion for singing and music come from?**

Well, like so many other gay boys, I used to spend hours singing along to records of Barbra, Cher, and Julie Andrews. Singing has always just been a natural thing for me, but when I discovered that singing allows you the opportunity to put a smile on someone else's face, that's really what drives me.

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned?**

That everything works out in the end. Our rehearsal leading up to the show can be crazy, but we always deliver a great show. I have learned to just relax and just enjoy performing.

**What advice would you give to someone who wishes to join the chorus?**

Just do it! We all take great joy in singing for the Fort Lauderdale community. We are always looking to expand our family and would love for you to come sing with us!

### Tim Haymon

Year Joined: 2005

Vocal Range: Baritone

**Tell me about your first performance with the Chorus. What was that experience like?**

We are going back a bit, but the performance was for World AIDS Day. We were performing songs from the FTLGMC and Stockholm concert. I was the newbie that had to learn the songs and choreography. Everyone was so supportive, I knew I had made the right decision by joining.

**Would you say that was your most memorable performance?**

It was a memorable one for sure, but the most memorable are the ones we have done with guest stars. We performed with the late Barbara Cook years ago, but most recently performing with Broadway and opera superstars Lisa Vroman and Martha Bartz singing a collection of Sondheim songs was another highlight. The songs were great, and the ladies were just so outstanding. We also memorized most of the music which gives Dr. Keating a chance to better conduct the show.

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned?**

Look in the mirror before going on stage. Years ago, we did a Judy Garland show and I was one of the dancers. We danced to two different songs back to back and there was a very short costume change. We were changing from overalls with plaid shirts to tux tails. I changed quickly and thought that I had more time than expected. We finished the second number and when I got back stage, I realized I forgot to take the plaid shirt off. I had worn a tux with a plaid shirt on stage. We still laugh about it.

**What is your ultimate goal and plan?**

I love singing with this group of guys. We have a philosophy of providing excellent entertainment while maintaining a balanced personal life. I hope we can continue to grow the group and keep our core values.

**What advice would you give to someone who wishes to join the chorus?**

I would advise them to just enjoy the music and friendship. Gary and everyone will give them the support they need to be confident in what we are creating and performing.

### Bradley Bush

Year Joined: 2003

Vocal Range: Tenor 1

**Tell me about your first performance with the Chorus. What was that experience like?**

My first performance, and the reason my friend asked me to join was literally historic, not to mention a dream come true. The chorus was looking for extra members to "beef up" their membership to sing the National Anthem at the Miami Marlins. We were the first gay organization to ever sing at a major league baseball game! The experience of singing in the middle of the stadium in front of thousands of fans was something I always wanted to have. To do that with an out, gay group was thrilling! When we finished, we did hear some "boeing" among the cheers, but it was mostly resounding, supportive cheers.

**How has the FTLGMC changed your life?**

I have made many "brothers in song" throughout



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the years. The friends you meet through this group become some of the best friends you have ever had. Plus, singing with an out, gay group that is proud of the message of diversity and acceptance they deliver has enriched and validated my life. And it is very rewarding to touch the lives of so many who need to know that they are who they are and that's okay.

**Where did your passion for singing and music come from?**

I am not sure. Since I can remember, I have been drawn to music and performing. There is something very rewarding about standing in front of people and bringing joy and happiness into their life.

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned?**

I have learned that we get very comfortable in our widely accepted gay lifestyle here in South Florida. But there are still so many parts of the world, country and even our state where gay people struggle with bigotry. I feel if our music reaches them and helps enrich their life with notes of acceptance, we have accomplished an amazing deed. I have seen audience members get inspired to make positive changes in their lives after hearing us sing!

**What advice would you give to someone who wishes to join the chorus?**

Bradley Bush



Make it happen! You won't be disappointed! Most people don't think that they have time to commit to rehearsals and concerts. Believe me, you will gladly give up one night a week to be around these amazing men and their passion to continue to make a positive difference in this world!

**Felix Fidelibus**

Year Joined: 1997

Vocal Range: Bass

**How has the FTLGMC changed your life?**

After separating from my partner of 20 years, the chorus became a place where I can enjoy the company of friends. It is a place of comfort, joy, and camaraderie. In that way, it has made my life more fulfilling and gives meaning and purpose to what I do. It also helps relieve loneliness and boredom of being alone.

**Where did your passion for singing and music come from?**

I first began singing when I was just a child in grammar school in New York. It was a Catholic school and I sang for the morning masses. I stayed with that chorus all through grammar school and junior high until I became an adult and joined the adult church choir. I've always enjoyed singing, so when the opportunity came to sing with the gay men's chorus, I jumped on it.



Felix Fidelibus





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Shawn Jordan



#### What is the biggest lesson you have learned?

Working with the chorus for so many years has taught me to be a team player. It takes all of us to make a chorus and to become harmonious with each other. It's not a single voice, but the voice of all of us that makes music together. This also translates to life, whereas we must all work together to achieve our goals.

#### What is your ultimate goal/plan?

My goal is to use whatever talent it is that God has given me to share with my fellow chorus members and with those that have come to hear us sing. To make music, that is important and shares the message of unity, brotherhood, and diversity.

#### What advice would you give to someone who wishes to join the chorus?

If someone asked me why they should join the chorus, I would say that it is a place of comfort, joy, and brotherhood. Additionally, it is a place where one can use their singing talent to express who they really are.

**Shawn Jordan**

Year Joined: 2016

Vocal Range: Tenor I

#### Why did you audition for the chorus?

I was new to the area and knew virtually no one at the time. I was desperate for an



Eric Mijii



extracurricular and wanted to be involved in something that would connect me to the local gay community.

#### What would you say was your most memorable performance?

I have lots of memorable moments from our concerts. One of my favorites is singing "Hello" from Book of Mormon. It was such a challenge because every person in the ensemble had to be right on cue with their "Hellos" and "Hi there's." It took a ton of practice to get it right, and it all fell into place on the night of the concert. I was so pleased, I had a huge grin on my face - which was appropriate for the song!

#### How has the FTLGMC changed your life?

I've made lasting friendships with the guys in the chorus. There's a wonderful sense of camaraderie and community within this group, and it's made my time in South Florida leagues better than I expected moving down here.

#### Where did your passion for singing and music come from?

I've been a singer my whole life. My parents put me in the church children's choir at a young age, and I attended an arts magnet school through middle and high school, where I got to sing daily.

#### What is it like working with Gary Keating?

Gary is a masterful teacher and has helped



tremendously to develop my voice and singing style. I've noticed a real change in my sound since joining!

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned?**  
Always breathe from the belly.

**Eric Miji**

Year Joined: 2018

Vocal Range: Bass

**Why did you audition for the chorus?**

I like singing, it's a positive way of giving to the community, I like Dr. Keating's conducting, and rehearsals as I have sung under his direction when he helmed Miami Gay Men's Chorus.

**Where did your passion for singing and music come from?**

I used to sing and dance for the tourists in high school and college; it was such a rush hearing applause. I was hooked. I degreed in Drama and Dance and got my Equity card doing A Chorus Line in 1979.

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned?**

No big lesson yet, but I like singing with a talented group of guys that sing and read music well. They provide part tapes to help you memorize notes and lyrics.

**What is your ultimate goal and plan?**

My ultimate goal is to see the chorus grow from 20 to 75. That means hard work, singing well, putting on great shows, marketing chorus, soliciting ads, membership drives, fundraisers, car washes, and the list goes on.

**What advice would you give to someone who wishes to join the chorus?**

Do your best to memorize your words and notes, and ultimately, you'll have fun because you'll feel secure in your performance and have the confidence to perform the song. The more you put in, the more you'll get back. Plus, you're doing the community a great service by doing something positive for the LGBTQ groups and their allies. It's a positive light by bringing the healing and entertainment with music.

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# ADVOCATING FOR THE LGBTQ FAMILIES: NICK SCANDALIOS

By Denny Patterson

The Tony Awards may be a prestigious night that honors excellence in theatre, but for Nederlander Organization Executive Vice President Nick Scandalios, he was recognized at this year's ceremony for his work and advocacy with the Family Equality Council. He was this year's recipient of the Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award.

The Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award is presented annually to a member of the theatre community who has made a substantial contribution of volunteered time and effort on behalf of one or more humanitarian entities, social services, or charitable organizations. Past recipients include David Hyde Pierce, Rosie O'Donnell, and Larry Kramer.

For the past ten years, Scandalios has advocated for LGBTQ families across the country. Prior to joining the Family Equality Council's Board of Directors in 2008, Scandalios dedicated countless hours of his time helping to further the rights, correct the injustices, and increase the safety of LGBTQ parents and their children. He was elected as the Board Chair in 2014 and played an instrumental role in the Council's work that contributed to winning the Supreme Court's marriage equality case.

Scandalios is known to many as a man who has pride and passion for his work, and I had the pleasure of chatting more with him about it.

**Congrats on being the recipient of the Isabelle Stevenson Award! That is quite an honor!**  
Thank you! I appreciate it.

**Paint the scene for me. What was your reaction when you found out you were going to receive this admired award?**

[Laughs] I guess you could say it was messy



because there were a lot of tears. Messy in all the right ways.

**I bet! What does this award mean to you?**

It is always a great thing to be recognized, but the thing that I find so powerful about it and what makes it so special is that the community you work with every day is recognizing the work you do outside of that community. Working for causes that are important to you beyond the walls of where you are living. The people you work with see, feel, and understand the value of what you are trying to contribute to the outside world and it's a validation that it matters, so it makes it all the more special.

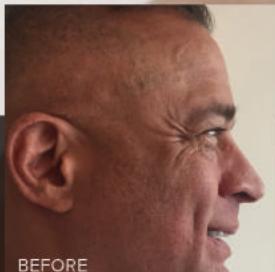
**This award is for your work with the Family Equality Council. How did you initially get involved with the organization?**

When my husband and I decided to have children, we took that path of surrogacy. During the surrogacy process, someone from Growing Generations, that's the organization we did surrogacy with, they said I should meet some people from the Family Equality Council.

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They are doing a lot of great work, and I might be interested. That was ten years ago and that was when we were in a very different place with the marriage movement than we are today. So, I thought it was interesting and I went to lunch with one of the board members and I found it fascinating about how many kids were in the foster care system and how many LGBTQ headed households were either having children or seeking to have children, which was a greatly growing number at the time, and what kind of barriers there were to family formation. The Family Equality Council, formally named Family Pride, was a national organization that represented families and advocated for better laws and getting rid of laws that were not helpful. Even in my own experience with having kids, at that time, California was the only place where you could get a court order to have your names be put on the birth certificate. Even though we lived in New York, we ventured to California for our surrogate and to present day, a lot of work is being done. So, having kids got me involved. That began my ten-year journey.

### Why did helping LGBTQ families become so important to you? How did it develop into a passion?

The passion is about families and children and how we can create more loving households. I'm 52-years-old. I came out in the explosion of the AIDS crisis which was a very scary time. As part of my coming out process, I grieved the very notion of having children, like many others did. I don't think that's the case anymore.

Statistics show they don't anymore, but when I was coming out, part of coming out was this whole idea about are you going to be rejected by your own family and how are you going to go through life. You certainly weren't going to have kids. My own parents, who are super supportive, I remember my mother saying that she was sorry that I won't have any children. I thought, well, I can still have children, but I knew I wasn't going to. It wasn't until I met my then-to-become husband Rick who was enough younger than me that it never dawned on him that he wasn't having children. So, re-exploring this, wait a minute, this is crazy. There is a natural desire to have children, so we started talking about it over a number of years. I began to realize that our community was shifting and the things we had fought for were becoming more inside the normative narrative of that nation. An estimated two million LGBTQ households have a desire to have children. Statistics show that at least 86 percent of young people coming out fully expect to have children, and that's a staggering statistic. It's a statistic that says you're young, you're LGBTQ, you don't feel any different from any other child growing up. There is no reason you shouldn't be able to have children. What I found fascinating early in the marriage movement, the family part of the movement was kept very separated. Then as it turns out, the family part of our movement was the critical component to our winning marriage in the Supreme Court of the United States. When Justice Kennedy was asking what about the children, he was quoting the Amicus briefs of





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the Family Equality Council. We submitted the Voice of the Children brief and it was that brief he quoted on the bench. So, I think even within our own community, there's been an evolution about the importance of accepting the family part of our movement within the movement. We have evolved in many ways over time.

I read that the Family Equality Council played a significant role with the Supreme Court case. Many might argue that the Amicus brief was a pivotal component for the swing justice.

**How does it feel to know that you have helped so many LGBTQ families and children?**

It's funny, I don't really think about that part. I think about how many kids that need to be helped and I think about the backlash that our movement is experiencing with quote on quote religious freedom bills. Now that the marriage question is settled, how on the state level are they going to try and prevent families from forming? That seems to be on the front line and when that becomes the front line, it becomes more intolerable because at the end of the day, they're not just hurting LGBTQ people and their right to form families, but they are essentially saying that all these kids who can be adopted and are living in the foster care system are undeserving of loving homes. Are you kidding me? Now, for me, it's more and more about focusing on the kids. How can anyone want to prevent children from being fostered or adopted into a loving home? Like why would anyone object to that? I can't comprehend it. The reason is pure discrimination. It's not about religious freedom, and it's certainly not about the safety of a child.

**Kansas and Oklahoma have been in the headlines recently hoping to pass bills where it will be illegal for LGBTQ people to adopt children. Is the Family Equality Council ready for this battle?**

Of course! We have been trying to fight it to get it stopped. The work we do will never end until all LGBTQ people who can support and raise children and want children can form families in whatever way they choose. Surrogacy, foster



care, and adoption. All children need loving homes.

**What would you say has been the biggest learning experience?**

That there are no boundaries to the love inside a family unit, and sadly, there seems to be no boundaries to those who want to utilize bad ideologies to hurt families for no reason other than the fact that they are LGBTQ. I am still stunned by this which is why I guess I feel so passionate about the fight. I have learned that it's all about the kids. Kids are always, always, always worth fighting for.

**For those who wish to get involved with the Family Equality Council, what can they do?**

Contact us at [www.FamilyEquality.org](http://www.FamilyEquality.org). Our CEO Stan Sloan is an extraordinary leader, and we have a great staff. Go to the website and see all the programs we offer. Family Week is in the summer and it's the largest gathering of LGBTQ families in the country. People come from all over the country to be with families just like them and that happens in Provincetown every summer.

**What can we expect next from you?**

I love what I do, I am passionate about the work in our movement, and I feel like I have found the place where I am best suited to serve. I will serve there as long as the battle needs to be fought.

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## RICHARD PAULL JOINS R3 ACCOUNTING AS PARTNER



# R3

Accounting, LLC is pleased to announce that Richard J. Paull, MBA, has joined the Fort Lauderdale firm as a partner. Mr. Paull, a long-time resident and business owner of South Florida has been a trusted and frequent consultant to R3 Accounting since 2013 and will now be representing the firm as a principal, as well as participating in the administrative functions.

Prior to R3, Mr. Paull's concentration was with a Fort Lauderdale firm, R J Consulting, which provided accounting, business consulting, and tax services to small to medium sized private companies. Mr. Paull also contributed assistance with clients' accounting, tax, reporting and financing matters. His expertise includes providing external CFO services for companies ranging from startups to mature organizations.

In this partnership position, Mr. Paull will provide strategic and managerial leadership to the firm and its employees, including: implementation and oversight of the

accounting, tax, back office, and CFO services to clients, and follow up action plans; strategic leadership of the Community Outreach programs, including a focus on non-business initiatives that build Community strength and spirit; and strengthening the firm's strategic partnerships with key external factors in South Florida.

Timothy Hart, CEO of R3 Accounting, stated, "Richard has been working with our clients at R3 for the past six years. We are very pleased to have been able to create this opportunity for us to work closely together and look forward to a very productive partnership going forward."

Richard Paull holds a Master's in Business Administration from Suffolk University in Boston, MA. and has been an active board member of various non-profit agencies in Palm Beach and Broward Counties. He currently serves on the Finance Committee of Stonewall National Museum & Archives, Fort Lauderdale, FL. His partnership position in R3 Accounting was effective June 1, 2018.



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# SAM SMITH

The Thrill Of It All (Capitol Records), Sam Smith's sophomore album, debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with 237,000 equivalent album units earned during the week ending November 9. It has also topped the charts in the U.K., Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium, selling one million units worldwide in the first week of release. The Thrill Of It All (is the follow-up to In The Lonely Hour, which was the biggest selling U.K. male debut in the SoundScan era and has sold 13 million adjusted albums worldwide.

The album includes the hit "Too Good At Goodbyes," which is certified Platinum by the RIAA. The single debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Digital Song Sales chart and topped the U.S. and U.K. iTunes charts with over 500 million combined streams worldwide. Views of the official video exceed 225 million.

Rolling Stone awarded The Thrill Of It All four stars and hailed Smith as "one of the mightiest, most expressive singers of his generation." The Associated Press observed, "he's still singing emotional songs, but his growth is evident. And perfectly executed... There's not a miss on the 10-track album... 'The Thrill of It All' is everything, and more." NPR said, "Sam Smith is a colossal force in contemporary pop music." People declared the album "a stunner" and Entertainment Weekly said, "Smith has pipes that are, on their own, worth the price of admission." Vulture noted, "'Thrill' successfully expands Smith's palette into something grander and more poignant... It's intriguing to watch (one) of the era's finest pop vocalists standing on the power of raw talent and emotion."

The Thrill Of It All, available at <http://samsmith.world/TTOIAUS>, finds Smith working once again alongside close friend and long-time collaborator Jimmy Napes plus Timbaland, Malay, Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd and Stargate. He was also joined in the studio by The Dap Kings,



gospel choirs and YEBBA, a young singer he discovered on YouTube, who duets with him on "No Peace."

The North American leg of The Thrill Of It All arena tour will kick off on June 18, 2018 at Air Canada Centre in Toronto and include shows at Barclays Center in Brooklyn (June 27), New York City's Madison Square Garden (June 29), Miami's AmericanAirlines Arena (July 14) and STAPLES Center in Los Angeles (August 28 & 29). Tickets are on sale now at <http://samsmithworld.com>.

In February 2015, Smith set a GRAMMY® record, winning a total of four awards – the most ever received by a U.K. artist following the release of a debut album. He was named Best New Artist, In The Lonely Hour took Best Pop Vocal Album honors and his single "Stay With Me" won awards for both Record and Song of the Year. Smith has also earned an Oscar, a Golden Globe, three Billboard Music Awards and three BRIT Awards, among others.

# SAM SMITH



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## THE RUSTY GORDON LGBT DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS OF PALM BEACH SURFS THE BLUE WAVE

The blue wave that's about to hit Florida comes ashore in Palm Beach County, courtesy of the Rusty Gordon LGBT Democratic Caucus!

Who was Rusty Gordon? In short, Rusty was a pioneer for gay rights during the early years of our struggle for equality. She was a member of the National Organization for Women (NOW) at a time when lesbians weren't welcome as NOW members. Rusty's persistence and leadership led NOW to fully embrace the lesbian community as equal members.

Rusty worked as a music producer in the 1960s, she began producing women's concerts and festivals in the early 1970s, and later was an advocate for lesbian music artists. She also founded the Whimsey Political Clearinghouse to focus on women's studies and LGBT issues, and later, was a founder of the organization that today is known as the statewide Florida LGBT Democratic Caucus.

Rusty passed away in 2009, but her partner of many years, Davilyn "Davy" Whims, is still active in LGBT issues.

The Rusty Gordon LGBT Democratic Caucus (RGDC), proudly named for our local legend, represents the LGBT community for the Palm Beach Democratic Party, ensuring that our voices are heard on party issues important to the LGBT community and that candidates and elected officials know who we are and what our community needs. As the Palm Beach chapter of the Florida LGBT Democratic Caucus, RGDC is host for **Here's Where We Win:** the Summer Conference of the Florida LGBT Democratic Caucus, being held at the Hilton Palm Beach Airport Hotel **July 27-29, 2018.**



The Florida LGBT Democratic Caucus represents the LGBT community for the Florida Democratic Party. We are an active organization, with more than a dozen chapters throughout the state — from Miami to Tampa to Jacksonville to the Panhandle and most major metro areas in between. We speak for the LGBT community, and advocate with our elected officials and candidates to ensure we're engaged at every step of the electoral and legislative process, that our voices are heard, and that our votes are not taken for granted.

Join us in West Palm Beach this July! **Here's Where We Win** will be an impactful weekend with LGBT activists from around the state, elected officials and candidates, presentations from key groups and partners, plus our Leadership Dinner with major speakers. Conference registration is just \$25, and includes our Friday night Welcome Reception, as well as Breakfast and Lunch on Saturday. And a side note: money raised from conference sponsorships goes toward LGBT Get-Out-The-Vote activities! We hope you can make it. We'll be excited to see you!

Registration, hotel, and ticket information can be found on our website,  
[www.FloridaLGBTADemocrats.org](http://www.FloridaLGBTADemocrats.org).



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More info, including Conference Registration, Hotel Information, Leadership Dinner tickets  
[www.floridaLGBTDemocrats.org](http://www.floridaLGBTDemocrats.org)

## REDEYE BEYOND AT ARTSERVE



Once the fireworks fizzle, it's time to search and explore the summer's next big thing, and the wait won't be long. The explosive summer event, RedEye, is right around the corner. Once again, RedEye promises hours of exciting art, music, film, food and fun on July 14.

A Broward tradition for over a decade, the RedEye art and music festival brings together artists of every genre under one roof, for one night, to create a wild underground art happening. Guests roam from room to room as they experience live bands, indie films, interactive art, cutting edge VR games, spoken word, improv comedy, performance art, moving art, and body art – experiences that defy category. And this year, RedEye promises to take you "Beyond."

"RedEye's wild ride of human artistry began as a way to support our non-profit mission, but has turned into a beloved summer happening," says ArtServe CEO Jaye Abbate. "It's a night for the community to come together. To celebrate the creative spirit alive and flourishing in South Florida, and have four hours of solid fun for less than the cost of a movie ticket." Attendees – even non-art lovers – are exposed to new films, cool VR experiences, new music, and new dance forms. "They can push way past their comfort zones this year, experience something wildly unexpected, and have a great time for a great cause," adds Abbate.

Funds raised will support local artists, programs for at-risk youth and underserved populations, workshops that train our arts innovators of tomorrow, and enhance the quality of life for everyone. That's one reason nearly 100 artists of every genre will be participating. It's also a major reason corporate sponsors want to get involved.

RedEye will be more interactive. It will offer more exciting installation works. Live painting will take on a whole new meaning. The Studio Stage sponsored by Puppet Network, will feature a funky mash up of acoustic players, stand up comedians, dancers, and surprise pop-up performances. And once RedEye heats up, it will be easy to cool down in the Wynwood Brewing Beer Garden.

Michelle Rose Domb + Josh the Man will emcee RedEye's top bands including Big Sounds Better, Deep Seas, Super Gold, Emily Sheila, AudioCrisis, Joey Sexton, Tim Clay, and more on RedEye's four stages. Plus, an over-the-top "Fashionista Fest" promises to take RedEye truly beyond expectations. As DJ Diesel, who will be spinning on the gallery stage, says, "You can't find a better ticket in town this summer."

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# red eye BEYOND

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# MDGLCC'S RUBY GALA

Photos: www.aphotovideo.com



Scott Bader, Steve Adkins, Jorge Richa



The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood team celebrating their "Business of the Year" recognition

A record number of nearly 600 revelers and networkers attended this year's Miami-Dade Gay & Lesbian Chamber Of Commerce (MDGLCC) 17th Annual Gala and Awards Celebration, "The Ruby Gala." Spotlighted at the event were a pioneer, a curator, some pop-ups and a moonlight. As is tradition, the event also showcased awards as "The Ruby Gala" once again honored corporate and individual supporters of the Miami-Dade LGBTQ community. "The Ruby Gala" took place Saturday, May 19th, at the Hilton Miami Downtown and was again presented by Wells Fargo.

"At its very foundation, the MDGLCC is all about networking and connecting," said Steve Adkins, president of the MDGLCC. "We certainly did have a night full of networking opportunities at the Gala this year. We also

had a lot of fun in the process and were honored to salute two individuals and two organizations that have worked tirelessly for the community."

Honored at "The Ruby Gala" were

**AT&T Business of the Year Award**  
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**Regions Business Person of the Year Award**  
Vicki Brail

**AIDS Healthcare Foundation Non-Profit Organization of the Year Award**  
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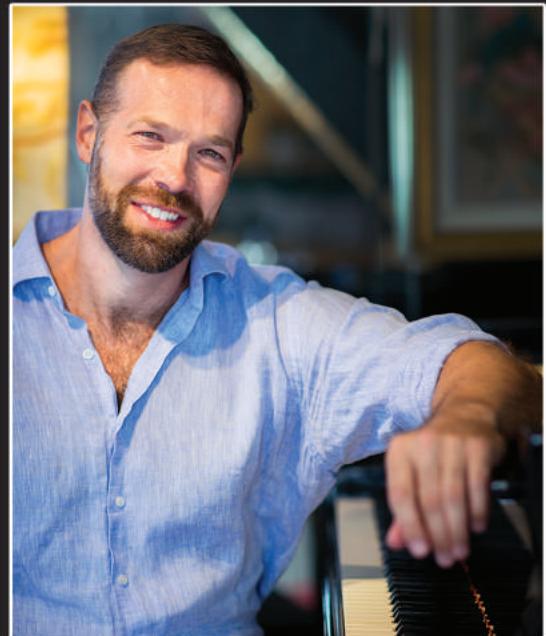
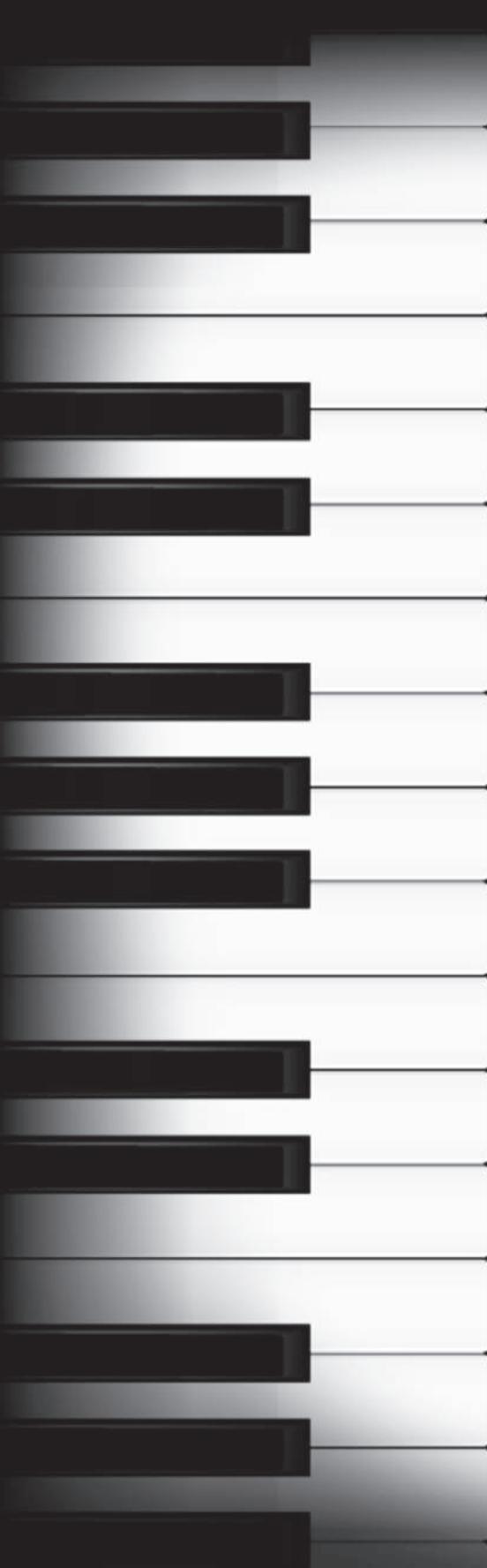
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Vicki Brail (far right) and friends



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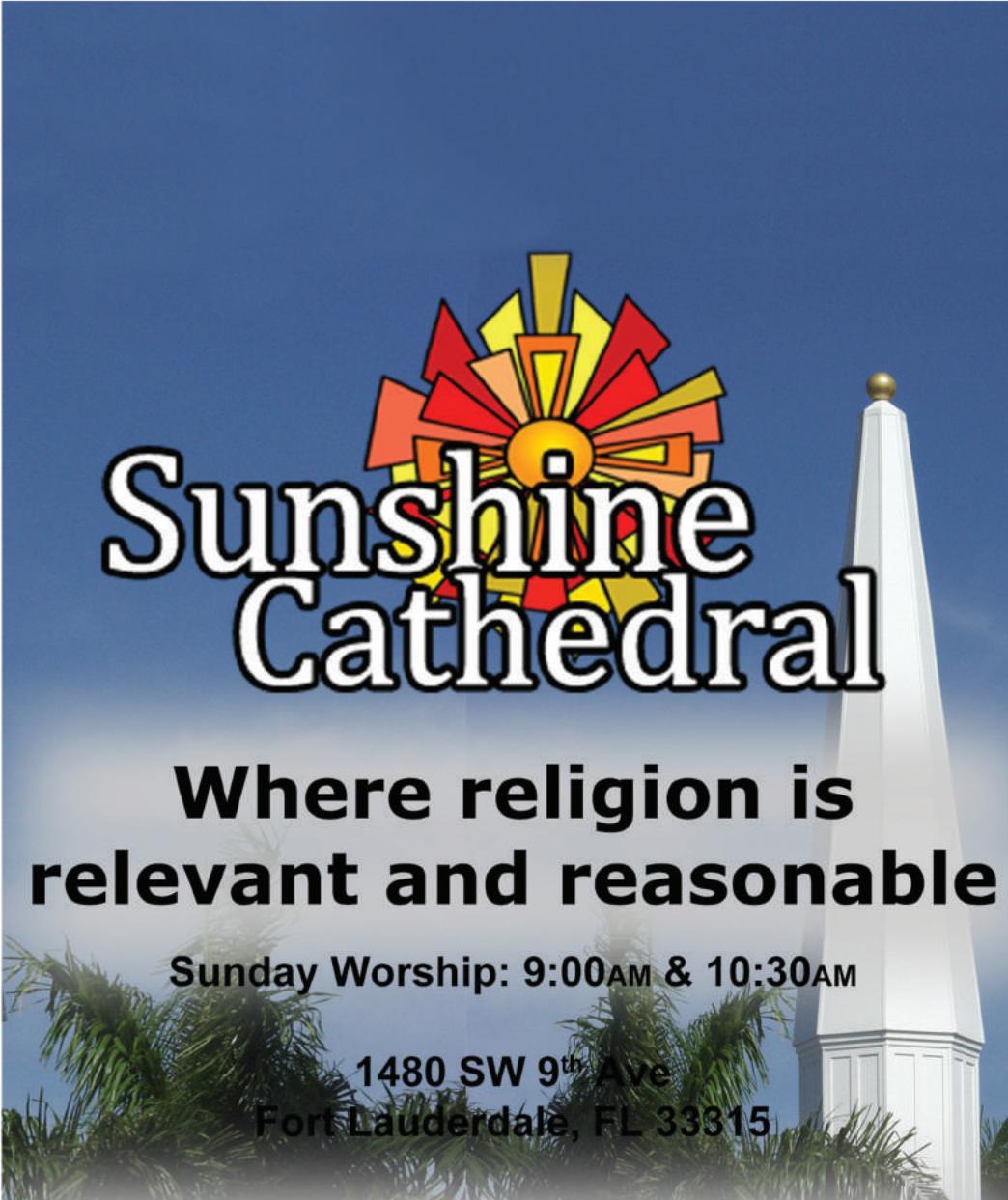
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# GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND: AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDY BELL OF ERASURE

## By Gregg Shapiro

t's been 30 years since the release of Erasure's third album *The Innocents*, the disc that aided the duo of gay vocalist Andy Bell and synthesizer mastermind Vince Clarks (formerly of Depeche Mode and Yazoo) into crossing over into mainstream success with songs such as "A Little Respect" and "Chains of Love." Of course, the gays (and the cool kids) had been dancing to them, and songs such as "Oh, L'Amour," "Who Needs Love Like That," "Victim of Love," and "Sometimes" for a couple of years by then. Since the release of *The Innocents*, Erasure has put out more than a dozen studio discs. Bell has even released a handful of solo albums.

An interesting musical experiment if ever there was one, Erasure's *World Beyond* (Mute) is a "classical reworking" of the 10 tracks from its 2017 *World Be Gone* disc. Given the subject matter of the album, the current chaotic political mood, the chamber music setting, backed by Echo Collective, is quite fitting. Songs such as "Be Careful What You Wish For!" "Oh What A World," "World Be Gone," "Take Me Out of Myself" and "Lousy Sum of Nothing" in particular, actually benefit from these new renditions. It's not all doom and gloom as you can hear on "Love You To The Sky" and "Just A Little." Nevertheless, it's "Still It's Not Over," Erasure's queerest and most overtly political statement, that is sure to have the greatest impact on LGBTQ listeners. I spoke with Andy Bell about the album before Erasure embarked on its U.S. concert tour.

**Gregg Shapiro:** When the 10 songs that appear on both *World Be Gone* and *World Beyond* were originally written, did they begin in electronic or acoustic arrangements?



Photo by Doron Gild

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**Andy Bell:** They were written electronically. Vince had sent me the musical parts and chord arrangements. It was done over a period of six months. I was sitting on the songs for probably three months. I was hemming and hawing. I couldn't come up with any ideas. Once Vince and I got together...we had three writing sessions; one in London, one in Miami and one in New York. Each time we met up, all of a sudden, my confidence came. I was singing into the mic. It was almost like I needed Vince there, as my muse, for the songs [laughs]. He's kind of a confidence booster. When I first heard the music, I thought, "Oh, wow, the music is so good, it doesn't really need any vocals [laughs]." It sounded like a film soundtrack. It took me a while for the songs to settle in. I think I get a bit nervous when I first hear the music. I kind of don't know what to do. You have to leave it for a while. You can listen to it, but the trick is not to listen to it too much. Otherwise you can kind of OD on the music.

**GS** You don't want to overthink it.

**AB** Yes!

**GS** With the exception of switching the placement of the songs "Love You To The Sky" and "Oh What A World," both albums are essentially mirror images in terms of the track listings. Why were those songs switched in the order?

**AB** The running order worked itself out on the electronic version. It was almost like a DJ list. It's not like you're telling a narrative all the way through. Each one finds its own place. When I redid the vocals for the orchestral version, I felt like "Oh What A World" was so strong. I think it had been a bit overlooked on the first version. Rather than overlooking it again, we should put it first so people notice it.

**GS** Can you please say something about what was involved in the decision process to rerecord the songs on



Photo by Andy Sturmyev

World Be Gone with the Echo Collective and transform them into what they are on World Beyond?

**AB** I think it was an idea that was sparked by Daniel (Miller of Mute Records) and Vince having dinner together. I think it was because I had been working on this "Torsten" project, which was two theatrical albums (Torsten the Bareback Saint and Torsten the Beautiful Libertine), and there's a third part to come. It was a thing of letting me explore my vocals more. When you're singing with electronic instruments, they tend to soak up a lot of the nuances in your vocals. I feel like I have to add backing vocals, just to emphasize the choruses and things like that on the electronic versions. On the orchestral versions, I think it's much more about the character of the voice. It was kind of a bit of an experiment to maybe bring the "Torsten" project closer to Erasure.

**GS** You sing about "Sweet Summer Loving" in the song of the same name and "summer romance" in the song "Love You to the Sky." Would it be fair to say that summer is your favorite season?

**AB** Well, it would be fair to say that my new husband (Stephen Moss) is from Florida. I associate him with the sunshine. He's got such a beaming smile. He lights up



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the room when he comes in. It's about that and it's a bit of salvation song. After I lost (longtime partner) Paul (Hickey), Stephen was instrumental in helping me through that. It's still kind of tough. It feels like you've lost your home in some ways. Even though Stephen and I are building a new life together. When you've been with someone so long, it leaves such a gaping hole. You're not trying to fill it with the other person. You have to find a new way.

**GS** To my ears, "Still It's Not Over" is one of the most overtly queer and political songs Erasure has ever recorded. The arrangement on the song really brings out the emotional power of the song.

**AB** It's about my love affair with San Francisco and New York City. Being out from the very beginning of my career, going to San Francisco was very hard. We were embraced by the city, by the LGBT community. At the same time, you felt the ghosts of all the people who had gone before us, especially in the U.S., who had fought to get HIV medicines and such. It's about those polar opposites. I remember coming across an ACT UP demonstration in New York City. It was very exciting, but at the same time quite scary [laughs], because of all the things tied in with it. Especially being HIV+ myself, you kind of felt a bit like a wild animal. It's difficult to

explain it. I think the song was a nod to that and a thank you to all of the people who have helped us. I know it's tough – the amount of times we've been bashed literally to the ground, physically and emotionally. The amount of times we had to get up again, pick up our stuff and start from scratch.

**GS** And still we rise.

**AB** Yes! It's never over. You think there's going to be one day when you can take a sigh of relief, but it's never going to be over, ever.

**GS** The World Beyond album is not the first time that Erasure has gone all-acoustic. That honor goes to 2006's Union Street. What do you enjoy most about the experience of rerecording Erasure songs in these kinds of musical settings?

**AB** I really love it. Union Street was one of those albums that was quite misunderstood, especially here in the UK with all of the music journalists. I have a sincere affection for country music. I was brought up on it where I grew up. When you're singing to strings, whether it's violins or guitars, your voice almost floats on it. That's why I love harps [laughs], they're very angelic. It's like another voice singing a duet with you. I really do love singing with live instruments.

**GS** The new Erasure U.S. tour begins in Miami. Is this a nod to your fans in one of your home bases?

**AB** It is now. We never used to play in Florida. We didn't have the fan-base down there. I think it's a natural progression because we've played there now a number of times. The gay community is so strong and it's building back up again, especially in Miami Beach. You feel like you're a homecoming queen [laughs] in those kinds of places. It's true! You're almost adopted by the place. It's a thrill for me to go and play there. You're in your home territory.



Photo by Andy Sturmy

## PALAT RESTAURANT SHINES AS DESIGN DISTRICT DARLING

By Steve Pike

**L**et Ilya Karaliou describe Palat restaurant in Miami's Design District.

"We're not re-inventing the wheel, we're just good at making it spin," Karaliou said.

Indeed, since it debuted this past spring, Palat, located just 10 minutes from Downtown Miami, has spun its way to become one of Miami's best – and best reviewed eateries.

Palat is the latest restaurant concept from Aldo Lamberti, one of Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia's more prolific restaurateurs. The first of the Aldo Lamberti Family of Restaurants to open outside of southeastern Pennsylvania and the New Jersey area, Palat is already a staple of the emerging New Buena Vista/Design Districts neighborhoods.

"We're not just a neighborhood place, but a place in the neighborhood," Karaliou said.

"People are coming from Brickell and Aventura."

Palat Miami's diverse menu was created by executive chef Pippo Lamberti and features contemporary Italian-inspired accented small plates, charcuterie, pastas, and tapas.

Using local ingredients, Pippo blends Miami flavors with traditional staples to create modern twists on the dishes he first experienced in his hometown in Italy. He uses techniques he learned during his 10-year tenure as executive chef at Positano Coast by Aldo Lamberti in Philadelphia and Cuisson at Café Boulud in Palm Beach.



It's Charcuterie Plate, in fact, might be the best in Miami; and its Beet Ravioli is a "must have" on the dinner menu that includes an outstanding Hanger Steak and Braised Rabbit tagliatelle. Looking for something a bit different? Go with the Sea Urchin with Squid Ink Pasta and Crab Meat.

"Our idea is to get people to try as many plates as they can in one visit," Karaliou said with a smile. "But that's impossible. It does, however, make the palate work and makes you happy. People experience that and want to come back and try more."

Palat's lunch menu includes a terrific House Ham Sandwich with ham smoked from its on-site smoker.

"Lunch isn't that big now, but we're growing," Karaliou said. "We're seeing a very positive dynamic. Everyone is working really hard to build relationships with our guests. And a lot of our guests have become regular customers." Check them out, you too, will become a regular.



**ON THE VERGE OF AN UNPRECEDENTED DEBUT AS THE FIRST TRANS WOMAN TO ORIGINATE A LEAD ROLE ON BROADWAY IN THE UPCOMING MUSICAL, HEAD OVER HEELS, PEPPERMINT TOOK TIME TO SIT DOWN WITH HER FRIEND AND COLLABORATOR, CAZWELL, TO DISCUSS THEIR NEW SINGLE THAT JUST DROPPED.**

**By Mike Jeknavorian**

**MIKE JEKNAVORIAN:** How long have you known each other?

**PEPPERMINT:** We've known each other for over ten years now.

**CAZWELL:** Yeah, for over ten years.

**MJ:** Is the new single "Harlem Cleopatra" your first collaboration on a song?

**PM:** No. Our first collaboration was on my single, "Servin' It Up."

**CZ:** I also wrote a song for Peppermint about trans violence that we dropped on SoundCloud a couple years ago, so we're not foreign to working with each other (laughs).

**MJ:** Do you guys have plans to collaborate again?

**PM:** We're practically married. So, yes.

**CZ:** If you stop being so busy (laughs)! We're actually collaborating on a podcast right now, which should start in a couple of weeks. We're really excited about it.

**MJ:** Do you both live in Harlem?

**PM:** I do live in Harlem world!

**CZ:** I don't live in Harlem. I moved to Los Angeles two years ago. It's boring as hell, but I'm ok with boring right now.

**MJ:** What do you like about Harlem or think is special about it?

**PM:** I love the culture and the architecture. I



also love the people, the food, and the history.

**CZ:** What sticks out to me the most about Harlem is the food and the fashion.

**MJ:** Who produced "Harlem Cleopatra"?

**CZ:** I produced it with Craig C out of Denver.

**MJ:** And you wrote the lyrics?

**CZ:** That would be me.

**MJ:** What does the expression "Harlem Cleopatra" mean?

**CZ:** For Peppermint to call herself "Harlem Cleopatra" is her way of saying she rules her block in Harlem.

**MJ:** Who's singing the "Harlem Cleopatra" chorus in the song?

**CZ:** That's actually me saying "Harlem Cleopatra" on the song. We just used the vocoder to lower my pitch. use music.

**MJ:** What are the rings about that are referenced in the song? Bling?

**CZ:** The rings are in reference to - Cleopatra has her rings on, so she's ready to fight if she has to.

**MJ:** Who did the costume design for the video?

**CZ:** The designer was Dope Tavio. I've never worked with him before, but I'm a fan of his Instagram, so we were so lucky to have him collaborate with us.

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**MJ:** At what party was the video shot?

**CZ:** The name of the party is, "Do the Right Thing," and it's still happening at The Ritz in Hell's Kitchen. Peppermint and I were performing that night already, so we decided to film it. The rest of the video was shot in Harlem.

**MJ:** Cazwell, you're quite prolific. How many songs have you recorded?

**CZ:** Gurl, really (laughs)? I don't know. 100?

**MJ:** Of all your songs, what's your favorite one?

**CZ:** Right now my favorite song is a new song that will be dropped next month called, "Cakes." I'm typically most in love with the most recent song. I really love "Harlem Cleopatra," too. My favorite video is probably Get My Money Back.

**MJ:** Peppermint, you're about to debut in Head Over Heels. Did you have to audition for the show?

**PM:** Yes. I got the part!

**MJ:** The musical is based on the Renaissance play, The Arcadia. What part do you play?

**PM:** The story is about an ancient Greek royal family that's cursed by an oracle. I play Pythio, the Oracle of Delphi.

**MJ:** The musical is set to music by The Go-Go's. What's your favorite Go-Go's song?

**PM:** "Head over Heels" is actually my favorite song, which I loved even before the show.

**MJ:** Head Over Heels opens right around the time of NYC Pride and the Tony Awards. Will you be involved with either?

**PM:** I'm hoping to do something for pride, but I'm focused on the show right now.

**MJ:** Who's your favorite Broadway diva or star?

**PM:** Probably Audra McDonald.

**MJ:** You guys were at Miami Beach Gay Pride on separate years, and I actually saw both of your shows. What are your memories about it?

**CZ:** Aww, nice! My memory of that show is that it was outside and it started to rain, but people wanted to hear "Ice Cream Truck" so

bad that they stayed in the rain (laughs).

**PM:** I remember it was such a huge crowd. It was one of the first places that I performed after the show [RuPaul's Drag Race]. I was so excited!

**MJ:** What's the weirdest question that a fan has asked you?

**PM:** "What is your name?"

**CZ:** Oh, I don't know. Probably that time somebody asked me how many songs have I recorded (laughs).

**MJ:** What celebrity did you act like a "fan" around?

**PM:** Janet Jackson!

**CZ:** I've never met Madonna, but if I did I would probably be frozen with fear. No matter how much she changes her face, she still looks stone-cold to me, but I love her.

**MJ:** What's your dream gig?

**PM:** Performing with Janet Jackson.

**CZ:** Having my star family pick me up in their flying saucer and take me off this planet. That, and owning a house with a pool and a recording studio. But I feel like I'm living my dream, so I don't think about it too much.

**MJ:** Peppermint, we'll see you on Broadway. Cazwell, when can we see you again in South Florida?

**CZ:** I'm actually trying to shoot a video for one of my songs in the Miami area this summer. I hope I get some gigs there this summer so I can shoot while I'm down there.



Photo by KarlGiant.com

# YOUR PROPERTY AND YOU

## Our Partnership with the Dan Marino Foundation

The Broward County Property Appraiser's Office is excited to partner with the Dan Marino Foundation to host a meaningful internship program for adult students with developmental disabilities. This intern initiative was designed to provide eight students with on-site practical experience and training in areas related to their specific field of study.



Utilizing the valuable skills learned during the internship, the interns working in our Customer Service Department are now able to assist homeowners with processing exemptions and researching exemption eligibility. Under the guidance of one of our Customer Service Representatives, one of our interns helped property owners file for Homestead Exemption and explained the benefits of this important tax-saving exemption. The interns in our IT Department work with our staff setting up computers, replacing toner cartridges throughout the office, backing up data files and answering help desk requests from our appraisers. Our Residential Department is fortunate to have two interns who have been researching property information to assist our Value Adjustment Board team. With supervision, these interns have been pulling comparable sale information and researching characteristics of various comparable properties. After compiling this data, they organize the information into packets for our team members to review and approve, and then use as they prepare for Value Adjustment Board hearings.

BCPA is fortunate to have each of these interns and their job coach working side-by-side our staff through a hands-on approach to gain valuable job skills. Our sincere appreciation to the Dan Marino Foundation for partnering with BCPA on this important endeavor. My staff and I look forward to continuing this partnership.

The Broward County Property Appraiser's Mobile Exemption & Information Team is at The Pride Center at Equality Park (2040 N Dixie Highway, Wilton Manors, FL 33305) on the 2nd Tuesday of each month between 10:00am-12:00pm to assist residents with exemptions and other property related matters.

If my office can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 954.357.6904 or by email at [MartyKiar@bcpa.net](mailto:MartyKiar@bcpa.net).

Take care,

*Marty Kiar*

Marty Kiar

Marty Kiar is the Broward County Property Appraiser and longtime advocate for LGBTQ equality.

The Broward County Property Appraiser's Office is located at  
115 S Andrews Avenue, Room # 111, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

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# DAVID DOUGLAS SPA

## AS OWNER OF DAVID DOUGLAS SPA, BRIAN TELLS WHAT SETS HIS SPA APART FROM THE REST

By Mike Jeknavorian

**D**avid Douglas Spa is a boutique day spa in Wilton Manors, FL specializing in anti-aging and wellness treatments. The spa includes a hand-picked team of massage therapists with a combination of rehabilitative and sports-medicine backgrounds.

The spa is owned and operated by Brian David Douglas. Douglas is an international educator for Repechage Skin Care. In 2017, he was recognized as the "Rising Star" in skincare. Douglas is also a massage instructor at American Institute, medical massage therapist, and a licensed aesthetician.

His spa offers affordable membership programs. These discounted programs mean that spa services can be more than a luxury or a once-in-a-while reward.

The spa's signature service is its Sea Spa Escape. This treatment begins with a full-body, dry brush exfoliation. The therapist then provides an extended 90-minute massage. A seaweed facial mask is applied and followed by a sea spa foot and leg scrub. It's the ultimate in pampering and a whole body, sensory experience!

I sat down with Douglas to get to know him and his spa.

**MIKE JEKNAVORIAN:** Where did you grow up?

**BRIAN DAVID DOUGLAS:** I grew up in the small town of Kannapolis, NC, about 25 miles from Charlotte. My father worked in a textile mill for over 30 years and my mother worked for Allstate Insurance. They still reside in the small mill house I grew up in.

**MJ** Why did you move to South Florida?

**BDD** I worked as a clinical massage therapist at Carolinas Medical Center Hospital. Our area was devastated when the mill closed and 4,000 people lost their jobs, including my father. The hospital was nervous about the financial impact that it would have and many of us were laid off. I was traveling to Florida a lot for continuing education and had numerous friends that had relocated to Wilton Manors. So in 2014, I decided to make the move to South Florida and to start fresh.





**MJ** Why did you choose Wilton Manors?

**BDD** It's a great place for my industry with all the tourism. I also really love "Wilton" because it has a small-town vibe, even though it has the culture and diversity of a metropolitan area.

**MJ** What's the "Rising Star" award that you won?

**BDD** I won that at the 19th Annual International Congress. I was recognized as the rising star in skin care for my work with Repechage, a seaweed-based product line which is perfect for men's skin. With over 40 countries represented, I was the only one to win from the United States.

**MJ** With so much competition in the spa industry in the area, how do you differentiate yourself?

**BDD** Creating an exciting menu of services, having a clean and attractive space, and providing exceptional service is of utmost importance. Unlike many of my competitors, we don't simply pick our products out of a magazine. I have a personal connection with the product line we use and carry. I have physically been in their lab

and manufacturing facility, have their CEO's contact information in my phone, and teach for each line. I think that this really gives us an edge over our competition. If I recommend a product to you, I know that it's appropriate, and I can truly stand by it. I am also blessed with an exceptional team. They are all seasoned in their field and have the certifications and education to back up their great work.

**MJ** What does the future hold for David Douglas Spa?

**BDD** In February, David Douglas Spa was honored to win a Global Wellness Award from American Spa and Luxury Travel Adviser magazine. We were named the "Top Spa for Men" for our services and accomplishments in men's beauty and wellness treatments. Last year, we rolled out a membership program which rewards our members with average discounts that range between \$21-\$24 for our various treatments and services. This year, we've added some advanced treatments such as micro-needling and advanced chemical peels. We continue to add new services to our menu and to truly listen to our clientele's suggestions. My intention is for David Douglas Spa to be a staple and anchor business in Wilton Manors and for us to become the go-to brand for LGBT tourists that visit the area.



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# JESUS TAKES A KNEE

By Rev. Patrick Rogers, MDiv.



This month we celebrate the 4th of July!

Every 4th commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The Continental Congress declared that the thirteen American colonies regarded themselves as a new nation, the United States of America, and were no longer part of the British Empire. We refer to no other holiday as the numeric day of the month, but often you will hear someone say "What are you doing on the 4th?" and the person being asked knows to what occasion the question refers!

The 4th also reminds me of taking a stand. It reminds me of determination and demonstration. The 4th reminds me that sometimes it has to get ugly to get to the good! And sometimes, it just isn't easy or pretty! But one has to do what one feels is right and go to where our divine source leads. Jesus had to ruffle more than a few feathers on his human

journey to demonstrate dependence on God and to gain independence of mankind. Jesus took a knee often!

One of my favorite Jesus' demonstrations is when he discovered Wall Street happening at the temple. He was upset (to say the least) and started tossing tables and made quite a scene. He made a firm statement about how he feels when the sacred and holy is desecrated!

Wonder how he feels about immigrant children in the United States being separated from their families and familial relationships being desecrated today? I watched a Senator's reaction to a reporter who asked about this desecration. The Senator's response was, "It's the law." Jesus healed people on the Sabbath and that was against the law and he clearly shared with us that love is above the law.

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Jesus' defiant acts were throughout his ministry on earth. He not only cured people on the Sabbath, but also fed thousands of people and found everyone worthy, whether society did or not. He ministered to others from other faiths and cultures which was also taboo. And I know today, that Jesus would definitely bake a gay wedding cake once he got over the fact that a wedding cake has a sexual orientation. Jesus was not dependent on the laws of mankind, he was dependent on God's love for all people!

When you become my age and older you know that someday you may need to explore independent living. Why do they call it independent living yet the reason you are going is because you can't live alone any longer. Shouldn't it be called dependent living because you are living depending on those

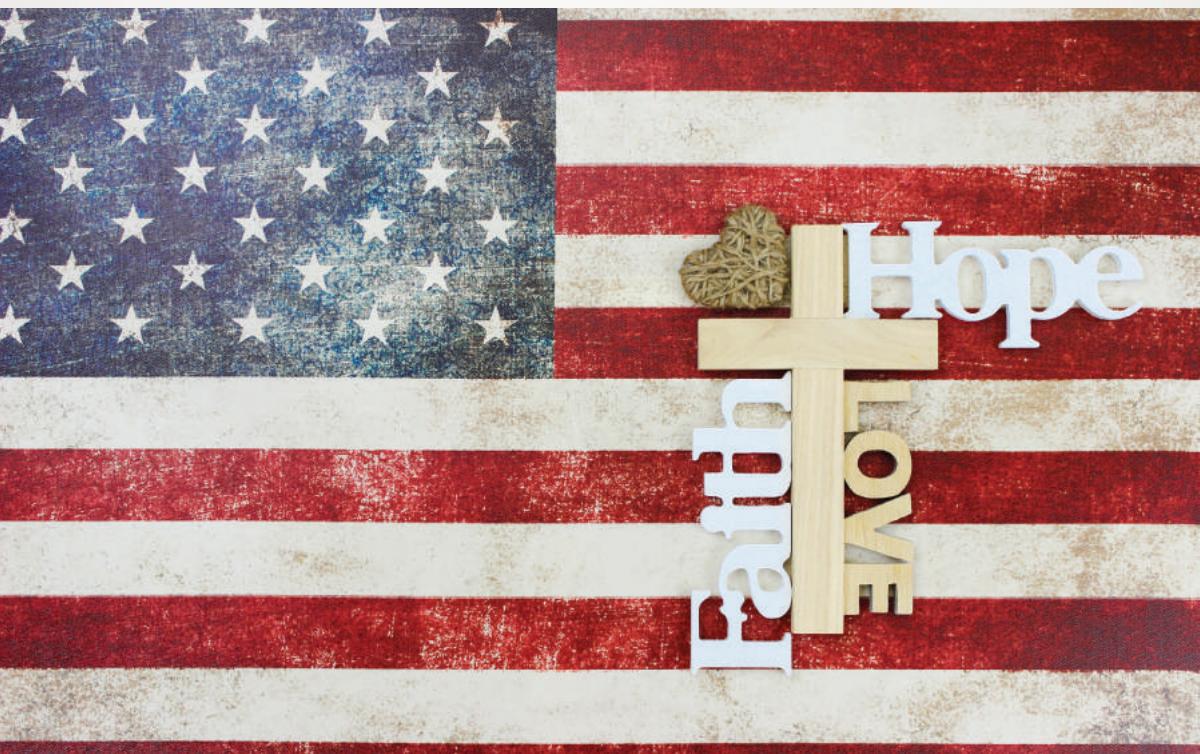
around you to help take care of you?

I still live on my own and in a condo but I consider this dependent living because I depend on God no matter where my physical body resides. I depend on God no matter where my spiritual self resides also. Luckily, I find that God is with us no matter where we live and no matter where we are on life's journey!

So let's be like Jesus and the example he set for us. If we need to toss the tables at City Hall, in our churches, or at the independent living facility, let us say yes and be dependent on God! Happy 4th and Happy In-Dependence Day!

Now that Pride month is over, let's continue our work according to the gospel of Diana Ross, "Let's Make This World a Better Place!"

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



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# THAT'S RIPE!

FRUIT-INSPIRED FASHION FOR A JUICIER SUMMER

By Mikey Rox

This summer's sticky-sweet summerwear obsession is a tropical treasure trove of fruity prints, patterns, and palates that'll make you look good enough to eat. That's what you're going for, isn't it?



## Novel Navels

Sink your toes into the eye-catching Sonnige Orange slip-ons, designed by lawyer-turned-artist Anny Cecilia Walt for BucketFeet, powered by enough Vitamin C to chase down the Vitamin D. \$65, [bucketfeet.com](http://bucketfeet.com)



## Pucker Up

Show off your arm UZIs – you didn't load those guns for nothin' – in Bonobos' short-sleeve Riviera shirt in this all-over lemon-wedge print that's as fun as it is fresh. Build a fabric fruit salad with additional styles in watermelon, banana, pineapple, and avocado. \$88, [bonobos.com](http://bonobos.com)



## Zest Man

LINK UP's cocktail-inspired lime-slice cufflinks, painted with rich pigmented enamel in a lip-puckering green, punch up your summer wedding attire and add a spritz of flair to sophisticated casual white-party looks. \$95, [linkupshop.com](http://linkupshop.com)



## Low-Hanging Fruit

There's an urban legend that says an upside-down pineapple in your grocery cart signifies you're a swinger on the prowl, but you can skip a trip to the supermarket (if that's your thing) in Mr Turk's piñá-colada-in-your-pants Clyde Slim Trouser. \$268, [mrturk.com](http://mrturk.com)

## Daily Rind

There's no bitterness to Frank and Oak's poplin grapefruit-printed shirt in dress blue that pairs just as perfectly with chinos as it does California-wash denim to create an out-to-dinner getup with zing. \$60, [frankandoak.com](http://frankandoak.com)



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### Chica Chica Boom Chic

You're just asking for a kween to wig when you put on Swatch's aptly named So Frutti wristwatch, reminiscent of Miss Chiquita (and Carmen Miranda before her), part of the watchmaker's Beach Swing collection designed for fashion and function with its illustrated face, silicone strap, and three-bar water resistance. \$75, [shop.swatch.com](http://shop.swatch.com)



### Seedless Slip-Ons

Fans of ABC's Shark Tank may recognize chunky, customizable ISlide sandals – the shoes' founders walked away from a deal on the Season 8 premiere – but even brand initiates will be intrigued by the watermelon Wave Gels that give the sensation of walking on water. (P.S. Ellen's a fan, too!) \$50, [islideusa.com](http://islideusa.com)

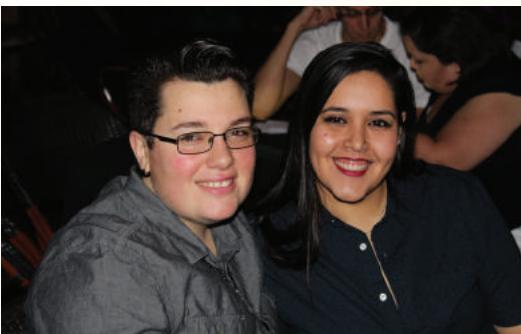


### Planting Seed

Smash or be smashed? That's the question when you show off the goods in MeUndies' thrice-softer-than-cotton avocado-printed briefs, boxers, and trunks that are practically begging for a freshness inspection. \$24, [meundies.com](http://meundies.com)

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He spends his time writing from the beach with his dog Jaxon. Connect with Mikey on Twitter [@mikeyrox](https://twitter.com/mikeyrox).

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