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The LGBT community called out a gay club owner after he shared photos of himself at a 2020 Trump rally in El Paso, Texas.

Johnny Alcantar is part-owner of The Old Plantation (formerly The OP) nightclub in El Paso, Texas. Alcantar, who identifies as straight, claims he was ignorant of the fact that the majority of the LGBT community views President Donald Trump as anti-LGBT.

Speaking to local NBC news station KTSM, Alcantar said he wasn’t aware of the Trump administration’s attacks on the community.

“It was never my intention to hurt anyone,” Alcantar said. “I don’t agree with everything that Donald Trump says. But I have to support our President because he’s our current president; I don’t have any other choice.”

The nightclub responded with a notice.

“To all of our fellow patrons, and LGBT community called out a gay club owner after he shared photos of himself at a 2020 Trump rally in El Paso, Texas — is seen with friends holding a flag promoting President Trump’s re-election in 2020. Photo Courtesy of Puya Kohlo, Facebook.

Johnny Alcantar, one of the owners of the Old Plantation — a gay nightclub in El Paso, Texas — is seen with friends holding a flag promoting President Trump’s re-election in 2020. Photo courtesy of Puya Kohlo, Facebook.

Johnny Alcantar, one of the owners of The Old Plantation — a gay nightclub in El Paso, Texas — is seen with friends holding a flag promoting President Trump’s re-election in 2020. Photo courtesy of Puya Kohlo, Facebook.
Three South Florida cities have now passed resolutions urging the Florida Legislature to support a bill that will protect LGBT people from workplace discrimination. But Florida’s gayest city, Wilton Manors, wasn’t able to muster enough support for a similar resolution at its last commission meeting.

Lake Worth, North Bay Village and Miami Beach all unanimously passed their resolutions. But Wilton Manors had to table its resolution since one commissioner recused himself from the vote, another was absent, and a third opposed it – leaving only two yes votes.

Wilton Manors City Commissioner Julie Carson refused to support the resolution because the Florida Inclusive Workforce Act doesn’t address discrimination in hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations.

Oakland Park resident Jen Laws, a public policy consultant and trans man attended the meeting to lend his support to the resolution.

“I’m glad it will be a continuing conversation. I really wish it had passed,” he said. “At the end of the day, workplace protections provide an avenue in which we can achieve other metrics of equality.”

Here’s what commissioners from the other cities had to say:

Andy Amoroso, the gay Vice Mayor of Lake Worth: “We embrace all people We need to support every bill going forward that can protect our rights.”

Julianna Strout, commissioner from North Bay Village: “Being a champion for workplace protections is extremely important to me. We need to create a ripple effect to ensure change in Tallahassee no matter how large or small your city is - you have power in creating change.”

John Elizabeth Alemán, commissioner from Miami Beach: “The most fulfilling thing for a person is to achieve independence and to be able to provide for themselves and their family. Every person deserves the opportunity to contribute at their fullest potential.”

SAVE Florida, a coalition of local groups including SAVE and the Palm Beach Human Rights Council, is the main group advocating for FIWA.

The Chair of the Republican Party of Florida, State Senator Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota), though is the person who filed FIWA, giving LGBT activists hope it would have a chance at passing in the Republican dominated Florida legislature.

So far five democratic state senators have co-sponsored the bill including Lori Berman, Boynton Beach; Jason Pizzo, North Miami Beach; Annette Taddeo, Miami; Kevin Rader, Boca Raton; and Bobby Powell, West Palm Beach.

Some LGBT activists have come out in opposition to the bill because it only covers discrimination in the workplace, leaving the fight over housing and public accommodations for another day.

“We are trying to protect as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time,” said Tony Lima, executive director of SAVE.

There also appears to be confusion over whether FIWA protects the transgender community.

But FIWA is clear in that it adds both sexual orientation and gender identity to Florida’s Civil Rights Act. Additionally, a coalition of local trans groups came together releasing a statement of support.

See the WMG in the center for more information on the Wilton Manors vote. Visit SFGN.com/FIWA for in-depth coverage of FIWA.
The European Parliament made history by passing the first resolution to protect intersex rights. On Feb. 14, the parliament introduced the resolution over the “urgent need” to address the violations against intersex people, according to Gay Star News. It calls for the member states to pass laws to protect them. Claude Moraes, a member of the LGBTI Intergroup at the European Parliament, introduced the bill.

“The European Parliament wants to ensure the European Union as a whole takes its responsibility in protecting the human rights of intersex people. Intersex people suffer from multiple human rights violations that have been recognised by multiple international organisations,” Moraes said. The resolution condemns unnecessary genital surgeries on intersex children, and addresses the need for better intersex individual and family counselling.

Ben Paistow, 40, won an unfair dismissal lawsuit against a U.K. prison. He was fired after two years of abuse over his bisexuality. Paistow’s coworkers and supervisor called him “gay,” “poof” and “vermin,” colored his work bag and uniform pink, threw water at him, and slapped him, according to Queerty. He was fired after being accused of using unnecessary force to break up a prisoner fight, but they later determined no force was used. “I felt as if all my dignity had been taken away,” Paistow told the court.

The judge who heard his case ruled in his favor. "From the earliest days at HMP Woodhill he was subjected to verbal and later physical abuse based upon his sexual orientation. He was unfairly dismissed and his dismissal was an act of victimization."
Jessie Vroegh, a transgender nurse working in an Iowa prison, asked to use the men's bathroom and locker rooms at work as he was transitioning to male. His department said no, because transgender issues were “too controversial,” and they were concerned for the “rights of the male officers,” according to the New York Times.

After Vroegh sued the prison for discrimination and won $120,000. “I was astonished,” Vroegh, 37, told the New York Times. “It was about being in a country where you have rights and you are free and everybody should be treated equally. It is worth it for anybody who comes up after me, who doesn’t have the voice to stand up to a big state entity.”

This is the first successful Iowa transgender rights case since 2007. Vroegh now works as a nursing director at a rehabilitation center, the New York Times reported.
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ASSIA

**LAWSUITS FILED AGAINST JAPAN TO RECOGNIZE GAY MARRIAGE**

Thirteen Japanese gay couples filed lawsuits against the government, seeking recognition of their marriages. They said their constitutional right to equality has been violated, according to the New York Times.

Many Asian countries are legalizing gay marriage, but Japan has yet to follow suit. Kenji Aiba and his partner Ken Kozumi have held on to a wedding certificate they signed together, hoping Japan would recognize it, but they are still legally “just friends” though they’ve lived together for five years.

“Right now we are both in good health and able to work, but what if one of us has an accident or becomes ill? We are not allowed to be each other’s guarantors for medical treatment, or to be each other’s heir,” Kozumi, 45 told the New York Times. “Progress in Japan has been too slow.”

Some cities have enacted partnership ordinances, so gay couples can rent apartments, but marriage is still reserved for a man and woman. **SGFN**

**AFRICA**

**ALGERIAN STUDENT MURDERED, ‘HE IS GAY’ WRITTEN IN HIS BLOOD**

Assil Belalta, a 22-year-old Algerian student was found dead in a student apartment with his throat slit, and the words “he is gay” scrawled across the wall in his blood.

In Algeria, homosexuality is illegal, but Belalta’s sexuality is still unknown, according to the Alawaba Loop. Pink News reported his Facebook indicates he was interested in men and women. Belalta was a third-year medical student, and hundreds of his classmates marched in solidarity.

“This institutional and state homophobia is becoming commonplace. And incitement to hatred against sexual minorities in Algeria becomes a common currency to make buzz and pour into populism. Politicians and some homophobic media are the ones really guilty of this homophobic crime that shook the university city yesterday,” LGBT rights group Alouen wrote in a Facebook post.

Algerian police have launched an investigation of his murder. **SGFN**

**EUROPE**

**FRENCH JOURNALIST: MOST OF VATICAN PRIESTS ARE GAY**

In a book exposing the “corruption and hypocrisy” in the Vatican, French journalist Frédéric Martel says most senior clerics are gay.

Martel researched the book, called “Inside the Closet” for four years. It alleges the priests that speak out against homosexuality are gay, according to the Guardian. The book’s publisher, Bloomsbury, says it “reveals secrets” about celibacy, misogyny and plots against Pope Francis. It reveals “a clerical culture of secrecy which starts in junior seminaries and continues right up to the Vatican itself.”

Pope Francis has in the past said being gay is a trend, and also an issue in priesthood.

“The issue of homosexuality is a very serious issue that must be adequately discerned from the beginning with the candidates [for the priesthood]. In our societies it even seems that homosexuality is fashionable and that mentality, in some way, also influences the life of the church,” he said, according to the Guardian.

The book will be published Wednesday, the same day as a sexual abuse summit at the Vatican. **SGFN**

**SOUTH AMERICA**

**BRAZIL TO ELIMINATE GAY REFERENCES FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Brazil’s proudly homophobic President Jair Bolsonaro will be removing all references to homosexuality, gay marriage and violence against women from schools and textbooks.

When Bolsonaro took office, he intended to eliminate “gender ideology and sexism” from schools, thought the Ministry of Education. He also eliminated their diversity department, according to Life Site.

“One of the goals to get Brazil out of the worst positions in international education rankings is to combat the Marxist rubbish that has spread in educational institutions,” Bolsonaro wrote in a tweet before his inauguration.

Brazil’s teacher unions are pushing back against the move, opposing the erasure of LGBT and women’s struggles.

“We are still waiting to see how, in practice, all this is going to turn out,” Nilton Brandao, president of one of Brazil’s largest teachers’ unions told the AP. “Right now, it does not make any sense.” **SGFN**
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**TEXAS**

**COUPLE IN TEXAS BEATEN OUTSIDE OF GAY BAR**

Four men were arrested and charged with beating a gay couple in Austin, Texas. Tristan Perry and Spencer Deehring were leaving a gay bar, hand in hand, when the men started yelling homophobic slurs at them.

The men then ganged up on the couple, beating them to the ground. Both Perry and Deehring ended up in the hospital, according to NBC KXAN. They told police the men started to “hurl the word faggot,” while they were beating the pair up.

“According to Tristan, he sustained a fractured nose, bruised orbital eye socket, concussion, chipped front teeth, lacerations, stitches and bruised ribs. According to Spencer, he sustained a concussion, injuries to his neck and bruising,” police wrote in the court affidavit.

The men are being held on a collective $300,000 bond, and the district attorney will pursue a hate crime finding.

**WEST VIRGINIA**

**WEST VIRGINIA DELEGATE CALLED ON TO RESIGN OVER ANTI-GAY COMMENTS**

Delegate Eric Porterfield called LGBT organizations “socialists,” “brutal monsters,” and the “Klu Klux Klan in the modern era without hoods.” He also insinuated that he would drown his kids if they were gay.

Chairwoman Belinda Biafore called on Porterfield to resign over his views, and the state’s Republican party condemned him in a statement.

“As religious leaders we feel compelled to point out that many of Mr. Porterfield’s recent statements do not reflect the values or sentiments of the entire faith community; rather, he has spoken only for himself,” the statement said.

“While we may not all agree on issues pertaining to our gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or queer brothers and sisters we should all agree on the inherent worth of all human beings.”

Porterfield made those remarks in support of a ruling that would allow businesses to deny service to LGBT people based on their sexuality.

**MINNESOTA**

**ADVOCATES PRESS MINNESOTA TO BAN CONVERSION THERAPY**

Advocates and opponents of the ban on conversion therapy debated at the Minnesota Capital on Feb. 13.

The advocates were pressing lawmakers to ban conversion therapy on those under 18 years old, and make it a law to mention that it is discredited to every patient, according to Inforum.

The opponents of the ban argued the First Amendment, and have testimonials saying “heterosexual-based counseling” helped them choose to live without acting on “same-sex attractions.”

“It was like hypnosis,” said Will Bernstrom-Sampson, who underwent conversion therapy when he was outed as gay and expelled from a private Christian school. “I was told constantly that I was a danger to other people.”

The bill would ensure that medical aid wouldn’t cover the therapy, and that no medical or mental health claim is being made. This means churches can still tell children being gay is wrong.

**KANSAS**

**KANSAS BILLS CALL GAY MARRIAGE ‘PARODY MARRIAGE’**

On Feb. 13, one day before Valentine’s Day, Kansas legislators introduced two bills that would invalidate gay marriage, and call it a “parody marriage.”

The bills argue that LGBT people are part of a religious movement, according to USA Today. It wants to classify marriage between a male and a female as “neutral” and same-sex marriage as “religious in nature.”

“We have never seen this level of extremist vitriol laid out in legislative language. These marriage bills combined are 18 pages of insults and name calling...The sponsors of these bills should be ashamed of themselves,” LGBTQ advocacy group Equality Kansas wrote in a Facebook post.

Other proposals of the bills would invalidate transgender people and bar public libraries from holding events like “drag queen storytime.”

Delegate Eric Porterfield called LGBT organizations “socialists,” “brutal monsters,” and the “Klu Klux Klan in the modern era without hoods.” He also insinuated that he would drown his kids if they were gay.

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Porterfield made those remarks in support of a ruling that would allow businesses to deny service to LGBT people based on their sexuality.
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Dolphin Democrats, the LGBT Democratic group of Broward County, held its annual membership meeting and elections Wednesday. They also revealed their upcoming endorsements, and featured several guest speakers.

For outgoing president Scott Herman the current state of the Dolphin Democrats is quite an achievement considering just a year and half ago a motion to dissolve the organization was openly discussed. Since taking over in June 2017 membership has doubled to over 300.

“The success of The LGBTA Dolphin Democratic Caucus was because of our communication and teamwork. And I would say everyone’s desire to grow the caucus into helping represent our community and holding our elected and appointed officials responsible,” outgoing President Scott Herman told SFGN. “I had promised that once the goals were met I would be stepping out. I had great directors. I gave them a lot of authority to carry out the tasks at hand.”

Founded in 1982, The Dolphin Democrats is the oldest LGBT political organization in Florida.

President Herman led a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the mass-shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that happened on Feb. 14, 2018.

At the meeting Jason Gad, representing BAWN (Ban Assault Weapons Now), collected signatures to place on the ballot for a constitutional amendment to ban assault weapons in Florida.

Suspended Sheriff Israel addressed the Dolphin Democrats as a guest speaker, memorializing the mass-shooting and defending his record as sheriff. (see page 34).

“What we’ve achieved in the last year and a half has been amazing. It could not have been done without the teamwork from the then current board,” Herman said. “I’m looking forward to seeing how the new board continues to grow the caucus.”

Below are the election results:

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

President: Alfredo Olvera
Vice President: Nik Harris
Secretary: Aaron Darr
Treasurer: Adam Sabi

**DIRECTORS**

Emma Collum
Justin Profitt
Lindsay Pollard
Paul Sparandera
Hillary Dougherty
Stephen Fuller

**THEIR ENDORSEMENTS INCLUDE:**

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Wayne Messam, Candidate for Mayor of Miramar
Nancy Metayer, Candidate for Mayor of Coral Springs. SFGN
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SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS ABOUT GAY
BASHING IN ORLANDO NOT ACCURATE

Social media lit up Thursday with posts
describing the potential gay bashing of
an Orlando area man. Turns out they
were false — at least according to a police
report from the Orange County Sheriff’s
Department.
“Everyone please pray for my friend. He
was beaten and left for dead in Orlando 2
nights ago. He is on life support and the
outcome is not looking very good,” one post
read. “Police are looking for anyone who
may know anything about the situation.
If you have any knowledge, please contact
them this person or persons need to be held
accountable and locked up. Stay strong my
friend and fight as hard as you can.”
According to the police incident report
an unresponsive man with a head injury
was found in a retail store parking lot. The
hospital found traces of meth in his system,
and the doctor stated in the report the man
may have overdosed.
SFGN is not identifying the man, and
is only writing about it because the social
media posts created such concern in the
community. SFGN

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This weekend will be packed full of activities, so open up the calendar app on your phone and start taking notes! It all begins Friday, Feb. 22 with Pride on the Drive as area bars, restaurants and businesses offers specials and parties to welcome the nearly 50,000 additional folks Fort Lauderdale Pride is expected to bring to the area.

Saturday is so full of activities that you’ll have a hard time deciding what to do. The day begins with “B3: Bear Beach Bash” starting at noon. Music and entertainment will be provided by “My Big Funny Peter,” aka Peter Bisuito, the world’s first gay muscle bear comedian. There will be hot muscle bear go-go dancers dancing to DJ Herbie James, and more on the Sebastian Beach stage! It’s a casual afternoon party with a cash bar and a food truck.

Pride Fort Lauderdale has the honor of being the first ever parade down A1A. Fort Lauderdale’s first openly gay mayor, Dean Trantalis, and Stonewall eyewitness and transgender activist Miss Major Griffin-Gracy have been selected as the grand marshals.

“Our parade – the first parade ever held on SR A1A along Fort Lauderdale Beach – is historic and we wanted to honor two people who have played important roles in our history as our first grand marshals," explained Pride President Miik Martorell.

Miss Major Griffin-Gracy was in the Stonewall Inn on the night of the brutal police raid that finally sparked drag queens and transgender people to rise up against oppression. Those riots would inspire the modern gay civil rights movement. Miss Major has devoted her life to promoting transgender rights and serving the community. Now a resident of Arkansas, she is the subject of an award-winning documentary, “Major!,” currently available on Netflix.

Mayor Dean Trantalis made history last year when he became the first openly gay mayor of Fort Lauderdale. Throughout his public service career, Mayor Trantalis has always been an advocate for the LGBT community and already demonstrated that he can effectively build bridges between the diverse residents of our city and region.

“As the LGBT+ community prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Pride Fort Lauderdale is reminded of the progress we have made. We are especially honored to have Miss Major Griffin-Gracy as one of our grand marshals. She is one of the few eyewitnesses to that pivotal moment in history who is still with us 50 years later. Miss Major is a hero to all LGBT+ people and we’re proud to honor her," Martorell said.

The parade, with the theme, “Carnaval,” will step off at 5:30 p.m. at Sebastian Beach near Windamar St. and proceed down
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SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019
FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH

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the northbound lanes of SR A1A to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park. Due to the limited time allowed for the parade on SR A1A, only a limited number of entries have been allowed. Since this is the first parade ever held on Fort Lauderdale Beach, organizers have no idea exactly how many folks will attend, but estimates are as high as 80,000 spectators along the route.

There are a limited number of VIP tickets available for the Parade hospitality tent. The tent will be located on the sand near the parade stage at Las Olas Blvd and A1A. This area features a bar and a place to get out of the sun close to the main stage and the center of all the action from noon until 6 p.m. and complimentary premium drinks all day (while inside the tent area only).

Tickets are $75 and a limited number of tickets are available and once they are sold out, no more will be available.

After the parade, dance under the stars to the sounds of DJ Dani Toro from Spain from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. In response to Bryant’s campaign, a coalition formed to repeal the ordinance and it was overturned.

The following day, Bryant stated, “In victory, we shall not be vindictive. We shall continue to seek help and change for homosexuals; whose sick and sad values belie the word ‘gay’ which they pathetically use to cover their unhappy lives.” Bryant led several more campaigns around the country to repeal local anti-discrimination ordinances.

In response to Bryant’s campaign, a coalition formed that planned and organized a protest celebration for National Gay Pride Day on June 28, 1977. Several hundred people marched through Coconut Grove carrying signs and shouting slogans. From that protest Gay Pride in South Florida was born. Bryant eventually lost her endorsement deal with the Florida Orange Grocers Association, due to protests from the community and allies, and faded into obscurity.

In 1978 activists collected enough names to put the gay rights ordinance back on the ballot, the first time in U.S. history that gays and lesbians used the political system to place a pro-gay initiative on an electoral ballot. The referendum was defeated, but the 1978 Pride march and rally grew to 1,500. The march occurred annually in Miami and continued to grow in size and scope.

It took 20 years, but in 1998 Dade County re-authorized an anti-discrimination ordinance protecting individuals from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Although the early marches were in Dade County, the Broward County Coalition for Human Rights was always an active participant.

In 1991 the committee adopted the name Pride South Florida. PrideFest stayed at the Coconut Grove Exhibition Center, but the parade and rally were moved to Fort Lauderdale for the first time. In 1992 the rally moved to the Broward County Convention Center out of the summer heat and rain. It remained there until 1995 when it moved to the War Memorial Auditorium and surrounding area in Holiday Park. Summer rain and heat were a continuing problem for Pride. The rainy season frequently canceled the Parade. In 1998, Pride South Florida split Pride and moved PrideFest from June to February and moved to Mills Pond Park and drew over 11,000 people.

After a heated town meeting in 2000, Pride South Florida decided to move the parade and associated festivities to February. A few years ago, there was a battle for control of South Florida’s pride events. In the aftermath, two pride celebrations were developed. Wilton Manors hosts its Stonewall Festival and Parade in June.
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This year’s entertainment line-up includes Todrick Hall. He first gained attention on the ninth season of American Idol, where he made it to the semi-finals. He then began producing and starring in parody videos that he posted on YouTube, which went viral. He has also served as a judge/choreographer on “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and has released several albums. Showing his versatility, Hall starred on Broadway, both as Lola in “Kinky Boots” and Billy Flynn in “Chicago.”

Joining Hall will be another “American Idol” fan favorite, Ada Vox, the incredible San Antonio-based singer and drag queen. Ada became a semi-finalist on “American Idol” after numerous attempts, both in and out of drag. Vox has released her first single “Because of You.”

The Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB is offering VIP tickets for the festival. By popular demand, VIP Lounge has been enlarged since last year. The VIP tickets, $100 until Feb. 23, and $125 at the Festival (if available) allows access to the covered VIP area, Special VIP viewing, complimentary drinks and VIP restrooms as well as cocktails compliments of Tito’s Handmade Vodka. There are a limited number of tickets available and once they are sold out, no more will be available.

The celebration concludes at 7:45 p.m. with a stunning fireworks display on the beach. Proceeds are used to help fund future Pride events and any remaining funds go back out into the community in the form of grants.

Parking can be difficult and expensive along the beach. There will be free shuttles from Hagen Park and the Brightline station (but not from the Galleria and Clay Shaw parking lots, as in the past despite what is indicated on the Pride website). Parking is free until 6 p.m. at the Hagen lot. If you plan to stay for the parade and park in the Hagen lot, make certain to have the remote parking app installed on your phone and note your space number.

THE CELEBRATION CONCLUDES AT 7:45 P.M. WITH A STUNNING FIREWORKS DISPLAY ON THE BEACH.

Photo via the City of Fort Lauderdale.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 20

OFFICIAL PRE-PRI DE MIXER, “GODDESS OF THE RIVER DR AG CHALLENGE,” FLIP FLOPS – 6 P.M.

Three drag queens, each in their own boats, compete for the title in this outrageous aquatic fundraiser and paddleboarders and kayakers will vote for their favorite performers.

THURSDAY, FEB. 21

RUNWAY FASHION SHOW, HARD ROCK EVENT CENTER – 7 P.M. TRUNK SHOW

OFFICIAL THURSDAY NIGHT PARTY, GEORGE’S ALIBI/MONKEY BAR, 9 P.M.

Celebrate Pride with your friends at George’s Alibi/Monkey Bar in the Shoppes of Wilton Manors, famous for their Thursday night $3 Long Island iced teas.

FRIDAY, FEB. 22

PRIDE POOL PARTY, COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH – 11 A.M.

Looking for some fun on Friday afternoon before Pride on the Drive? The Courtyard by Marriott on Fort Lauderdale Beach is hosting an afternoon party on the upper pool deck overlooking the beach.

PRIDE ON THE DRIVE – 6 P.M.

A complete list of participating businesses will be posted at Pridefortlauderdale.org.

“AFT E R GLOW” – WILTON THEATER FACTORY, 8 P.M.

An open marriage gets complicated in this Off Broadway hit by S. Asher Gelman. Catch this Ronnie Larsen Presents production at the Wilton Theater Factory in Wilton Manors, running through March 10.

SEXY CIRQUE TROUPE AIROTIC AT SUNSHINE CATHEDRAL

This high-flying act offers an LGBT+ flavor in each mesmerizing performance. (Repeats Saturday, Feb. 23, 8 p.m.) Tickets at OutlandishFL.com.

STON E WALL NATIONAL MUSEUM & ARCHIVES GALA – 7 P.M.

The Stonewall National Museum & Archives marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots at its annual gala at the Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale Beach. Actress and activist Kathy Najimy (“Sister Act”) will be the guest speaker for the gala, which also includes a silent auction, dinner and entertainment.

SATURDAY, FEB. 23

DRAG BRUNCH – 11:30 A.M. AT THE RITZ-CARLTON FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH.

Tickets are $125 each.

B3: BEAR BEACH BASH – NOON

See hot muscle bear go-go dancers and more on the Sebastian Beach stage!

CARNIVAL DR AG & DINE PARTIES – NOON.

The festival gets started early at the many hotels and restaurants along SR A1A (and you can beat the traffic for the parade). Participating businesses will be offering entertainment, drink and food specials all afternoon.

CARNIVAL PARADE – 5:30 P.M.

Take part in the Pride Fort Lauderdale Parade on A1A from Sebastian Beach to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park.

CARNIVAL PARTIES

The festival gets started early at the many hotels and restaurants along SR A1A (and you can beat the traffic for the parade). Participating businesses will be offering entertainment, drink and food specials all afternoon.

• Parade Party, Courtyard by Marriott, noon – 5:30 p.m., 954-635-4120.
• Brunch and Parade Viewing Party, Rock Bar, noon – 5:30 p.m.
• She Tea, Official Women’s Party, Spazio, 3 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
• Latin T-Dance, Cafe Ibiza, 3 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

PRIDE BLOCK PARTY – 7 P.M. – 10 P.M.

5th St. and A1A.

SUNDAY, FEB. 24

RETOX BRUNCH, W FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH, 11 A.M. – 2 P.M.

Tickets at RetoxBrunch.Eventbrite.com

BEACH FESTIVAL – NOON – 8 P.M.

Fireworks show at 7:45 p.m. $5 donation requested at the gate.

OUTSHINE’S BIG NIGHT OUT, 7 P.M.

The Manor hosts as OUTshine LGBT Film Festival celebrates Hollywood’s biggest night, the Oscars, with a gala watch party at the area’s largest LGBT+ nightclub. Tickets at OutShineFilm.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL PRIDE EVENTS, GO TO PRIDEFORTLAUDERDALE.ORG.
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THE PALM BEACH COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DETAILS PLANS FOR 2019

Zachary Winograd

Any LGBT activists and organizations are setting goals for the new year, one organization being the Human Rights Council (HRC) of Palm Beach County, a non-profit LGBT advocacy group.

Since 1988, the HRC has been dedicated to furthering and protecting the LGBT community’s civil rights in Palm Beach County. In 2018, they were able to get cities like Lake Worth and Boynton Beach to ban the practice of conversion therapy within their cities. This year’s first order of business is assisting LGBT seniors and LGBT youth.

“Locally, PBCHRC is working with West Palm Beach City Commissioner Christina Lambert on initiatives to assist LGBT seniors and with WPB City Commissioner Kelly Shoaf and Compass on initiatives to assist LGBT youth” said HRC founder and Legislative Director Rand Hoch via email.

On the state level, HRC also plans to work with other outside advocacy groups to pass the Florida Inclusive Workforce Act, a new effort to amend the Florida Civil Rights Act to prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Other groups and people collaborating on the effort are SAVE Florida, Translatina, Conservatives on the Right of Equality and former Florida Rep. David Richardson.

OTHER PLANS AND INITIATIVES FOR 2019 INCLUDE:

Installing a rainbow pride crosswalk in downtown West Palm Beach

Working with WPBA and Palm Beach County to change signs on single-stall restrooms to be gender-inclusive

Getting Lake Worth City Commissioner Omari Hardy to support an inclusive and innovative approach to city-wide bullying prevention

Working with the healthcare district of Palm Beach County to see if it is possible for the district to provide trans-specific medical care for those in need

Urging the school district of Palm Beach County to cease all ties to homophobic companies and businesses like Hobby Lobby and Chick-fil-A

While it’s a hefty agenda, this is nothing new for Rand Hoch, who founded the organization back in 1988. Hoch started his career by advocating for gay rights in South Florida in the 1970s, later becoming Florida’s first openly gay judge in 1992. After retiring from the bench, Hoch returned to PBCHRC in his current position.

The HRC has passed over 160 laws supporting LGBT civil rights, according to their website — and hopes to add on to the list in 2019.
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Gay Chili Cook Off serves up a spicy good time

Monies raised will benefit Compass Youth Group

Compass hosted its seventh annual Gay Chili Cookoff on Sunday. Like last year, the cookoff was held at Penny's at the Duke in Lantana. The event featured entertainers, giveaways, and ten heaping plates of chili.

Compass raised a record-breaking $4,000 at the event — with the proceeds going toward its youth group. Last year the event raised about $3,000.

“It's been amazing to get more community members and organizations involved and to watch it grow over the years," said Amanda Canete, Compass' youth services director. "This year has been one of our biggest turnouts.

There were ten different local businesses competing this year. Familiar venues like The Mad Hatter Lounge and H.G. Roosters cooked to win, as well as some new competitors. Other clubs and organizations that participated were Night Runners of WPB, Compass Health Services, and the Rusty Gordon Palm Beach LGBT Democratic Caucus.

One of the newest organizations to participate this year was "Hause of QUOTA." The organization is a “queer collective” based in Lake Worth that consists of drag performers, visual artists, and event coordinators who each use their talents to unite, foster, and support the LGBT community.

“It's been a great experience so far, we are so excited to be here,” said House Mother Ray Ray. "Not a lot of people know us, so it's been good to show [our] face, introduce ourselves, and do something positive for the youth."

The cookoff had individual contestants compete as well. Former owner of Mother Earth Sanctuary Café in Lake Worth, Patti Lucia, decided to put a spin on her chili by adding her special homemade cilantro sauce.

Lake Worth resident and first-time participant Richard Edgeworth showcased his skills as a professional chef with his chili dish affectionately named “Devil’s Own,” but cared more about giving back to the restaurant and community than winning.

“Penny’s has basically helped me come out of my shell and recover from a bad relationship, find new love, and finally stop being anti-social," Edgeworth said.

The chili wasn't the only item on the menu that night. There were several show-stopping performances by some of Palm Beach County's most colorful entertainers. Raejean Cox kicked off the show with a medley of Dolly Parton songs that included “9 to 5” and the crowd favorite “Jolene.”

“As the show’s host, it's an honor that people want to come and perform for the cookoff,” said Cox, who has been the MC for the cookoff for four years. “It's a win-win all the way around.”

Other performers were Lala Cox, Velvet Lenore, Melissa St. John, Nicole Sapphire, Vasti Love Montana. Since there was a western overture to the cook off, Elite Drag Kings took their performance to the next level by performing “Pony” made famous by Ginuwine. Along with the spicy performances, the night also included giveaways of alcohol and memorabilia.

This was the most Compass has ever raised during their seven-year history.

“The funds raised go mostly to the youth equality prom that we throw every year. We would never want cost to deter youth from going to a prom because they are very expensive,” Canete said. “So, through fundraisers like this, and other fundraisers that the youth do themselves, we are able to provide an amazing prom at no cost.”

The performers donated all of their tips to Compass.

“This year, we’ve had the most performers that we’ve ever had that," Cox said. "It's good because every dollar goes to the youth.”

**AND THE WINNERS WERE:**

1st place:  
THE MAD HATTER LOUNGE

2nd Place:  
H.G. ROOSTERS

3rd Place:  
THE RUSTY GORDON PALM BEACH LGBT DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

This isn't the first time Mad Hatter Lounge won either - they took home the crown two years ago as well. In 2018 it was Eric Pearson from Compass that won the contest.

The Compass Youth Group meets every Wednesday and Friday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The group is for LGBTQ teens and allies from ages 12-18. This group is open; anyone can join at any time. For more information contact Amanda Canete at amanda@compassglcc.com.
COMPASS AND POVERELLO TEAM UP FOR HEALTHY EATING

Compass will be teaming up with Poverello, a nonprofit food pantry for those living with chronic illnesses in South Florida, this Saturday to show people that eating healthy can be inexpensive.

Poverello will be doing live cooking demonstrations and tastings at Compass from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and supply a week’s worth of their meals. Along with freshly cooked meals, Poverello will be offering tips and tricks that will outlast the healthy meals.

“We will continually put the needs of our clients above all other interests and proactively change to meet those needs,” Poverello’s website reads.

Since 1987, Poverello’s main mission has been to make sure that people with chronic illnesses, particularly HIV/AIDS, can access the food and resources they need. The pantry supports their services through community fundraisers at local restaurants like Lucky’s Market, California Pizza Kitchen, Anthony’s Coal Fired Pizza, and more.

Poverello said it provides food to over 3,000 people with the help of over 200 volunteers. Their meal plans are medically tailored and include:

- Regular, healthy meal plans
- Diabetic-friendly meal plans
- Heart healthy meal plans
- Kidney-friendly meal plans
- Vegetarian-friendly meal plans.

“We will continually put the needs of our clients above all other interests and proactively change to meet those needs.”

- Poverello

This will be the last of five sessions that Compass and Poverello will be hosting together. You must register prior to the event via Poverello’s website, or contact Compass’ Neka MacKay at neka@compassglcc.com.

We encourage you to purchase your tickets in advance online:

www.watertaxi.com
Judge upholds conversion therapy bans in Palm Beach County

In a decision that had local LGBT rights activists holding their breath, a judge last week upheld bans on conversion therapy in Boca Raton and Palm Beach County.

"...the Court concludes that Defendants have identified a compelling interest in protecting the safety and welfare of minors. Protecting minors may be the paradigm example of a compelling interest," Judge Robin Rosenberg wrote. "Defendants have pointed to and relied upon extensive credible evidence of the damage that conversion therapy inflicts. This body of information comes from well-known research organizations and subject matter experts."

The decision comes on the heels of a Tampa area federal magistrate judge recommending that city's conversion therapy ban be partially blocked. The President and founder of the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, Rand Hoch, was concerned with the recommendation earlier this month and hoped it did not affect the Palm Beach County lawsuit.

"What surprised me most was that the City of Tampa lost on the First Amendment issues, which has been the strongest portion of the conversion therapy ban cases that have been tried to date," Hoch said. "In all of the other conversion therapy cases around the U.S. that I am aware of, our side always ultimately prevailed on the First Amendment issues."

Now that Rosenberg, a President Obama appointee, has upheld the local bans, Hoch is hoping the judge presiding over the case in Tampa will take her ruling into consideration.

"In light of Judge Rosenberg’s masterful and well-reasoned ruling, I am hopeful that Judge Jung rejects the magistrate’s recommendation," Hoch said.

But even if Judge William Jung, an appointee of President Trump, overturns the ban in Tampa it will not affect Rosenberg's ruling.

Judge Rosenberg handed LGBTQ children in Palm Beach County a significant victory.

- Rand Hoch

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF THE PALM BEACH COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The local lawsuit was brought by two therapists, Julie Hamilton and Robert Otto. They’re being represented by Liberty Council — a Southern Poverty Law Center designated hate group. Liberty Counsel's main argument was that conversion therapy bans violated their clients’ free speech rights.

Rosenberg rejected that argument.

The two bans in Boca and Palm Beach County were spearheaded by the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council. They applauded the judge’s decision.

"Judge Rosenberg handed LGBTQ children in Palm Beach County a significant victory," Hoch said. "For the time being, young LGBTQ people in Palm Beach County will remain safe from the psychological abuse caused by a handful of quacks who would like to resume practicing conversion therapy here."

PBCHRC also noted that none out of the 20 conversion therapy bans enacted in Florida apply to members of the clergy — unless they also are licensed mental health professionals.

The Liberty Council told the Palm Beach Post they’ve already appealed the decision to 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mathew Staver, Liberty Council attorney, told the Post: “I think [Judge Rosenberg is] flat-out wrong, with all due respect to the court.”

Conversion therapy is also known at “reparative therapy” or “sexual orientation change efforts” (SOCE).

The practice has been rejected by every major professional health organization in the U.S. including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the American Psychiatric Association. SFGN
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Add 10 more names to the list of more than a dozen who have left the Broward Sheriff’s Office since Gov. Ron DeSantis replaced Sheriff Scott Israel last month with Gregory Tony.

This week’s dismissals include a captain who got into trouble last year over a homophobic Facebook post and the community outreach team he oversaw. Collectively, they made nearly $850,000 annually, records show.

“With any new administration there comes changes,” Tony said in an emailed statement.

Capt. Ira Goldberg, 49, had been with the Sheriff’s Office since December 1990. His termination form, dated Wednesday, cited “services no longer retained.” He earned $161,269.90 in 2018, records show.

Responding to a torrent of acrimonious criticism of ex-Sheriff Scott Israel’s leadership and his force’s response to last year’s massacre of 17 students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, DeSantis on Jan. 11 announced that Israel was out and Tony was in.

After an internal affairs investigation over a comment Goldberg directed toward the openly gay vice president of the county’s Log Cabin Republicans, an LGBTQ political group, the captain was disciplined with a one-day suspension for violating his agency’s social media policy, documents show.

Inferring that the club’s vice president had hired people to protest against then-Sheriff Israel, Goldberg’s post said: “I hope you offered them money instead of sexual favors. Those men deserve better.”

Goldberg’s departure is the latest in a string of resignations, demotions, dismissals and promotions in Tony’s ongoing purge of Israel’s staff. The agency has nearly 5,500 employees.

The day after Tony was appointed, five members of Israel’s command staff, including several the ex-sheriff had recruited from his former agency the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, had turned in resignation or retirement paperwork.


Joining Goldberg as newly unemployed is his team of nine civilians from the community outreach team created by Israel.

They are the team’s manager Elgin Jones, Patricia Lynn as special projects coordinator and seven liaisons: Michael Albetta, Lorraine Aza, Charles Gilbert, Stephen Greenberger, Patrick Jabouin, Lynn Reich and Lorraine Smith.

Their termination forms, dated Friday, said they were let go “due to layoff/reduction in force.”

Tony’s decision to dissolve the community outreach team was made in tandem with command staff comprised of “veteran law enforcement professionals with a vast amount of institutional knowledge who were employed to formulate our mission moving forward,” the sheriff said Friday via email.

His thinking, Tony explained, was returning community outreach to district deputies, who have traditionally held that responsibility due to their intimate familiarity with the communities they serve.

“Returning these duties and responsibilities to the districts fosters relations that strengthens the partnership between law enforcement and the community,” Tony said. “We stand on the premise that it is the responsibility of both law enforcement and the community to work toward ensuring a safe environment for the residents and visitors of Broward County to live, work and play.”

Also let go since Tony became sheriff have been Col. Frank Adderley, Fort Lauderdale’s former chief of police. Adderley was with FLPD for 36 years and came up through the ranks there with Israel, who brought him to the Sheriff’s Office in 2016.

Another former Fort Lauderdale cop, Jonathan Appel, also lost his job with the sheriff’s office.

The list of the terminated also includes Chief of Staff Lisa Castillo, her husband, Angelo Castillo, who was director of strategic planning and research, Community Affairs Manager Wallace Eccleston, who is the husband of Israel’s campaign manager, Amy Rose, and Kimberly Andor, an administrative assistant.

Col. Tom Harrington resigned, Maj. Nathan Osgood retired, Russell DiPerna left as an executive officer and the agency’s general counsel, Ron Gunzburger, who helped get Israel elected, has announced that he will leave in mid-March to work for the governor of Maryland.

At least 10 agency veterans have been promoted by Tony.
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Former Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel spoke on his suspension as a guest speaker at a Dolphin Democrats membership meeting Wednesday night at the Pride Center in Wilton Manors.

“Tonight unfortunately and sadly I come to you with a heavy heart, and you’re here with a heavy heart. [At] Stoneman Douglas a year ago tomorrow we lost 17 people, 14 children,” Israel said. “I’ve been overwhelmed, absolutely overwhelmed, with shock and tremendous grief.”

Israel said he spent the year traveling and speaking to the parents of Parkland students, and it became apparent that many of the children were suffering from post-traumatic stress, and anxiety. “It was the most horrific thing imaginable.”

He also revealed he knew Aaron Feis, the late football coach who died trying to shield students from gunfire, and that he had coached Israel’s children.

“Tonight, tomorrow, where we memorialize and we think about where we were a year today, we think about what we could do even in our small little worlds to prevent these mass tragedies from happening,” Israel said. “See something say something, communicate with law enforcement. [If you] see someone behaving in a way that they’ve never behaved before, make sure law enforcement knows about it.”

Just three days after being sworn into office, Gov. Ron DeSantis suspended the beleaguered sheriff following 10 months of intense national attention garnered by the mass shooting of 17 staff and students in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

“The massacre might never have happened had Broward had better leadership in the sheriff’s department,” DeSantis said of the Democratic former sheriff.

Israel was replaced with former Coral Springs Police Sgt. Gregory Tony, who has a background in active-shooter training.

At the statewide public safety commission last November, Israel defended his decision before the shooting to revise his office’s active shooter policy, from stipulating that officers “shall” enter an area to save lives, to officers “may,” instead.

“The reason I inserted ‘may’ and believe wholeheartedly in that word [is] because I want an effective, tactical response - not a suicide response,” Israel told commission chair, Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri.

A federal judge in Florida ruled that the Broward County schools and the county sheriff’s office had no legal duty to protect students during the shooting, after the father of one of the victims filed a lawsuit against Deputy Scot Peterson, the school’s resource officer under Israel, who never entered the building.

Ed Leuchs, a member of the Dolphin Democrats, the LGBT democratic group of Broward County, asked Israel Wednesday about the policy revision, claiming it “allowed the members of your staff who are on campus to do what I felt was cowardly, let those children be massacred and not even go into the school.”

“Partially, certainly as far as Deputy Peterson” Israel said, addressing Leuch’s statement about inaction. “But I will say this, there was no training issue, no policy issue, no ‘word’ issue - this was about a deputy who chose not to go in, and you cannot evaluate courage.”

When the member reiterated it was eight of his officers under scrutiny total, Israel said “we don’t know what they knew,” and that their actions were still under internal affairs investigation.

“One year before this mass killing at [Marjory] Stoneman Douglas, we had a mass killing at Fort Lauderdale International Airport, [and there was] a hero, a brown shirt, wearing the same uniform as Peterson, same sheriff, same policies,” Israel went on to say.

“[Deputy Jesse Madrigal] was at the airport, heard gunshots, and ran towards the killer into custody in 72 seconds,” Israel said, noting Madrigal was awarded Deputy of The Year by the Florida Sheriff’s Association for his actions.

“Some people are going to go in and some people aren’t.”

Israel said he would return to speak about every aspect of his suspension; “I come here tonight as your suspended Sheriff. I can't even put into words how unjust that is. [...] This is absolutely, absolutely a political move - nothing more, nothing less.”
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South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg campaigned in New Hampshire over the weekend. Buttigieg is seeking to become the first gay man elected President. In a wide ranging interview with CNN, Buttigieg shared his thoughts on Vice President and former Indiana Governor Mike Pence: “My personal interactions with him have always been very civil and very decent, but it’s also simply true that politically he’s a fanatic and he damaged our city and our state through choices that his social extremism led him to make,” Buttigieg said.

Buttigieg, 37, is one of eight significant Democrats to declare presidential ambitions. The Democratic field includes Buttigieg, five U.S. senators, a congresswoman and former President Barack Obama’s Housing & Urban Development secretary.

On Feb. 15, former Massachusetts Governor William Weld announced his intentions to form a presidential exploratory committee as a member of the Republican Party. Weld governed Massachusetts from 1991 to 1997. He was the Libertarian Party’s vice presidential candidate in 2016.

President Donald Trump, Weld said, is “simply too unstable to carry out the duties of the highest executive office in the land.” Weld offered tax cuts during his Bedford, New Hampshire press conference and categorized members of the Republican party as political prisoners suffering from “Stockholm Syndrome.” A spokesperson for the Republican National Committee said any effort – much less the whims of 73-year-old Weld – would go “absolutely nowhere.”

David Richardson announced via Facebook he would seek a seat on the Miami Beach City Commission. Richardson previously served portions of Miami Beach as a state representative in Tallahassee – the first gay man elected to the Florida House. He gave up that seat to run for an open U.S. Congress office – coming in second in the 2018 Democratic primaries to eventual winner Donna Shalala.
John Knox Village is committed to compliance with all federal, state and local fair housing laws. It is our policy to treat individuals without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or handicap. The employees of John Knox Village have a legal obligation to treat each individual in a consistent and equally fair manner. In order to assist you with your decision on your new home, we are providing a list of guidelines used to qualify residents for tenancy in our community. Please note that this is our current rental/ownership criteria; nothing contained in these requirements shall constitute a guarantee or representation by John Knox Village that all residents and occupants currently residing at the community have met these requirements. There may be residents and occupants that have resided the community prior to these requirements going into effect. Additionally, our ability to verify whether these requirements have been met is limited to the information we receive from various credit and screening services used.

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ince its 1997 opening in the heart of Wilton Manors, Alibi has shared its heart through the efforts of many. When bartender Stephen Tendrich’s father was diagnosed with prostate cancer, he wanted to show his support through a simple act, painting pinky nails pink. That began his Pink Nail Society 501(c)3 to spread cancer awareness which raised nearly $10,000 at his annual January benefit. When not behind the bar, Uwe Schroeder is working hard to share his love of animals preparing his Grateful Paws benefit. For this year’s event on March 6, Uwe aspires to once again donate $10,000 for the rescue of South Florida dogs and cats.

Managers Don Clark and Byron Richardson’s July benefit, Bartenders, Boxers & Briefs has raised well over $125,000 for Tuesday’s Angels, a charity assisting AIDS survivors living on their own. With the advent of life saving medications allowing more normal lives, the charity is winding down.

But we cannot forget, this fight isn’t over until there’s a cure and those in power stop trying to end life giving support.

At Turnabout, most of the staff performs and donates tips to support Safe Schools South Florida in their efforts to create safer schools where children with sexual orientation and gender identity issues can thrive with dignity.

Alibi bands together with teams for the AHF Florida AIDS Walk, Poverello Bowlathon and supports Broward House Dine Out for Life, Pride South Florida, Stonewall Museum, Pride Center Wicked Manors, and several sports teams as well as many events not held at Alibi through donations, volunteers and support for silent auctions.

Too many aren’t mentioned here, but we must remember, it is the staff, past and present that work so hard behind the scenes, volunteering support, gathering auction items, setting up and tearing down, and more that makes these events stellar, their hosts superstars and charities, supported.

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SMART RIDE FUNDRAISER KICKS OFF 2019 RIDE

SMART Ride 16 takes place on Nov. 15 and 16. Fundraising efforts for this year’s ride begin on Thursday, February 28. A Night Of Stars is sure to entertain. The evening, hosted by Nicolette and featuring a performance by Michael Dean as Cher, takes place at Lips.

A Night of Stars promises to put the fun in fundraising. Several guest servers will be on hand to help out, among them – Tony Beall, Mark Byrd, Bryan Carstensen, Kevin Daft, Louis Pedraza, and Andy Perrott. General admission tickets cost $50.

VIP tickets cost $75 and include all of the above with preferred seating and adult beverages. Doors open at 7 p.m. and dinner begins at 7:30 p.m.

SMART Ride is the 2nd largest AIDS bicycle ride in the country and the only one of its size to give back 100 percent.

SMART Ride is a 2-day, 165-Mile bicycle Ride from Miami to Key West. Since 2003, it has raised more than $10 million. That money has been distributed throughout Florida, making SMART Ride the 2nd largest AIDS bicycle ride in the country and the only one of its size to give back 100 percent.

Participants in the ride come from throughout Florida and locations all over the world to take part in the event. People participate for many reasons including:

- Having HIV
- Knowing someone with HIV
- Losing a loved one to HIV
- Doing the right thing

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Three LGB members of Congress led an effort on Wednesday in opposition to a Trump administration waiver allowing South Carolina adoption agencies to refuse child placement into LGBT homes.

In a letter dated Feb. 13, Reps. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-N.Y.) and Angie Craig (D-Minn.) — the only openly gay members of the U.S. House who are parents — and bisexual Rep. Katie Hill (D-Calif.) led 95 House Democrats in denouncing the waiver, which allows the Greenville-based Miracle Hill Ministries to decline to place children with families contrary to its religious beliefs.

“We are writing to express our strong condemnation of this waiver because it will deny children the safe, loving and happy families they deserve and turn away qualified potential parents,” the letter says. “We strongly urge you to stop this despicable taxpayer-funded discrimination and uphold the essential non-discrimination protections that ensure that every child has a loving home.”

Last month, the Department of Health & Human Services announced it had granted South Carolina a request for a waiver from an Obama-era rule prohibiting adoption agencies that receive federal funds from discriminating on the basis of religion or sexual orientation. That decision brought an outcry from supporters of LGBT families.

“Permitting these agencies to use a litmus test to turn away qualified adoptive and foster parents reduces the number of loving families available to the over 4,000 children in South Carolina’s foster care system and the more than 400,000 children in foster care nationwide,” the letter says.

Stan Sloan, CEO of the pro-LGBT Family Equality Council, commended lawmakers for writing the letter in a statement.

“We are grateful to members of Congress for standing with the faith, child welfare, and LGBTQ communities to say ‘no’ to discrimination in foster care and adoption, thus ensuring that America’s 440,000 foster children are not needlessly denied the loving, supportive families they deserve,” Sloan said.

More action may come on this front from the Trump administration. At the National Prayer Breakfast, President Trump declared support for religiously affiliated adoption agencies seeking to place children into homes consistent with their religious beliefs.

“My administration is working to ensure that faith-based adoption agencies are able to help vulnerable children find their forever families while following their deeply held beliefs.”

- Donald Trump

The Washington Blade has placed a request with HHS seeking comment on the letter and an inquiry on whether any more requests for waivers from the adoption regulation are pending before the department.

Washington Blade courtesy of the National LGBTQ Media Association.
New traditions are hard to come by these days. Owners Steve and Ariel have owned J. Mark’s Restaurant for 10 exciting years. Sitting at their dinner table is quite the experience and something they do regularly with friends and family while tasting new menu items for their Pompano and Fort Lauderdale locations.

A tradition they created, test tasting new menu items in their home in South Beach, started to receive real input on how food tastes and what changes may need to be made to these new items.

Sitting down to their table was fascinating as we shared stories of cooking experiences gone bad to amazing memories of why we love food in the first place. During the laughter, Steve explained new menu items like the Spinach and Artichoke Dip with Crab and what makes theirs special. Learning they receive fresh produce, seafood, meats and breads daily is extremely important and sets them apart from many other local favorites.

Toasting over wine with friends creates memories that J. Mark’s has been proud to be a part of for the last ten years. Since their inception they have hosted numerous events for the LGBT community including the SFGN anniversary party and events for the Pride Center, Local Chamber and more. Steve and Ariel believe in supporting the community and creating one that cares and supports each other. This is no surprise as we enjoyed many new favorites from their menu.

- Blue Pistachio Kale Salad
- Fried Green Tomato Sliders
- Quarter Pound Trade Burger with Fries
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Stop by anytime to say hello and enjoy a cocktail or romantic dinner for two and let J. Mark’s become part of your family tradition.
People with HIV/AIDS in Venezuela are dying because of an acute lack of available antiretroviral drugs in the country, according to service providers and activists with whom the Washington Blade has spoken in recent days.

César Sequera, founder of Alianza Lambda de Venezuela, a Venezuelan LGBTI advocacy group, told the Blade on Feb. 8 during a telephone interview from the country’s Vargas state that he has been able to obtain antiretroviral drugs from non-governmental organizations or from donations he received from outside the country. Sequera, who is also a priest at an Anglican church outside of the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, acknowledged “there are other people who aren’t receiving them.”

“The situation is critical and alarming,” he told the Blade.

Hendriel Briceño, a 26-year-old public university professor who lives in Caracas, tested positive five years ago. He told the Blade during a WhatsApp interview on Feb. 8 that he did not take antiretroviral drugs for a year “because there weren’t any.” Briceño said he currently has a month’s supply.

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“We have a very serious situation,” said Eduardo Franco, secretary of Red Venezolana de Gente Positiva, a Caracas-based HIV/AIDS advocacy group, during a telephone interview on Monday.

Sequera, Briceño and Franco all told the Blade that Venezuela’s worsening economic and political crises have further exacerbated the country’s HIV/AIDS crisis.

A report from the International Council for AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), Aid for AIDS International, Global Development and three Venezuelan organizations — Asociación Civil Impacto Social, Alianza Venezolana para la Salud and Sociedad Venezolana de Salud Pública — cites statistics from the Pan-American and World Health Organizations, the Venezuelan Ministry of Health and other agencies that note 25,000 more people died from HIV between 2010-2018. The statistics also indicate the number of people with HIV increased from 97,000 to more than 120,000 during the same period.

PAHO, WHO and UNAIDS representatives traveled to Caracas last June in order to observe the Venezuelan government’s efforts to combat HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. The organizations subsequently announced a plan to combat the diseases that includes input from Venezuelan health care providers, NGOs and government representatives.

“The plan was subsequently presented to the national authorities who gave approval of the document, as well as to State coordinators, the Venezuelan Society of Infectious Diseases, Pulmonology, Pediatrics and Gynecology/Obstetrics,” reads the plan of which the Blade obtained a copy.

The Global Fund Board of Directors on Sept. 24, 2018, approved $5 million “to help alleviate the gaps in the provision of HIV treatment in Venezuela.”

The PAHO Strategic Fund received $4.9 million to purchase antiretroviral drugs. Venezuelan NGOs received the remaining $100,000 from UNAIDS in order to oversee the distribution of medications to people with HIV/AIDS.

The first shipment of the antiretroviral drug Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Dolutegravir (TLD), which contained 100,000 bottles, arrived in Venezuela on Dec. 23, 2018. A second shipment of TLD with 200,000 bottles arrived in the country on Jan. 16.

Red Venezolana de Gente Positiva and more than two dozen other Venezuelan HIV/AIDS service and advocacy organizations in a Feb. 4 letter to Health Minister Carlos Alvarado said none of the bottles from the two shipments had been distributed from a warehouse that is located on a military base in Miranda state. The letter also notes “millions and millions of pills of antiretroviral drugs are stored and withheld without justification” at the warehouse.

“Venezuelan civil society organizations working on HIV are writing to you to demand your urgent intervention in the release and delivery of antiretroviral medicines that will save the lives of more than 70,000 people living with HIV and AIDS in Venezuela,” reads the letter.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) on Feb. 6 wrote in a tweet that, “apparently [President Nicolás] Maduro is blocking $5 million Global Fund shipments of HIV and AIDS medicine from Venezuela.”

“This is a death sentence to those who depend on anti-virals (sic) for survival,” said the Florida Republican.

A Rubio spokesperson on Monday told the Blade she did not “have any additional information” about the antiretroviral drug shipment.
The Venezuelan government has said a lack of working trucks has prevented it from distributing the drugs throughout the country.

ICASO Executive Director Mary Ann Torres, who is originally from Venezuela, on Tuesday told the Blade during a telephone interview from Toronto the Venezuelan Ministry of Health indeed only has a handful of trucks that are working. She said officials distributed some of the drugs in Valencia, a city in Carabobo state, after the open letter to Alvarado and Rubio's tweet.

‘The government doesn’t care’

Venezuela, which has the world’s largest known oil reserves, was once Latin America’s most prosperous country. Venezuela’s worsening economic and political crisis has prompted millions of Venezuelans to migrate to neighboring Colombia and other countries in recent years.

Juan Guaidó, president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, last month declared himself president after the country’s disputed presidential election that took place in May 2018. The U.S. is among the countries that have officially recognized Guaidó as Venezuela’s interim leader.

Briceño said he has seen well-dressed people in Caracas “picking through the garbage” for food.

One source who asked the Blade not to identify them by name because of safety concerns said three condoms and a bottle of lubricant costs a month’s salary for someone who is making minimum wage. Madonna Badillo, a transgender woman of indigenous descent who lives in the Colombian city of Maicao, which is a few miles from the country’s border with Venezuela on the Guajira Peninsula, told the Blade last March during an interview at her home that Venezuelan women sell their hair to wigmakers for less than $10 “out of necessity.”

“One of the things I have seen is the government doesn’t care,” Torres told the Blade. “It’s a mixture of bad policies. It’s a mixture of ideology over evidence.”

Torres said other issues that have contributed to the crisis include corruption and the mismanagement of Venezuela’s nationalized oil and mining industries.

“It’s not about sanctions,” she told the Blade. “It’s about the mismanagement of a country and a government that is over-powerful and over-present everywhere. They have left the infrastructure to be destroyed completely. You see pictures of the hospitals and you understand why health is the way it is. Everything is falling apart.”

Sequera noted some Venezuelans still support Maduro, despite the deepening crisis. He also told the Blade there will be “a civil war” in the country if the U.S. stages a military intervention to oust Maduro.

“Every day they don’t make the decision to oust him,” Sequera said.

“The entire population will come out on the street,” Sequera said.

Humanitarian aid is ‘urgently needed’ in Venezuela

Rubio is among those who have sharply criticized Maduro for preventing humanitarian aid from the U.S. from entering Venezuela. Media reports note Guaidó on Tuesday told supporters at a Caracas rally the aid would be brought into the country on Feb. 23.

Torres told the Blade that humanitarian aid is “urgently needed” in Venezuela. She also said the country needs to be completely rebuilt.

“The problem is the reconstruction won’t start with Maduro in power just because he doesn’t accept there is a problem,” Torres said. SFGN

Venezuelan police on Friday raided the offices of an HIV/AIDS service organization.

The International Council for AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO) confirmed social media and press reports that said police took donated infant formula and medications for people with HIV/AIDS from the offices of Fundación Mavid in the city of Valencia in Carabobo state.

ICASO in a press release said the police also arrested three human rights activists who work for the organization.

“We are scared for the safety of our activists and call upon the global community to help us — not just us, but the people of Venezuela living with HIV,” said Alberto Nieves, executive director of Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA, a Venezuelan HIV/AIDS service organization, in the ICASO press release.

The Washington Blade earlier this week reported Venezuelans with HIV/AIDS are dying because of an acute lack of available antiretroviral drugs in the country, which has the world’s largest known oil reserves.

Two shipments with 300,000 bottles of the antiretroviral drug Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Dolutegravir (TLD) that the Pan-American Health Organization Strategic Fund purchased arrived in Venezuela on Dec. 23, 2018, and on Jan. 16.

Fundación Mavid is among the more than two dozen Venezuelan HIV/AIDS service and advocacy organizations who wrote to Health Minister Carlos Alvarado on Feb. 4 to say none of the bottles from the two shipments had been distributed from a warehouse that is located on a military base in Miranda state. The letter also notes “millions and millions of pills of antiretroviral drugs are stored and withheld without justification” at the warehouse.

The Washington Blade last week spoke with Fundación Mavid President Eduardo Franco, who is also secretary of Red Venezolana de Gente Positiva, a nationwide HIV/AIDS advocacy group that is based in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, about the plight of Venezuelans with HIV/AIDS.

“We have a very serious situation,” said Franco.

Venezuela’s worsening economic and political crisis has exacerbated the already precarious situation of people with HIV/AIDS.

Millions of Venezuelans have migrated to neighboring Colombia and other countries in recent years.

National Assembly President Juan Guaidó declared himself president last month, even though President Nicolás Maduro won the country’s disputed presidential election that took place in May 2018. The U.S. is among the countries that have officially recognized Guaidó as Venezuela’s interim leader.

The Blade has reached out to the Venezuelan government for comment on the Fundación Mavid raid. SFGN
(CNN) — Here is some background information about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender milestones in the United States.

**1924**
The Society for Human Rights is founded by Henry Gerber in Chicago. It is the first documented gay rights organization.

**1949**
President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs an executive order that bans homosexuals from working for the federal government, saying they are a security risk.

**1969**
The "Los Angeles Advocate," founded in 1967, is renamed "The Advocate." It is considered the oldest continuing LGBT publication that began as a newsletter published by the activist group Personal Rights in Defense and Education (PRIDE).

**1970**
Community members in New York City march through the local streets to recognize the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots. This event is named Christopher Street Liberation Day, and is now considered the first gay pride parade.

**1973**
Lambda Legal becomes the first legal organization established to fight for the equal rights of gays and lesbians. Lambda also becomes their own first client after being denied non-profit status; the New York Supreme Court eventually rules that Lambda Legal can exist as a non-profit.

**1950**
The Mattachine Society is formed by activist Harry Hay and is one of the first sustained gay rights groups in the United States. The Society focuses on social acceptance and other support for homosexuals.

**1953**
President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs an executive order that bans homosexuals from working for the federal government, saying they are a security risk.

**1955**
The first known lesbian rights organization in the United States forms in San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). They host private social functions, fearing police raids, threats of violence and discrimination in bars and clubs.

**1961**
The first US-television documentary about homosexuality airs on a local station in California.

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January 1, 1973
Maryland becomes the first state to statutorily ban same-sex marriage.

March 26, 1973
First meeting of “Parents and Friends of Gays,” which goes national as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in 1982.

December 15, 1973
By a vote of 5,854 to 3,810, the American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in the DSM-II Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

January 14, 1975
The first federal gay rights bill is introduced to address discrimination based on sexual orientation. The bill later goes to the Judiciary Committee but is never brought for consideration.

March 1975
Technical Sergeant Leonard P. Matlovich reveals his sexual orientation to his commanding officer and is forcibly discharged from the Air Force six months later. Matlovich is a Vietnam War veteran and was awarded both the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. In 1980, the Court of Appeals rules that the dismissal was improper. Matlovich is awarded his back pay and a retroactive promotion.

1977-1981
Billy Crystal plays one of the first openly gay characters in a recurring role on a prime time television show in “Soap.”

January 9, 1978
Harvey Milk is inaugurated as San Francisco city supervisor, and is the first openly gay man to be elected to a political office in California. In November, Milk and Mayor George Moscone are murdered by Dan White, who had recently resigned from his San Francisco board position and wanted Moscone to reappoint him. White later serves just over five years in prison for voluntary manslaughter.

1979
The first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights takes place. It draws an estimated 75,000 to 125,000 individuals marching for LGBT rights.

1981
Inspired by Milk to develop a symbol of pride and hope for the LGBT community, Gilbert Baker designs and stitches together the first rainbow flag.

1976
After undergoing gender reassignment surgery in 1975, ophthalmologist and professional tennis player Renee Richards is banned from competing in the women’s US Open because of a “women-born-women” rule. Richards challenges the decision and in 1977, the New York Supreme Court rules in her favor. Richards competes in the 1977 US Open but is defeated in the first round by Virginia Wade.

1973
Kathy Kozachenko becomes the first openly LGBT American elected to any public office when she wins a seat on the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council.

Elaine Noble is the first openly gay candidate elected to a state office when she is elected to the Massachusetts State legislature.

1974
1975
1978
The Stonewall Inn.

February 9
After a vote of 5,854 to 3,810, the American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in the DSM-II Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
March 2, 1982
Wisconsin becomes the first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

November 30, 1993
President Bill Clinton signs a military policy directive that prohibits openly gay and lesbian Americans from serving in the military, but also prohibits the harassment of “closeted” homosexuals. The policy is known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

November 1995
The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act goes into effect as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The law allows a judge to impose harsher sentences if there is evidence showing that a victim was selected because of the “actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.”

April 1997
Comedian Ellen DeGeneres comes out as a lesbian on the cover of Time magazine, stating, “Yep, I’m Gay.”

October 6-7, 1998
Matthew Shepard is tied to a fence and beaten near Laramie, Wyoming. He is eventually found by a cyclist, who initially mistakes him for a scarecrow. He later dies due to his injuries sustained in the beating.

April 1, 1998
Martin Luther King Jr.’s widow, Coretta Scott King, asks the civil rights community to help in the effort to extinguish homophobia.

October 9, 1998
Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney from Laramie, Wyoming, make their first court appearance after being arrested for the attempted murder of Shepard. Eventually, they each receive two life sentences for killing Shepard.

April 30, 1997
DeGeneres’ character, Ellen Morgan, on her self-titled TV series “Ellen,” becomes the first leading character to come out on a prime time network television show.

September 21, 1996
President Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act, banning federal recognition of same-sex marriage and defining marriage as “a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.”

December 3, 1996
Hawaii’s Judge Chang rules that the state does not have a legal right to deprive same-sex couples of the right to marry, making Hawaii the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are entitled to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples.

1983
Lambda Legal wins People v. West 12 Tenants Corp., the first HIV/AIDS discrimination lawsuit. Neighbors attempted to evict Dr. Joseph Sannabend from the building because he was treating HIV-positive patients.

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FEATURE LGBT RIGHTS TIMELINE

May 17 2004
The first legal same-sex marriage in the United States takes place in Massachusetts.

April 26 2000
Vermont becomes the first state to legalize civil unions between same-sex couples.

June 2003
The US Supreme Court strikes down the “homosexual conduct” law, which criminalizes same-sex sexual conduct, with their opinion in Lawrence v. Texas. The decision also reverses Bowers v. Hardwick, a 1986 US Supreme Court ruling that upheld Georgia’s sodomy law.

September 6 2005
The California legislature becomes the first to pass a bill allowing marriage between same-sex couples. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoes the bill.

May 17 2004
The first legal same-sex marriage in the United States takes place in Massachusetts.

August 12 2009
Milk is posthumously awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama.

November 4 2008
Voters approve Proposition 8 in California, which makes same-sex marriage illegal.

August 4 2010
Proposition 8 is found unconstitutional by a federal judge.

October 28 2009
Obama signs the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law.

May 9 2012
In an ABC interview, Obama becomes the first sitting US president to publicly support the freedom for LGBT couples to marry.

September 4 2012
The Democratic Party becomes the first major US political party in history to publicly support same-sex marriage on a national platform at the Democratic National Convention.

May 15 2012
Tammy Baldwin becomes the first openly gay politician and the first Wisconsin woman to be elected to the US Senate.

October 25 2006
The New Jersey Supreme Court rules that state lawmakers must provide the rights and benefits of marriage to gay and lesbian couples.

May 15 2008
The California Supreme Court rules in re: Marriage Cases that limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples is unconstitutional.

September 20 2011
“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is repealed, ending a ban on gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.
June 26, 2013
In United States v. Windsor, the US Supreme Court strikes down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, ruling that legally married same-sex couples are entitled to federal benefits. The high court also dismisses a case involving California’s Proposition 8.

June 9, 2015
Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announces that the Military Equal Opportunity policy has been adjusted to include gay and lesbian military members.

July 27, 2015
Boy Scouts of America President Robert Gates announces, “the national executive board ratified a resolution removing the national restriction on openly gay leaders and employees.”

May 17, 2016
The Senate confirms Eric Fanning as secretary of the Army, making him the first openly gay secretary of a US military branch. Fanning previously served as Defense Secretary Carter’s chief of staff, and also served as undersecretary of the Air Force and deputy undersecretary of the Navy.

August 5-21, 2016
A record number of “out” athletes compete in the summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The Human Rights Campaign estimates that there are at least 41 openly lesbian, gay and bisexual Olympians – up from 23 that participated in London 2012.

April 4, 2017
The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals rules that the Civil Rights Act prohibits workplace discrimination against LGBT employees, after Kimberly Hively sues Ivy Tech Community College for violating Title VII of the act by denying her employment.

June 30, 2017
The US Department of Defense announces a six-month delay in allowing transgender individuals to enlist in the United States military. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis writes that they “will use this additional time to evaluate more carefully the impact of such accessions on readiness and lethality.”

October 6, 2014
The US Supreme Court denies review in five different marriage cases, allowing lower court rulings to stand, and therefore allowing same-sex couples to marry in Utah, Oklahoma, Virginia, Indiana and Wisconsin. The decision opens the door for the right to marry in Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming.

April 28, 2015
The US Supreme Court hears oral arguments on the question of the freedom to marry in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Michigan. On June 26 the Supreme Court rules that states cannot ban same-sex marriage. The 5-4 ruling had Justice Anthony Kennedy writing for the majority. Each of the four conservative justices writes their own dissent.

June 24, 2016
Obama announces the designation of the first national monument to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. The Stonewall National Monument will encompass Christopher Park, the Stonewall Inn and the surrounding streets and sidewalks that were the sites of the 1969 Stonewall uprising.

June 30, 2016
Secretary of Defense Carter announces that the Pentagon is lifting the ban on transgender people serving openly in the US military.

November 9, 2016
Kate Brown is sworn in as governor of Oregon, a day after she was officially elected to the office. Brown becomes the highest-ranking LGBT person elected to office in the United States. Brown took over the governorship in February 2016 (without an election), after Democrat John Kitzhaber resigned amidst a criminal investigation.

June 27, 2017
District of Columbia residents can now choose a gender-neutral option on their driver’s license. DC residents become the first people in the United States to be able to choose X as their gender marker instead of male or female on driver’s licenses and identification cards. Similar policies exist in Canada, India, Bangladesh, Australia, New Zealand and Nepal.
Virginia voters elect the state’s first openly transgender candidate to the Virginia House of Delegates. Danica Roem unseats incumbent delegate Bob Marshall, who had been elected thirteen times over 26 years. Roem becomes the first openly transgender candidate elected to a state legislature in American history.

President Donald Trump announces via Twitter that “After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US Military…”

In a memo to all federal prosecutors, Attorney General Jeff Sessions says that a 1964 federal civil rights law does not protect transgender workers from employment discrimination and the department will take this new position in all “pending and future matters.” In February 2018, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals releases an opinion that “sexual orientation discrimination constitutes a form of discrimination” and that it is a form of sex discrimination.

A second federal judge rules against Trump’s prohibition on transgender individuals serving in the military. The Pentagon announces it will begin processing transgender applicants to the military on January 1, while the Department of Justice continues to appeal the ruling.

Trump rescinds his previous policy to allow a new policy to take effect that will likely disqualify most transgender people from serving in the US military. The White House announces that the policy will say “transgender persons with a history or diagnosis of gender dysphoria -- individuals who the policies state may require substantial medical treatment, including medications and surgery -- are disqualified from military service except under certain limited circumstances.”

Christine Hallquist wins the Democratic primary in the Vermont governor’s race, becoming the first openly transgender gubernatorial candidate for a major party.

Democratic US Representative Jared Polis wins the Colorado governor’s race, becoming the nation’s first openly gay man to be elected governor.
The U.S. Senate confirmed William Barr on Thursday as President Trump’s next U.S. attorney general — a move that has made LGBT rights supporters wary amid indications he’d continue anti-LGBT policy at the U.S. Justice Department.

The Senate confirmed Barr on a largely party-line 54-45 vote, although Sens. Doug Jones (D-Ala.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) broke with Democrats to vote for the nominee and Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) broke with Republican to vote against him. Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) didn’t vote.

Each of the 2020 presidential candidates or potential hopefuls in the Senate — Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) — voted against Barr.

Many Democrats expressed concern about Barr over a 2018 memo he wrote asserting a more limited authority for Special Counsel Robert Mueller as well as the nominee’s refusal to make public Mueller’s upcoming report on the Russia investigation.

LGBT rights supporters, however, had different reasons to oppose his confirmation.

Sarah Kate Ellis, CEO of GLAAD, was among the LGBT rights supporters who expressed concern over Barr’s anti-LGBT record.

“There’s little doubt that William Barr will carry on this administration’s ongoing efforts at rolling back the progress LGBTQ Americans have made in recent years,” Ellis said. “This confirmation today reminds us once again that the Trump administration is no friend to us.”

During his confirmation hearing, Barr hinted he’d continue the anti-LGBT policies of Jeff Sessions, who resigned on the behest of Trump following the mid-term elections after he recused himself from the Russia investigation.

Barr’s answers suggested he’d continue to uphold the Justice Department’s view that LGBT people aren’t protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964, which bars sex discrimination in the workforce. Additionally, Barr suggested he’d uphold religious freedom even at the expense of anti-LGBT discrimination.

But Barr also said during his confirmation he’d have “zero tolerance” for hate crimes, including those committed against LGBT people, and make investigating and prosecuting them a “priority” as attorney general.

Sharon McGowan, chief strategy officer for the LGBT group Lambda Legal, said in a statement he must uphold civil rights as attorney general.

“As attorney general, William Barr will be responsible for defending the civil rights of all people, not just the wealthy and the powerful,” McGowan said. “From his first day on the job, he must make clear that, unlike his predecessor, he will not use the Department of Justice as a weapon of discrimination and bigotry. He must bring new leadership to the Department of Justice, and get it back in the business of defending civil rights and equal justice under law for all people.”

But Barr, who also served as attorney general 30 years ago during the administration of George H.W. Bush, also has a record troubling to LGBT rights supporters.

The Trump appointee once made anti-gay comments expressing concerns about greater tolerance for the “homosexual movement” in the United States than the religious community in a 1995 article for “The Catholic Lawyer,” a conservative Catholic publication for St. John’s University School of Law.

“It is no accident that the homosexual movement, at one or two percent of the population, gets treated with such solicitude while the Catholic population, which is over a quarter of the country, is given the back of the hand,” Barr once wrote. “How has that come to be?”

During his tenure at the Justice Department under Bush, Barr also acted to keep in place an administrative ban on people with HIV from entering the United States. Barr implemented a policy using the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to detain people with HIV, including Haitians seeking asylum in the country.

Despite this record, one longtime gay friend of Barr’s, former Time Warner general counsel Paul Cappuccio, has come to his defense. Upon Barr’s nomination, Cappuccio told the Blade, “He’s not going to ever let people be discriminated against, OK?”

David Stacy, government affairs director for the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement Barr’s confirmation spells trouble for LGBT people.

“William Barr has made clear that as attorney general he would not defend and uphold civil rights laws for all Americans — including LGBTQ people,” Stacy said. “From his deeply disturbing opposition to nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people to his record of undermining HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and awareness — Barr would perpetuate Jeff Sessions’ work to license discrimination and double down on the Trump-Pence administration’s harmful attacks on the LGBTQ community.”

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- Sarah Kate Ellis

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**Gold Lamé**

*It’s time for us to look to the future and embrace electric scooters*

By Sal Torre

As I sit and ponder what to write about this week, I can’t seem to focus on any single topic. Should I write about the discussion at our last City Commission meeting concerning the Florida Competitive Workforce Act? How some in our community would like to see a few crumbs of equality instead of the whole pie, to make a deal by taking the very important protections of housing and public accommodations off the table for the LGBT community in our state? No discrimination while you work or seek employment, but just wait until you go home, look to use a public restroom, or try to book a hotel room. Not such a good deal if you ask me.

Perhaps I could write a “What ever happened to” type article, describing what candidates for public office in our municipal elections are up to since Election Day in recent years past. Fellow residents would like to know where all these civic minded individuals are who promised us so much. Many quickly disappear once the reality of post-election defeat sinks in, with the realization that they were not as popular as they thought. Many no longer live in our city, have never participated in community organizations except during the brief time of their campaign, and have never served on a city board or advisory committee. Some even needed directions to different areas of this small two square mile city we call paradise.

With so many thoughts going through my mind, and suffering from a seldom recognized writing anxiety disorder, I ventured out to meet some friends and free my mind of the roadblocks hindering me from getting this article done before deadline.

After enjoying a few IPA drafts, reaching the point of saying goodbye and heading home, two events occurred that offered me direction for this article. First, a young gentleman wearing a gold lamé top appeared at the bar, triggering a deep guttural response from a dear friend next to me, “Oh dear God, not Gold Lamé!” The second occurred as I headed out the door onto Wilton Drive. An electric scooter whisked by as a lovely young gentleman briskly made his way along our main thoroughfare.

Electric scooters are a much-needed new mode of transportation being embraced by many in cities around the country. However, the reactions these scooters are receiving by many non-users are very similar to the reaction caused by the gold lamé garment, very passionate and very negative.

Multimodal transportation has been the established mantra on how best to move South Florida into the future amongst city planners, government entities, and many others. So, what is the issue over the poor little electric scooter? In a state that has no helmet laws for motorcycles, why is everyone concerned about helmets for scooter riders? In a state where pedestrian deaths by automobiles are one of the highest in the nation, why do we single out the few accidents caused by scooters as a menace that will ruin our lives? In a region grappling with horrific traffic congestion, why do we look to demonize such an enthusiastic solution embraced by many city residents to scoot about town?

As I drove through downtown Fort Lauderdale on a recent Sunday, I was amazed to see so many people utilizing the new electric scooters. Young couples riding together, people in uniform on their way to work, residents not in cars, and so many others. This is exactly what we have been asking for in planning sessions, visioning workshops, and regional planning. Yes, there are some very important issues that still need to be clarified by the state, like whether scooters should operate on sidewalks, bike lanes, and/or automobile lanes. However we should not look to judge scooters in the same fashion as many few gold lamé; that such an item has no explainable purpose in our world today.

The Fort Lauderdale City Commission’s recent decision not to pull the plug on this new experiment desires tribute. Unfortunately, Oakland Park and many other cities are rushing to ban this promising mode of transportation. Cities in South Florida need to fully embrace the concept of multimodal transportation. The state has an equal responsibility to embrace relevant regulations that will permit such new modes of transportation to best coexist with automobiles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

The state also has a responsibility to protect all Floridians against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. No picking and choosing when it comes to the rights we all deserve. That is why this community should strongly support the passage of the Florida Competitive Workforce Act.

Increasing mobility here in South Florida and having state lawmakers support full protections for all Floridians will go a long way in making life just better here. **WMG**

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The state also has a responsibility to protect all Floridians against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. No picking and choosing when it comes to the rights we all deserve. That is why this community should strongly support the passage of the Florida Competitive Workforce Act.

Increasing mobility here in South Florida and having state lawmakers support full protections for all Floridians will go a long way in making life just better here. **WMG**
For the last couple columns I’ve been talking about whether we might be able to predict where housing prices are headed, based on the long term history of pricing here in Broward County. But something has come up in the news on a related issue, that I think merits a brief commercial message.

This past week there was an article in Barron’s financial weekly on a disturbing trend in real estate – namely, why is there an increasing tendency for people, especially at the higher ends of the income strata, to rent as opposed to own their home?

Five reasons were cited:

(a) Although mortgages are indeed available, lending standards are tighter than during the mid-oughts real estate boom.

(b) Inventory in many areas of the country – at certain price points and property types – is tight.

(c) Interest rates have bounced up from historic lows. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note has increased by 130 basis points from its low in July 2016. That makes a typical mortgage payment (as mortgage rates are very sensitive to the 10-year Treasury rate) about 15 percent higher.

(d) Desire for flexibility. There are responsibilities associated with home ownership. Increasingly, people just want to send a text or pick up the phone and tell somebody else to handle it – and not at their personal expense.

And finally (and perhaps most germane here in southeast Florida):

(e) Prices have gotten so far ahead of themselves that people just don’t think owning their personal residence is a good idea, let alone a sound investment.

Let’s bring it down to dollars and cents. After all, your mortgage lender is going to want that (even if they smile when asking), and their underwriters take no prisoners.

Consider the sale price of a single family home here, limited to Wilton Manors, Oakland Park and Fort Lauderdale, over the last 60 days that is smack at the 80th percentile (the start of the top 20 percent). A pretty nice home, but hardly grand-luxe. Well, according to MLS data, the sale price of that home was $783,000.

Let’s assume you put 10 percent down. If so, I would estimate the monthly payment on this home (including property taxes and insurance) is about $5,200 per month. (Caveat: this is a “horseshoes and hand grenades” estimate; every property would be different and only a mortgage broker could give you the exact number.)

Even so, to afford that sort of payment, a lender would be looking for your household to have an income (again, horseshoes and hand grenades) in the area of $200,000 per year (ideally higher). You can (should!) ask yourself, how good are the jobs in southeast Florida, and how many households actually have (and will continue to have) that kind of income?

Well, you might argue, a lot of these buyers are from the Northeast Corridor (Boston, NYC, DC) and are making much larger down payments, or paying cash. But a lot of these people are also very sophisticated and thus aware of the factors outlined above.

It then becomes something like the child’s game “musical chairs.” For a while, everybody thinks they will get a chair when the music stops. But not everyone will. And, eventually, people will start to realize that. It seems, per the Barron’s article, that some already do.

James Oaksun, Florida’s Real Estate Geek(SM), is Broker-Owner of New Realty Concepts in Oakland Park. In addition to having degrees from Dartmouth and Cornell, he is a Graduate of the Realtor Institute (GRI).
Wilton Manors Tables Resolution Supporting Statewide Non-Discrimination Bills

By Sallie James

City commissioners on Tuesday tabled action on a resolution that urged the Florida Legislature to support two separate, bipartisan bills that ban anti-LGBT discrimination in the workplace.

It wasn’t what they had originally planned to do.

But with Vice Mayor Tom Green absent and two LGBT factions sparring over the measure, the commission hesitated. Commissioner Julie Carson opposed the resolution and Commissioner Gary Resnick couldn’t vote due to a conflict.

So the commission agreed to revisit the issue sometime in the next month.

“I’m glad it will be a continuing conversation. I really wish it had passed,” said Oakland Park resident Jen Laws, a public policy consultant and trans man who attended the meeting. “At the end of the day, workplace protections provide an avenue in which we can achieve other metrics of equality.”

The single resolution included support for both the Florida Inclusive Workforce Act (FIWA) and the Florida Competitive Workforce Act (PCWA). Both bills prohibit employers from discriminating based on sexual orientation and gender identity and would protect the LGBT community by adding sexual orientation and gender identity to Florida’s Civil Rights Act.

However, the Competitive Workforce Act additionally bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public accommodations and housing. Supporters of the Competitive Workforce Act believe that accepting anything less is a compromise, but the state Legislature has repeatedly refused to consider the measure for more than a decade.

Carson refused to support the resolution because FIWA doesn’t address discrimination in hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations. Activist Tony Lima, executive director of SAVE, said he was disappointed the resolution was tabled.

“We are trying to protect as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time,” Lima said. He believes FIWA has a good chance of becoming law because it is good for business.

“The Competitive Workforce Act has been dead on arrival in Tallahassee for the past 14 years because the Republicans in Tallahassee aren’t interested in hearing the bill,” Lima said. “FIWA is something that is more palatable.”

Resident and SFGN correspondent Sal Torre, who opposes FIWA, said the city should be “advocating for and supporting the strongest bill possible,” referring to the Competitive Workforce Act.

“Now is not the time for us to make concessions and support anything less,” Torre told the commission. He urged the commission to table the measure.

Wilton Manors Mayor Justin Flippen said the commission recognized the merits of both resolutions.

“We are not going to take a position for which one we support,” Flippen said. “Both measures are not 100 percent but we feel it’s our duty to support whichever measure will take us closer to the finish line. We don’t get involved in the lobbying. The cause of equality is greater than any individual organization.”

Equality Florida, which supports the Comprehensive Workforce Act, has released a statement opposing FIWA because it doesn’t address public accommodations.

FIWA was filed by the chair of the Republican Party of Florida, State Sen. Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota). It is a collaboration by Gruters, SAVE, the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, Translatina and the Conservatives on the Right of Equality.

Meanwhile on Tuesday the North Bay Village Commission unanimously passed a resolution urging the Florida Legislature to support FIWA. While earlier this month, the Lake Worth City Commission did so as well.

In January, newly-elected Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an executive order that prohibits discrimination in state employment and state contracting but notably excluded LGBT people.

The order DeSantis signed, “Reaffirming Commitment to Diversity in Government,” prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, and disability, but says nothing about sexual orientation or gender identity.

WMG
Wilton Manors Strategic Plan: Innovating and Adapting for Our Future

By Justin Flippen

This is the last in a series of articles about the City of Wilton Manors Strategic Plan, and the success we’ve had in achieving the goals of that plan. The fourth and final priority area is Innovating and Adapting for the Future. How do we prepare for the future and grow responsibly?

We have to find ways to treat our environment more gently and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and this priority area focuses on that goal. The technology in this realm is rapidly developing, but despite developing technologies, fossil fuel currently and unfortunately remains the most inexpensive option.

City staff has nonetheless worked to purchase fuel efficient vehicles to the greatest extent possible, but it may be shocking to learn that even in 2019, there is no widely accepted, affordable, fuel efficient police pursuit vehicle. The Wilton Manors Police Department fleet makes up the greatest portion of the city fleet, and while administrators and code compliance officers are utilizing hybrids, the patrol cars currently remain traditional gasoline fueled. We are looking forward to progress in that area over the next year, and the city should remain committed to the acquisition of green and cleaner technology and equipment that meets our public safety needs.

In addition, in the last few years we’ve implemented an innovative technology called “pipe-bursting” which extends the life of our potable water pipe system, minimizes the construction impacts to neighborhoods, and maintains the integrity of the infrastructure. Recently the city commission approved a contract for a Sewer and Storm Water Management Master Plan which will offer a comprehensive plan for preparing for sea level rise and ensuring capacity into the next 25 years. We are also exploring pilot projects like water reuse.

Reducing our municipal energy consumption through a variety of strategies is an ongoing effort and includes reducing paper, eliminating styrofoam, and phasing out as many printers as possible. Look for increased online services in the near future, like paying for classes (which will reduce vehicle miles traveled). Creating transit oriented corridors will reshape where and how we build in the future and how we move from place to place.

The city will also encourage environmentally sustainable practices by our residents and businesses, and you’ll hear more about that next month when I share the good news about the Oakland Park/Wilton Manors Joint Climate Action Plan.

Finally, the Strategic Plan calls for the city to utilize relationships with other jurisdictions to address future regional needs. Your city commission is very proactive in its efforts to advocate on issues of funding as well as legislative and regulatory concerns. My goal is to be a role model for other cities across the country, and to demonstrate how a municipality and community can prosper from being inclusive and accepting from policy to practice.

Justin S. Flippen, J.D.
Wilton Manors Mayor WMG
It’s never a good thing to be considered “plastic” (thanks to “Mean Girls”) but come March 9, that changes.

Legendary doll Barbie will be honored in an exhibit titled “The Art of Barbie: Homage to a Global Icon.” Conceptualized by the City of Wilton Manors and Art Gallery 21, the exhibit will be on display from March 9 to April 6. There will be guided tours and information at no cost on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from noon to 8 p.m.

To prove that Barbie truly doesn’t age (Seriously, what is her secret?), guests can celebrate her 60th birthday party on Saturday, March 9 at Art Gallery 21. Attendees will be able to tour the exhibit alongside local artists as well as enjoy prizes, party favors and drinks. Of course, there is an epic Instagram opportunity: guests can take selfies with an interactive Barbie installation. The party is from 7 to 9 p.m. and admission is free.

“Barbie is so iconic, she deserves this 60 year celebration and homage,” said artist Rodger Helt. Artist Wayne Nilson, favoring the doll’s diversity, said, “Barbie has been portrayed as everything from a teenage fashion model, to an astronaut, to a presidential candidate, and everything in between. Her extended family of dolls are made up of many different races and ethnicities as well, which enables a worldwide ability to relate.”

There will also be a photography workshop on Saturday, March 23 from 2-4 p.m. titled “Characters in Search of a Dollhouse.” Here, attendees will learn how to use toys (and Barbie, of course) in photography and visual story telling.

With slides, video and various backgrounds and sets, attendees will be educated on how to create their own “Toy Story” (get it?). The event will be led by Brett Butler, one of the featured artists for the exhibit and Wilton Manors based photographer and writer. Although there is no cost to attend, advance registration is requested.

“Barbie is not a fad. She has been loved by children because, through Barbie and her many friends, they can be and do whatever they desire,” said Constance Ruppender, Founder & President of Art Gallery 21, Inc.

“Social media has allowed doll people to connect to each other across the globe and this community of creatives has elevated doll collecting to a level that encompasses everyone, regardless of their station in life. All of the artists in our exhibit are doll collectors and accomplished artists...The ability to play invites us to create without attachment, explore without a destination, and enjoy the moment.”

Featured artists for the exhibit are the aforementioned Brett Butler, Rodger Helt (artist, illustrator, architectural designer and writer) and Wayne Nilson (former guest designer for Ashton-Drake’s “Gene Marshall” doll).

“These events will showcase Barbie in various art forms allowing for an eye-opening learning experience,” Butler said. WMG

Art Gallery 21 is located at 600 NE 21 Court in Wilton Manors.

For more information or to RSVP to any of these events, email artgallery21wcm@gmail.com. Visit the Instagram page @artgallery21, or visit bit.ly/WMBarbie19.
City Commissioner Julie Carson has been diagnosed with a rare form of salivary gland cancer and will undergo surgery to treat the condition in mid-March.

Carson announced her illness in a recent Facebook post:

“My next few months will be spent at U of M Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center in Deerfield Beach & Miami to treat a rare Salivary Gland Cancer - Acinic Cell Carcinoma of the Parotid Gland,” Carson wrote. “80% of these cancers are benign, Yours is not, said the Doctor. Of the 20%, yours is the rarest of the rare. Surgery is scheduled for March 15. Let’s get started.”

Carson, who was first elected to the Commission in 2010 and was re-elected to another four-year term in 2016, is determined to meet the challenge head-on.

“The main treatment is surgery. If it has spread any, the secondary treatment is radiation,” Carson said.

The surgery is tricky because all the facial nerves pass through the parotid gland, which must be removed, she explained.

Her surgeon will remove the gland, separate all her facial nerves and return them to her face by placing them in tissue that will be removed from her stomach, Carson said. “I hope she is generous in tummy tucks and facelifts,” Carson quipped.

Carson said she noticed a small lump in her face about three years ago, but it didn’t bother her and her doctor was unconcerned. But a year ago it began to grow, became sore and caused slight facial paralysis, she said.

Carson began to research the symptoms online and correctly self-diagnosed her own condition. “It was very clear what it was when I found it. I went to the doctor and said I have a parotid tumor. I went to a specialist, and had a MRI and then a biopsy in January,” Carson said. “It is a slow growing, non-aggressive type of cancer.”

She expects to spend only a night or two in the hospital and then recuperate at home.

“I have a wonderful city family and wonderful friends and am so blessed in so many ways,” Carson said. “This will be another experience and journey in life I haven’t had. Obviously I will handle it because I have been given it.” WMG
Letter to the Editor

I have two different reactions to two stories in this week’s SFGN Wilton Manors Gazette.

I guess losing Boomerang’s might be predictable as greedy landlords are a fact of retail life. However I’m appalled that the two interviewees in your article basically disregarded this store’s right to even be on the Drive. Where do d’Arminio and LoGrande get off thinking they are the arbiters of what kinds of businesses are appropriate for the Drive. I don’t know where they live but I live nearby and I walk to the store all the time - don’t care about the temperature. And most people do as well from what I see.

Thrift stores are a valid presence anywhere they want to do business - and not all of us are as rich as those two guys must be. Do they really think that we need yet more bars and restaurants on the Drive, while empty storefronts abound and some of the former barely last a few months these days. Retail diversity is the goal of any main street, and not all of us are as rich as those two guys must be. Do they really think that the two interviewees in your article are the arbiters of what kinds of shop just because a couple of clueless bureaucrats say so?

Second, in your editorial by Mr. Torre, he devotes a full page rant to discussing a property that he never even identifies. Does he expect readers to just guess what and where he’s talking about? That’s just poor journalism.

Kevin Hell
Wilton Manors

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Growing up on our sunny beaches, it’s no wonder where Marjee Nathaniel’s infectious smile comes from. She’s a natural South Floridian who loves what she does.

“My dream career has come true,” she beams.

Nathaniel credits her experience with State Farm at such a young age for the development of her communication skills and interpersonal relationships.

After graduating from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale in 1990, Marjee worked with State Farm in one capacity or another. While completing an Associate of Arts Degree at Broward Community College and Bachelor’s from University of Central Florida, she was an agency team member. It was during this time she realized how instrumental State Farm agents were in the lives of their clients.

With degrees in hand and ready to make a change, Marjee shifted gears within the company and moved into the roles of State Farm Auto Claims representative, State Farm’s Fire Catastrophe Team representative, and Personal Injury Protection Claims.

With these experiences in hand, she was presented with the grooming opportunity to move into Agency Management – a move she jumped at to become an agency field specialist training agents and their teams with the products and services State Farm provides.

“Being an agency field specialist is what truly grooms someone to be a State Farm agent,” Nathaniel says. “I really wanted to leave with people who brought me to the dance, which was agency.”

On April 1, 2008, her dream was fulfilled when she became the only State Farm office in Wilton Manors. Today, Nathaniel has clients not only throughout Broward County but all over the state.

“I strive to help people with car insurance, life insurance, and any banking needs they may have – since a lot of people are unaware State Farm has a bank,” she smiles. “State Farm has over 85 products and services.”

“Stop in for some chocolates or remembrance items. I am dedicated to taking care of every customers’ insurance needs today while planning their financial tomorrow.” It only takes one visit with Marjee to see she indeed prides herself on exceptional customer service and is always available to help.

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We’ll post as many shirtless pictures as we can, we’ll show off our scars, we’ll ask other trans men who’ve been there and done that how it felt, what doctor they went to, what insurance covered it, how to treat our scars, must-haves to get through our recovery, and everything else. But that first time you feel the breeze on your nipples — damn, is it worth it.

I was always a small-chested person and I considered myself lucky. When I started to emerge as male, though, I was self-conscious that I had a female chest and so I bought myself a binder. Like many trans guys, I did my research online through Facebook, Youtube, and various other sites.

I was excited when I got my binder in the mail but then I put it on. The damn thing was nearly impossible to put on and I almost had to cut myself out of it. And that was the first and last time I wore a binder.

I’m privileged compared to a lot of trans guys. Many guys wear binders for years. Not only are they incredibly uncomfortable and hot, but they can be dangerous to our physical health, too, making it more difficult to breathe and move around.

I did some more research and instead bought myself skin-sensitive athletic tape. For a year and a half I taped my nipples down everyday. I always wore an undershirt, too, to hide them even more.

After about 6 months of HRT (hormone replacement therapy), I started to do some serious research on my top surgery options. There are multiple types of top surgery choices for trans men. There’s the Double Incision with or without nipple grafts, Keyhole, Peri Areolar, Buttonhole technique, and the Inverted-T or T-Anchor.

At the time, I had insurance through the Affordable Care Act. While I was and still am grateful that the ACA exists, my policy didn’t cover top surgery since it was considered cosmetic. While this is getting better and a lot of insurances are starting to see the medical necessity of gender-affirming surgeries, many policies still don’t cover any transition-related surgeries.

After doing my own research on all the various top surgery choices, consulting with multiple doctors, and considering factors like travel, affordability, aesthetic results, recovery time, and more, I chose my surgeon because he was the only surgeon who actually touched me during my consult.

He was warm and welcoming and had hardly any experience with trans men. Sometimes I can’t believe I picked him since he was lacking in trans male top surgery experience. And even though there are many options for top surgery, the surgery I actually had was gynecomastia with liposuction. It’s the surgery a cisgender male would have if he had gynecomastia, which is enlarged breast tissue in men. A small incision was made on the bottom half of each areola where breast tissue was removed and then two small incisions were made under the armpits where I had liposuction. It was an outpatient surgery. I had to wear a post-surgery binder for three weeks but I was feeling almost back to normal after a week. I have no noticeably visible scars at all.

I paid for half of the surgery through the Care Credit card and the other half through my personal credit card. It took me a year to pay off the Care Credit and another two and a half years to pay off my personal credit card.

Picking my surgeon wasn’t easy, paying off the surgery wasn’t easy, recovering from the surgery wasn’t easy. And I had it incredibly easy compared to so many. But I knew how happy it made me when my parents came to visit me about 3 months after my surgery.

My dad said, “You walk a little different, more straight, with your chest out.” I didn’t notice that my walk changed but I realized he must be right. Not only was I feeling more confident in my appearance but I didn’t have to hunch to hide my breasts anymore. I could walk tall and proud.
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When executive Mark Schroeder retired after a satisfying career in New York and moved to Wilton Manors a couple years ago, he quickly identified an obvious gap in the market once he closed on his house—how to get a residential contractor to show up, be true to their word and execute a project beyond a client’s expectations.

The solutions-expert in him saw a simple mission: develop a company to provide 5-star residential, home improvement and repair services focused on the community in Wilton Manors and extending throughout Broward County.

Having worked with renovations expert Arnaldo Medina – whose work includes some of the top homes in Greater New York – Mark’s pitch to Medina to call South Florida home too, was an easy sell.

“It’s where our worries have nothing to do with polar vortexes,” was all Schroeder had to say.

With Arnaldo and team in place to bring a combination of top home renovation, repair expertise, and responsiveness, Mark put his business acumen back to work in 2018 and Wilton Manors Handymen was founded.

Mark says proudly, “While we are still an up-and-coming business, we are emboldened by the response from happy clients, achieving a five-star review from every client with whom we have worked.”

“Most of our business comes from word-of-mouth,” Arnaldo adds.

“Wilton Manors Handymen is fully insured and we are happy to stop by for a free, in-home estimate,” says Schroeder.

Wilton Manors Handymen services include popcorn ceiling removal, drywall repair and replacement, indoor and outdoor painting, crown molding, tiling, kitchen and bathroom remodels, and general repairs.

The Wilton Manors Handymen team members are also proud supporters of important networks and charities in our neighborhood and beyond, including the Wilton Manors Business Association, a year-long commitment with South Florida Gay News titles, SunServe, Southern Poverty Law Center, Honor Flight Network and ASPCA.

“We are happy to stop by for a free, in-home estimate.”

- Mark Schroeder

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A good friend has gone through weeks of excruciating chemotherapy treatments, without any guarantee of success. The regimen was so difficult, there was the possibility it would kill him. I don’t know that I could agree to it. The thought of being continually nauseous makes me shudder.

The night before my recent birthday, as I hung onto the toilet for an hour and a half violently ill, I kept saying I wanted to die. I was totally depleted, trembling in cold, and my body and mind were out of control. I can’t imagine possibly enduring that experience daily. But, you never know until you’re in that situation.

My friend had the same physical nightmare I did, but he suffered nausea because of cancer. Mine was because I dragged longer than necessary on a joint. Luckily, it was an unusual occurrence for me, and one that I won’t succumb to again. He doesn’t have the choice. He can’t say, “I won’t do cancer again.” Only, “I won’t do the treatment again.”

My mind’s images as I crouched naked and sweating were so grey, empty, and scary, that I feared I would die. A strong voice inside said, “You’re better than this.” I begged to live because I knew I had more work to do on myself, and on behalf of others. I shook with chills, and slept briefly on the cold floor.

Lincoln, our labradoodle, was asleep on the bed of a guest downstairs. He heard me, came upstairs, stood anxiously outside the bathroom, and expressed his concern to Ray with a loud bark. Ray, in bed, suffered with me, listening in anguish to every pitiful sound, sometimes putting a pillow over his head, as he imagined the day when I might possibly be reacting to chemotherapy, rather than just strong grass.

I haven’t had a drink in more than 25 years, and although I swore off pot too, it had never been a problem. Yet, there’s always the fear that an occasional high from any source will trigger a slip with your poison of choice. If I had consistently good judgment in such matters, I wouldn’t have ended up as ashamed and disappointed as I was with myself, as I begged for another day on the eve of my 71st birthday. But, I had hoped the grass would eliminate my need for a tranquilizer to ease sleep with my sciatica, and, I over-compensated knowingly.

It’s the difficulties in our lives that teach us the most about ourselves, about life, and about what matters most. My life challenges have all been things that I could manage, and small compared to those of most others in the world, certainly to those of my good friend with cancer. I want to know from my friend, “What are your reasons for wanting to live under such conditions?” “What observations about accepting one’s increased probability of early death do you have to share?”

“How are you now a different person?”

Here’s what I have to share from my own bad night. Slow down, and do things in moderation. You can always have seconds if you choose. If you have an addictive personality, don’t screw around with your recovery. If you’re having a bad experience, and it’s your own fault, don’t beat yourself up. Everyone makes mistakes. Forgive, but don’t forget. Think about what happened, and consider the experiences of others, such as those worse off, and those who endured the effects of your mistake. Share your experiences, and the lessons learned with others so that they don’t make your mistake, and so they learn from your reflections.

Also, be grateful. Be grateful for life, and the privileges you enjoy, and be very thankful for those who stand by you as you face life-altering challenges. None of us do much in life without love, and help, from others. My good friend has a husband who stood with him through every awful minute. So, too, do I. Single people have family and friends, and if not, they are always the recipients of the kindness of strangers. I am so very grateful for all of the love that guides and guards my precious life.

My heart embraces with more awareness today everyone who suffers, for whatever reason, the physically and emotionally debilitating experience of being so sick, they wish they were dead, but who actually want very much to be alive.

Brian McNaught has been a leading educator on LGBTQ issues globally since 1974. He has made his many books and DVDs available for free at Brian-McNaught.com. The New York Times named him “The Godfather of gay diversity training.”
Judy Levis Markhoff

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One of a Kind

Handsome Brandon (ID 609374) is waiting to meet you. At eight years young and 107 pounds this guy hopes you’ll open up your heart and home to him. Brandon previously lived with a park ranger and is used to walking many miles each day. Sadly his owner is ill and has no one to help her take care of her beloved dog. Brandon knows basic commands, loves car rides and really likes rope toys. He gets along with other dogs, but prefers a home without cats as he likes to chase them. Can Brandon be part of your family?

The adoption fee for dogs over 6 months is $100 and kittens over 6 months are $50. When you adopt from the Humane Society of Broward County the dogs and cats are spayed or neutered, microchipped, receive preliminary vaccinations, cats are feline leukemia tested, and dogs over 7 months are tested for heartworm. They also receive a flea/tick preventative, a 10-day limited health care plan from VCA Animal Hospitals, 30 days of Trupanion Pet Insurance and a bag of Purina ONE pet food. The HSBC opens daily at 10:30 am and is located at 2070 Griffin Road, a block west of I-95. For more details call 954-989-3977 ext. 6. To see who else is looking for a home visit www.humanebroward.com.

Brandon

Handsome Brandon (ID 609374) is waiting to meet you. At eight years young and 107 pounds this guy hopes you’ll open up your heart and home to him. Brandon previously lived with a park ranger and is used to walking many miles each day. Sadly his owner is ill and has no one to help her take care of her beloved dog. Brandon knows basic commands, loves car rides and really likes rope toys. He gets along with other dogs, but prefers a home without cats as he likes to chase them. Can Brandon be part of your family?

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The adoption fee for dogs over 6 months is $100 and felines over 6 months are $30. When you adopt from the Humane Society of Broward County the dogs and cats are spayed or neutered, microchipped, receive preliminary vaccinations, cats are feline leukemia tested, and dogs over 7 months are tested for heartworm. They also receive a flea/tick preventative, a 10-day limited health care plan from VCA Animal Hospitals, 30 days of Trupanion Pet Insurance and a bag of Purina ONE pet food. The HSBC opens daily at 10:30 and is located at 2070 Griffin Road, a block west of I-95. For more details call 954-989-3977 ext. 6. To see who else is looking for a home visit www.humanebroward.com.

Sweety & Mikey

Sweety (ID 607255) and his brother Mikey (ID 607256) have such a sad story. Their beloved owner passed away quite some time ago, and no one in their family could take them in. Various family members tried to care for them by feeding them and visiting them in the empty house while they tried to find a suitable new home. But, no new home was found, and that’s no life for a companion cat. So, their family had to make the tough decision to bring them here to the shelter. Thankfully they are getting plenty of love and attention here, but they really need a new forever friend. These fellows are laid back cats that get along with everyone and everything - children, adults, cats, and even dogs! All they need is a person who is going to shower them with enough love and affection to make up for lost time. Thanks to a generous donor their adoption fee is sponsored, they just need a home to call their own.

Two of a kind

Immigration law can be complex, and it is a legal specialty of its own.”
Padilla v. Kentucky, 559 U. S. 356, 369 (2010), U.S. Supreme Court

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ON A PERSONAL NOTE, I AM PROUD TO DELIVER TO YOU TODAY THE LARGEST WEEKLY PAPER IN GAY AMERICA. AT THE SAME TIME, AS I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE, NEVER COOK BACON NAKED.

SFGN’S PLACE AT YOUR TABLE

As we begin our tenth year, the amazing size of SFGN is a tribute to the economic strength of our own LGBT community, and that is not even counting the number of Long Island Iced Teas the Alibi will sell this Thursday night during Pride Week.

Just like our bi monthly magazine, The Mirror, which touched down at 128 pages last month with our Arts and Entertainment issue, the LGBT community of greater Fort Lauderdale is making a statement. To steal a line from “Le Mis,” we are now the mayors of this town.

In South Florida, LGBT residents are the makers and shakers of our communities; the movers and doers. We are the leaders who shape our lives, run our businesses, and dominate our politics, though since we are talking about gay stuff, I will go easy on the dominatrix thing.

SFGN is proud to be your voice. It’s not all about me. We are a group project. The paper stands tall because our content is credible, our reporting factual, our advertisers genuine, and our opinions independent.

Advertisers spend their money with us because they recognize that they get bang for their buck. Businesses realize an advertisement in our paper today can deliver them customers and consumers tomorrow. It makes sense. We reach 400 venues in three counties with distribution points in over a dozen cities.

Our online editions with breaking news stories are as much of an enterprise as printing the paper and the magazine. We offer immediate news updates and instant gratification for media junkies. From Italy to Alaska, people read SFGN online.

Publishing and distributing our digital and print editions costs a small fortune, though.

We pay for our content. Our staff, insurance, cars and even freelancers cost money. But good work ain’t cheap, and cheap work ain’t good.

Your support and advertising dollars make this endeavor and labor of love possible.

SOUTH FLORIDA’S GAY PRESS

Having a free and forceful gay free press matters in America. We have come a long way, but we have always had something worth fighting for — our rights to equality. A gay press has been the forum for your voice.

For decades, Fort Lauderdale’s gay magazines and bar guides have also sponsored pride rallies and hosted fundraisers for charitable causes. They provide editorial space for organizations and columnists to illuminate causes that count. Their media sponsorships have been additional spark-plugs that furthered our community’s economic growth and vitality.

Along those lines, SFGN has illuminated our lives and our loves; our victories and our losses. We have lobbied for domestic unions and gay soldiers. Today, we now demand equal participation and protection for our transgender community. We won’t ever let up. Nor should you, not as long as you have a breath in your body.

In this issue, SFGN provides a forum for Equality Florida to articulate its stance on a controversial LGBT bill before the state legislature. On other pages, our columnists discuss health and aging and arts and entertainment. Whether you are rich and retired, a runaway or homeless, we will be your advocates; our pages your voice.

A gay free press matters, whether it is uncomfortable for a politician in office or a pride director caught with his finger in the pie. Our duty, however, is to always be honest and thorough. If we don’t live up to that, your duty is to hold us accountable. We are not beyond criticism. Heck, you can find something wrong with me everyday. My mother did.

SOUTH FLORIDA’S GAY PRIDE HISTORY

The first ever Pride Fort Lauderdale parade on our beach begins this Saturday at 5:30 p.m., near Sebastian Street, not far from what was once the famous and very homosexual Marlin Beach Hotel. You may know it as the home of the movie “Where the Boys Are,” starring Connie Francis. This weekend, expect a few more boys.

It was in the basement of the Marlin Beach, in 1984, that a small group of eight concerned gay Fort Lauderdale residents met to form an advocacy group to call attention to an...
emerging health crisis impacting gay men. America came to call it “AIDS.” Back then, it was also known as “G.R.I.D.;” a Gay Related Immune Deficiency.

It was in South Florida that the issue of gay rights took on national prominence. In January of 1977, a group of conservatives — led by entertainer and Florida orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant — packed Miami-Dade County’s commission chambers to protest the potential passage of a gay rights ordinance. It passed anyway.

The results shook the planet.

The very first day after Miami Dade became the first major urban area in the country to pass legislation protecting gays, it snowed in Miami for the first time ever. It was also the first and only time snow fell upon the city, at least until gays showed up at the White Party in Vizcaya.

This crazed juice queen Anita would lead a repeal fight and get the ordinance reversed.

It took more than 20 years for Miami-Dade to revive and pass the law. Rights deferred are rights denied. What takes forever to build you can lose in a minute.

A year later, something called the Briggs Initiative in California would seek to ban gays and lesbians from working in public schools. The first openly gay legislator in the country, Harvey Milk, a San Francisco city supervisor, would be assassinated in his office.

When I moved to Fort Lauderdale in 1977, radio talk shows were still debating whether the American Psychiatric Association had wrongly declassified homosexuality as a “mental illness” in 1973. There were no pride parades.

South Florida has now become one of the safest and most livable places for LGBT Americans to reside, play, and work. Gay men and women have enhanced this corner of our country. It’s not only tropical; it’s tolerant.

We have come a long way, but we are not babies. Like women, minorities, and immigrants, American institutions for too long historically and unjustifiably disgraced LGBT populations. Today’s parade therefore can’t just be a party of rainbows and beads. We can’t forget a past tarnished by unacceptable indignities.

This week we must also shine a light on history. This is the very year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Bar riots in New York City. Many who helped pave the road for us are not here today to walk upon it. Remember them.

Yes, today, along the same Fort Lauderdale beach where we were once censured for looking at each other the wrong way, we smile unabashedly, parade unapologetically, and hug and kiss enthusiastically.

We have indeed come a long way. Enjoy the moment.
What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“We at United Church of Christ Fort Lauderdale are grateful for our relationship with South Florida Gay News. We are very happy with the results of this partnership. The staff is professional, enthusiastic and always willing to help! Thank you SFGN!”

~ Rev. Patrick Rogers ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“We have been advertising with SFGN since we opened our doors. Here at Yellow Brick Road we see new clientele come in every day telling us that they saw us in SFGN. We are thankful for them helping us get up and running and will continue to do business with SFGN in the future.”

~ Stevan & Diane ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“SFGN is my favorite place to advertise. The staff is super helpful and easy to work with and every time I run ads I see a big bump in ticket sales, so now I run ads for every show. I'm not sure I could even stay in business without the marketing support I get from SFGN.”

~ Ronnie Larsen ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“SFGN is a great resource for us. They have worked closely with us to develop strategies that really get our name out to the public. We wouldn't have the reach or the impact we have without them.”

~ Mark B. Kent ~
What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“Congratulations on the incredible September issue of the MIRROR. Thank you to Norm, Pier and staff for putting it together. I have enjoyed working with SFGN for the past 8 years. WELL DONE GENTLEMEN!”

~ John Castelli ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“Christ Lutheran Church is truly grateful for the opportunity to advertise with the “South Florida Gay News.” As a church in the Ft. Lauderdale community, we have seen the impact of our association with the SFGN in guests and visitors attending Sunday morning worship. We hope both the neighborhood community and our church community continue to benefit from our ongoing relationship with the SFGN. Many Thanks!”

~ Pastor Deborah Geweke ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“We love advertising in SFGN! It is a pleasure to work with Edwin and his colleagues at the paper, and we’ve seen a real increase in attendance at our services and events. It’s true when they say that advertising pays. Thank you for helping us spread the word!”

~ Rabbi Noah Kitty ~

What Our Clients Say About SFGN!

“South Florida Gay News has been instumental in increasing our patient population at American Pain Experts. The outstanding service of the staff and exceptional quality of the magazine is the best!”

~ Dr. Neel Amin ~
LGBTQ EQUALITY: NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

If you've never travelled to Tallahassee to lobby for LGBTQ equality, this is the year to show up and call on leaders to include our community as equals in the state's civil rights statute.

Lobby Days are March 11-12 and with new leadership in the state Capitol and bipartisan momentum on our side, your voice can make a difference at a time when we are on the brink of a breakthrough.

Florida has come a long way since Equality Florida's founding more than 20 years ago. We are the nation's third most populous state and today nearly 60% of Floridians are covered by local nondiscrimination protections that include sexual orientation and gender identity.

One thing we've learned from working to pass nondiscrimination ordinances all across the state, in progressive and conservative areas alike, is this: At the moment we are closing in on victory, we will be offered less than full equality. In that moment, if we start bargaining away our civil rights, we lose the moral high ground and we abandon critical protections that will take more than a decade to come back to secure.

Sometimes the bargain proposed is the introduction of unreasonable exemptions. Often it is a move to jettison protections for the most vulnerable in our community. But it always arrives with a lecture on incrementalism and what is realistic and pragmatic. Our refusal to settle for less than full equality under the law in these moments has been the key to securing full protections that leave no part of our community behind in city after city and county after county.

WE ARE AT A TIPPING POINT FOR LGBTQ PROTECTIONS STATEWIDE

The Florida Competitive Workforce Act (FCWA) has been reintroduced with the direct and simple goal of adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the existing categories in Florida Civil Rights law. Last year FCWA was the third most co-sponsored bill last year and has earned broad, bipartisan support. It is a priority for business leaders across the state who have formed Florida Competes to push for passage.

All of the bipartisan support in Tallahassee, the pressure from grassroots voices, along with business, faith, and community leaders, have made failing to pass comprehensive protections increasingly a political liability for legislative leaders. And now with the end zone visible, we have to resist the pressure to sell our community short.

This year a competing, employment-only bill has been introduced that would fence us out of full inclusion in our state's civil rights statue by addressing only employment. Under this bill our community would be specifically carved out of housing and public accommodation protections that apply to all other groups protected under Florida's Civil Rights Act. This is clearly not acceptable. The standard we have held and that we deserve is to be treated as equals under the law, not Floridians in a separate and unequal category.

THE STRATEGIC PERILS

We cannot ignore the negative political and legal implications of this “settle for less” strategy. Some will say it a necessary sacrifice for a significant gain. But a clear-eyed legal analysis reveals that is not so.

First, securing employment-only protections could actively harm LGBTQ people in the other contexts of housing and public accommodations. For example, certain federal agencies and courts have interpreted prohibitions on sex discrimination to protect LGBTQ people, but making those arguments becomes much harder if we pass an employment-only bill that specifically carves us out of housing and public accommodations. No other state with a comprehensive civil rights law has ever attempted such a risky scheme and for good reason.

A judge could cite the existence of explicit employment protections as evidence that the Florida Legislature knew how to establish LGBTQ protections when it intended to and, therefore, must have intended to exclude protections for LGBTQ people in housing and public accommodations. In other words, our legal advocates are in a position now to argue based on case law that LGBTQ people are protected in all areas under current sex-discrimination laws, and the passage of an employment-only bill could effectively take those arguments away. We have come too far to risk undermining our progress in this way.

Second, backers of this employment-only bill claim it will draw support from legislators who are uncomfortable or even hostile to providing transgender Floridians access to public accommodations, specifically bathrooms. We cannot capitulate to those...
lies as the far right targets transgender students to deny them access to public accommodations and supports policies barring transgender service members from the military. The only way through the lies is to confront them, not acquiesce or avoid them.

Third, a strategy focused only on employment ignores the coordinated malice of anti-LGBTQ crusaders who are spending incredible resources to go to court to be able to tell LGBTQ customers, “We don’t serve your kind” in public accommodations. And, research on elder issues in Florida shows a staggering 45% of same-sex couples experienced discrimination while seeking senior housing. An employment-only strategy trades away progress we’ve made toward vital housing and public accommodation protections for our most vulnerable.

Fourth, a misstep by Florida in this crucial moment will reverberate nationally. Under Speaker Pelosi’s leadership, passing comprehensive LGBTQ protections through the Equality Act is a priority for the U.S. House of Representatives. There could not be a worse time to accept abandoning full equality.

A FAMILIAR MOMENT OF TENSION

When we stand together for full civil rights, for our whole community, we show that basic protections for our community are non-negotiable. When we flinch, we send the message that we will acquiesce to ugly ideas about who we are.

The battle for equality in one of the most conservative areas of the state offers us lessons on what it takes to win in Tallahassee. It shows we can win without jettisoning protections vital to our community.

In 2012, the Jacksonville City Council had rejected adding sexual orientation and gender identity protections, and some in our coalition who had been pushing for that change began to advocate for a sexual orientation-only bill. Both versions then failed, but a new coalition emerged unshakeable in its commitment to leave no community and no protections behind. Together we leaned in to elections, educated lawmakers, and lifted up the stories of why the protections were vital. Ultimately, Jacksonville adopted a fully LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance, ushered in under a GOP mayor and conservative City Council. Mayor and former Republican Party of Florida Chair Lenny Curry signed a fully inclusive Executive Order and refused to veto the ordinance despite pressure from anti-LGBTQ conservatives. Many of our valued partners who had flinched in that pivotal moment, who had been willing to cave into a “take what you can get” philosophy, came to understand that moment as we do - a sign of how close we were to the finish line.

STAND UP FOR FULL PROTECTIONS

We have reached that tipping point in Tallahassee, where last year the majority of freshmen legislators, GOP and Democrats alike, joined in supporting full protections. Public opinion has moved dramatically in our direction. We can’t now back off and allow any legislator to feel they can abandon their obligation to provide comprehensive equal protections to LGBTQ Floridians by passing incomplete legislation.

That is why organizations who fight this fight all over the country issued a statement opposing this new legislation that carves us out of full inclusion in the state’s comprehensive civil rights statute. All the protections in our civil rights laws are vital. Our community’s tremendous progress toward this goal has always rested in the grassroots power of Floridians standing up and demanding their rights at City Hall, before the County Commission, and in the State Legislature.

We call on everyone who believes in full equality to come to Tallahassee for Lobby Days on March 11-12 to demand our Legislature complete that task of including sexual orientation and gender identity in the state civil rights act just like every other protected group, nothing more, nothing less. SFGN

CONVICTIONS
Guest Column

When we flinch, we send the message that we will acquiesce to ugly ideas about who we are.

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A LITTLE BIT OF FAITH AND PRIDE
SFGN is here for you, no matter who — or what — keeps you going. Read our Spirituality Section to stay in touch with your local religious LGBT community. The only requirement? Be yourself.

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SANCTUARY
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Some people ask if PRIDE events are still needed. Their argument is based upon the idea that the goal is to “fit in” and PRIDE events bring special attention and hinders the mainstream normalization of being LGBT. My response is that there is nothing normal about being LGBT, as it is a special gift God chose to give to me and I celebrate it every day. My “goal” is not to fit in but to embrace and feel special and celebrate who God created me to be. Celebrating my gift from God is my interpretation of normality. Being a gay man is a very special gift from God and God believes in me and our community that together we can transform the world and teach it that diversity is sacred.

It makes me sad that people have and still today use the Christian scriptures to justify persecution of LGBT people. If one looks at the example of Jesus, he embraced people of all faiths, cultures, sexes, genders and had a special connection with the oppressed. God chose God’s son to bring to humanity the gift of love not persecution. As Christians, Jesus is the foundation, the cornerstone of our faith and it isn’t just a “suggestion” for us to be Christ-like, which is an invitation to experience the kingdom of God even today, not a reservation for the future.

Being gay comes with responsibility. This weekend we will gather together, people of all sexual orientations and there are multiple celebrations from parades to beach parties. It will indeed be a special time. In this weekend’s celebration, even the city of Fort Lauderdale is hosting a PRIDE parade which I haven’t seen in the last 20 years of being acquainted with South Florida. This reflects that indeed times are changing and even though we celebrate this weekend we must remember that the fight for freedom still exists.

Lawmakers in Tennessee have introduced a bill called the Natural Marriage Defense Act in the state legislature to make same-gender marriage illegal even though it would have the effect of the state losing over $9 billion in federal funding. That’s a lot of prejudice and hate even over their love of money!

In the state of Kansas, introduced by seven Republican lawmakers, the Marriage and Constitution Restoration Act, recently presented, refers to the LGBTQ community as a “denominational sect that is inseparably part of the religion of secular humanism” and seeks to ban same-sex marriage.

I am concerned that the ultimate goal here is to have these “un-natural” acts of prejudice and hate eventually reach the new United States Supreme Court.

Prejudice, judgment, control and oppression are evil and the opposite of “natural” acts and normality according to the Christian scriptures that I study and believe. Jesus’ “lifestyle” was one of love. The world has been offered the same “lifestyle” to choose, which is love over hate. Jesus taught us the example that love for one another and our neighbor is also more than a mere “suggestion,” it’s a commandment we Christians are to follow.

As we celebrate this weekend’s events and the numerous PRIDE events throughout the year, LOVE is the path I will follow. Happy PRIDE!
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3485 N. Federal Highway, Fort Lauderdale
954.568.2208
The stories about the buffets in Vegas are legendary. It used to be that the casinos would offer lavish buffets at ridiculously low prices to lure in gamblers. Those days are long gone. First of all, the casinos soon discovered that a lot of folks came for the food and left without gambling. Secondly, on many of those buffets, folks mistook quantity for quality. Finally, the cost of providing such lavish spreads has made it nearly impossible to offer such deals. Still, most of the casinos in our area offer some kind of dining, whether it is deli style or fine dining, and quite a few offer buffets, that while not priced as low as the legendary Vegas buffets, still offer some bang for the buck.

I take the ratings on Yelp with a whole shaker, not just a grain, of salt, but I provide them here because I have not been to every one of these buffets. I also do not include places that only offer a Sunday brunch buffet.

**Fresh Harvest**

Seminole Casino Coconut Creek
5550 NW 40th St., Coconut Creek
954-977-6700
seminolecoconutcreekcasino.com

Fresh Harvest gets three Yelp stars (out of a possible five) and since I have actually dined at this buffet, I can assure you that it is a fair review. Fresh Harvest is probably among the better casino buffets you’ll encounter. On the night of my visit all of the food was fresh and well-prepared and there’s enough variety to satisfy any diner.

There is a lavish salad bar, a small but well-presented array of sushi and various hot dishes in chafing dishes. There are build your own pasta and carving stations as well. When I stopped by the carving station there was only one person ahead of me. There were two carvers, but the remaining one didn’t seem to be interested in serving me, until I specifically asked her for a slice of prime rib (which was perfectly done and lean). When I passed the carving station later, there was a line five-deep and the two people staffing the station were chatting and not waiting on any of the customers. Table service, on the other hand, was attentive and efficient.

The base price for a dinner on a weeknight is $27 and a steamed lobster or grilled steak can be added for an additional $20. That may seem hefty, but the portions are huge (really Wilma Flintstone should have carried it out). An unlimited beverage package for house wine and domestic bottled beer is $15. My pinot grigio was awful, probably the worst wine I ever drank.

If you’re a dessert fan you will be in heaven. There is a wide array of offerings, from a complex chocolate and caramel mousse to something as simple as an oatmeal cookie and a scoop of gelato. Each was perfectly made and worth every calorie. There are many sugar-free options.

Fresh Harvest is also open for lunch from Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. for $19. Dinner Monday through Thursday, served 4 p.m.- 9 p.m. is $27. On Friday and Saturday, dinner is served from 4 p.m. - 9 p.m. for $33, which includes one pound of crab legs. On weekends brunch is served from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. for $28 and includes endless mimosas & sparkling wine and one pound of crab legs.

**Farmer’s Pick**

Isle Casino
777 Isle of Capri Circle, Pompano Beach
954-972-2000
islepompanopark.com

Farmer’s Pick Buffet also gets three stars on Yelp. According to the casino’s website, the buffet partners with local farmers and offers more than 80 items. Lunch, $16.99, is served Monday through Saturday from noon until 3:30 p.m., dinner Sunday through Thursday from 4-8 p.m. is $26.99 with a $3 discount for Select, Gold, Platinum and Millionaire guests. Friday and Saturday night presents the “Endless Seafood” dinner from 4 until 9 p.m. $31.99 ($3 discount for VIPs) with a champagne brunch on Sundays from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. for $22.99 is also available.

**The Luxe**

The Casino at Dania Beach
301 E Dania Beach Blvd., Dania Beach
844-794-6244
casinodaniabeach.com

While it only gets two and half stars on Yelp, it is quite easy to get your hands on one of the Casino’s coupons allowing you to pay $25 for the buffet (available on Friday and Saturday nights only and usually priced $29.95) and getting you a $20 gambling credit. So, in the end you only end up paying five bucks. Not a bad deal and worth checking out. On Sunday from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. a champagne brunch is offered for $24.95.
What is mojo? Mojo (pronounced mo-ho) has many origins – including the derivative of the Spanish mojar, which means to celebrate by drinking. Mojo is also slang for self-confidence, self-esteem, or self-efficacy; commonly used when referring to talent or sex appeal.

These are the vibes Domenick Falcione and Anthony DeMaio created when they opened Mojo Restaurant and Lounge in 2010. Their vision was to deliver affordably priced food with the “New American Eclectic Cuisine” concept.

“It’s a place that is all about how food should be savored by the senses – a gathering spot with original artwork on the walls, live jazz and acoustic music in the lounge, and where the food reflects the seasons and spans the globe with inspired items influenced by diverse cultures from Asia to Latin America and the Mediterranean.”

Domenick Falcione is a chef/artist. Using his double “palette” to create both savory dishes and abstract art. Having learned to cook at an early age by watching everyone in his family prepare meals, at seventeen he was invited to apprentice in Florence, Italy at the 5-Star restaurant, Sabitinis. Following this two-year apprenticeship, Domenick attended and graduated in 1981 from the Restaurant School of Philadelphia. He has been featured in travel and lifestyle publications as well as having received three top reviews for Mojo in Fort Lauderdale from local food critics.

Prior to opening Mojo in Fort Lauderdale, the talented Falcione/DeMaio duo owned and operated several different eateries in New Jersey – opening their first restaurant, The Little Rock Cafe, in 1984 in Ventnor. They share the day to day responsibilities of running a small independent restaurant while respecting each other’s expertise.

Inside Mojo, one feels like they are in an island resort, with real character that invites good conversation, a comfortable atmosphere and diverse menu options. There is also an art gallery ambiance with vivid paintings on just about every wall that catches the eye - created by Falcoine himself. 37 of his originals have been purchased by enchanted customers.

Check out Mojo’s seasonal and ongoing promotions, extensive menu selections, and even a gallery of Dom’s art at MojoFL.com.

Mojo opens Monday-Saturday at 5 p.m. Happy Hour is 5-7 p.m. Half-Off Appetizers are available at the bar Monday-Friday 5-7 p.m. Live music plays Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.

Mojo Restaurant and Lounge is located at 4140 North Federal Highway, Fort Lauderdale, in the Coral Ridge neighborhood. Call 954-568-4443 or visit MojoFL.com for reservations.
J.W. Arnold  
jw@prdconline.com

THU 2/21

CONCERT
The South Florida Symphony welcomes back pianist Svetlana Smolina to perform Tchaikovsky’s dazzling Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the Broward Center in Fort Lauderdale. The program, conducted by Maestra Sebrina Maria Alfonso, also includes Rimsky-Korsakov’s spirited “Capriccio Espagnol” and Debussy’s lush tone poem, “La Mer.” Tickets start at $40 at SouthFloridaSymphony.org.

FRI 2/22

THEATER
Theater at the J presents Neil Simon and Burt Bacharach’s spunky 70s romantic comedy, “Promises, Promises,” Feb. 21 through March 9 at the Adolph and Rose Levis Jewish Community Center, 9801 Donna Klein Blvd. in Boca Raton. The score includes tuneful hits like the “A House is not a Home,” “I Say a Little Prayer,” “I’ll Never Fall In Love Again,” and the title song. Tickets start at $30 at LevisJCC.org.

SUN 2/24

CIRCU S
Dazzling aerialists soar overhead inside the Sunshine Cathedral — yes, inside the church — in Airotic’s sexy and creative adult cirque production, tonight and Saturday at 8 p.m. There’s no bad seat for an exciting, yet intimate encounter with the six ripped and very limber performers. You won’t believe what they can do with their bodies and you’ve certainly never seen a performance quite like Airotic. At the Sunshine Cathedral, 1480 S.W. 9th Ave. in Fort Lauderdale. Tickets start at $30 at OutlandishFL.com.

MON 2/25

CONCERT
Christopher Cross burst onto the music scene in 1980 and won five Grammy awards for his self-titled debut album. Now, the composer and performer of “Sailing,” “Arthur’s Theme” (Oscar and Golden Globe winner), “Ride Like the Wind” and “Never the Same” will be performing his most loved songs at the Broward Center’s Amaturo Theater tonight at 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at $49.50 at BrowardCenter.org.

TUE 2/26

THEATER
If you missed “Waitress” last season at the Broward Center, here’s your chance to catch this feel-good musical from a groundbreaking all-female creative team, including six-time Grammy nominee Sara Bareilles and Tony-winning director Diane Paulus, tonight at Miami’s Arsht Center. Inspired by Adrienne Shelly’s film, this show will have you craving pie for days to come! Tickets start at $34 at ArshtCenter.org.
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To say Sharon McKnight is unflappable is an understatement. On the afternoon I phoned her for this interview, she was cleaning up the mess from a shooting in her Hollywood apartment complex.

"We have a nut job in the building across the way," she explained non-chalantly. "I opened up the drapes and there's a bullet hole staring at us."

Several bullets pierced the walls of her bedroom and closet, but fortunately, her costumes survived, she pointed out with a haughty laugh. She stopped short of comparing her life to a "SWAT" episode, even though a SWAT team was called in to deal with the situation.

It's not surprising that most of McKnight's musical heroes are also strong women. Over her career, she's channeled Mae West, Ethel Merman and virtually every beloved buxom bombshell known to audiences.

"I have all these shows," she said. "You know when I started in 1825, there were no titles, just your name. Then all of a sudden this name thing came along—'Love Songs by Jerome Kern' and all that bullshit. I named my first show 'Songs to Offend Almost Everyone.'"

One of her most popular shows is "Gone, but Not Forgotten," a salute to legendary ladies, including Patsy Cline, Madeline Kahn, Pearl Bailey and Judy Garland. That show is always evolving, "because people keep dying, you know," McKnight said.

She just added Aretha Franklin and Carol Channing standards to that run sheet. She has an entire program devoted to the great performer and comedian Sophie Tucker called "Red Hot Mama," and another, "Betty, Betty, Bette," that salutes Betty Hutton, Betty Grable and Bette Davis.

"I once had an audience in Hartford that was so young, they didn't know who Bette Davis was," McKnight exclaimed. "That's one of the few times when we didn't 'click.'"

On Saturday, March 2, the Tony nominee will perform at Island City Stage's annual gala signature cabaret fundraiser at the Pier 66 Hotel and Marina in Fort Lauderdale, but she's not planning one of her more risqué, campy programs, even though she acknowledges the largely older gay audience would probably eat it up.

"It's not about me, it's about the people in the dark," she said about cabaret. "Thank you for the compensation, but I'm here to take you on a journey and it's going to be a real journey. It's live, it's real."

She then quoted her friend Dick Gallagher, Patti Lupone's former musical director, "Cabaret is about being yourself on purpose."

Nothing gets under the veteran performer's skin than to see contemporary "actors on Broadway" touring with rehearsed "cabaret" shows.

"It's hard for people who have been in the business a long time and made it their business when these young people come along and learn 12 songs and call it a nightclub act," McKnight complained. "I would have quit a long time ago, but I can't stand mediocrity."

She defiantly promised anything but mediocrity to the audiences at the Pier 66 event. If this call was any indicator, the performance will be memorable, for sure.
Immigration law can be complex, and it is a legal specialty of its own."

Padilla v. Kentucky, 559 U.S. 356, 369 (2010), U.S. Supreme Court

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Exhibition Opening | Saturday, February 9 from 4-7pm

Caprice, 95, Chicago, IL (detail), 2015. Image courtesy of project:gallery and Jess T. Dugan.

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SOTA.org | 954-335-7002 | info@sota.org
Transgender activist Miss Major Griffin-Gracy was inside the Stonewall Inn on a hot summer night in 1969 when police once again burst into the Greenwich Village gay bar. In those days, police raids were frequent and harassment of gays, lesbians, drag queens and transgender people commonplace.

That night was different, though, and the fed-up patrons had taken enough. That raid sparked “three nights of absolute terror,” Griffin-Gracy recalled, riots that would mark the beginning of the modern LGBT rights movement.

“…things went to west hell, as they say. And people think, ‘Oh, just one night of mayhem.’ That was three nights of absolute terror. It didn’t just happen that one day. Because people were fed up. The times are different. Everybody was in an uproar over the war, over the treatment of blacks, over the treatment of women. Everybody wanted their piece of whatever the American dream was at that time. And our community and the gays and lesbians were no different. And, so it was just a feeling of, ‘Well, God damn it, tonight we’re going to do something,’” Griffin-Gracy said.

Her incredible story didn’t end in the back of a paddy wagon, however.

In the decades since Stonewall, she has worn the hats of organizer and activist, sex worker, and transgender elder.

Griffin-Gracy found herself in Attica prison for a time (and suffered a broken jaw at the hands of another inmate). She has raised her voice most loudly for transgender prisoners—particularly those of color—who suffer regular injustices in the criminal justice system.

“I’m concerned about the things that are happening to my community that’ve been going on ever since I realized I was not like everybody else,” she told HuffPost in a 2018 interview. “It becomes a matter of when those things happen, what do you do? Do you run and hide, do you let stuff go on? And it’s hard to do that if you care about people. So, I just want to make sure that things are better, and not just for me and my folk, but for everybody.”

Despite the legalization of same-sex marriage and slowly advancing civil rights protections, Griffin-Gracy still holds a pessimistic assessment of the progress: “If Stonewall would have made a difference, things would be better today. If the civil rights movement had been a success, black people wouldn’t be 85, 90 percent in prison. So, the things that were, still are.”

She’s not one to give up a fight, however. Now a resident of Arkansas, Griffin-Gracy continues to advocate for transgender rights through her nonprofit, House of GG, and a powerful documentary, “Major!,” currently available on Netflix, preserves her story for new generations.

As the LGBTQ community—and the world, for that matter—prepare to observe the 50th anniversary of those terrifying nights and the changes that followed, South Florida also has an opportunity to thank one of the last remaining pioneers of an era.

“I’m not really anything special,” the demure Griffin-Gracy often says. “I’m just one of the girls.”

Miss Major Griffin-Gracy will be honored at the Stonewall National Museum and Archives gala on Friday, Feb. 22 at the Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale. She will also be a grand marshal of the Pride Fort Lauderdale parade on Saturday, Feb. 23.

For more information, go to PrideFortLauderdale.org.

In addition to serving as SFGN’s arts & entertainment editor, J.W. Arnold is co-executive director of Pride Fort Lauderdale.
2.20.2019

John Knox Village is committed to compliance with all federal, state and local fair housing laws. It is our policy to offer senior living to those that qualify without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, familial status, or handicap. The employees of John Knox Village have a legal obligation to treat each individual in a consistent and equally fair manner. In order to assist you with your decision on your new home, we are providing a list of guidelines used to qualify residents for tenancy in our community. Please note that this is our current rental/ownership criteria; nothing contained in these requirements shall constitute a guarantee or representation by John Knox Village that all residents and occupants currently residing at the community have met these requirements. There may be residents and occupants that have resided the community prior to these requirements going into effect. Additionally, our ability to verify whether these requirements have been met is limited to the information we receive from various credit and screening services used.

Mix and Mingle 5-6 PM at Galanga’s Thai Kitchen & Sushi Bar:
2389 Wilton Dr, Wilton Manors.

Complimentary transportation provided to John Knox Village and back to Galanaga’s.

Enjoy a tour, cooking demonstration and dinner with JKV Executive Chef - Mark Gallusci.

March 7 | 5-7 PM

Seating is limited. Reservations required. Call 954-783-4040 to RSVP.

651 SW 6th Street
Pompano Beach, FL 33060

web JohnKnoxVillage.com
Call (954) 783-4040 to RSVP.

John Knox Village is committed to compliance with all federal, state and local fair housing laws. It is our policy to offer senior living to those that qualify without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, familial status, or handicap. The employees of John Knox Village have a legal obligation to treat each individual in a consistent and equally fair manner. In order to assist you with your decision on your new home, we are providing a list of guidelines used to qualify residents for tenancy in our community. Please note that this is our current rental/ownership criteria; nothing contained in these requirements shall constitute a guarantee or representation by John Knox Village that all residents and occupants currently residing at the community have met these requirements. There may be residents and occupants that have resided the community prior to these requirements going into effect. Additionally, our ability to verify whether these requirements have been met is limited to the information we receive from various credit and screening services used.
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Funding for this organization is provided in part by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council
ALL STARS 4

The winner was announced...
Are you ready?

Michael Cook

Credit: VH1.
Monet x Change may have strutted into the Drag Race workroom on Season 10, broom in hand ready to sweep up the competition, but it was during this past season of RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars that the fans really got to see what our favorite Sponge Queen could do.

Elaborate costumes and talent to match took her to the first co-crowning, as she and Trinity ‘The Tuck’ Taylor both snagged the All Stars 4 crown and prize package.

I sat down to chat with Monet post-crowning, and this newly anointed queen chatted with me about everything from her new EP, her quick progression to right the wrongs she felt she made on Season 10, and whether or not the shade in the workroom was real or not.
Congratulations on your amazing and truly groundbreaking victory. Not only are you the first co-winner of RuPaul’s Drag Race, but you are the first queen of color to get into the All Stars Hall Of Fame! You had such a great showing on Season 10; what made you want to turn right back around and essentially do it all over again?

Well you know, I think in Season 10 I did not represent myself to the best of my abilities. I know that everyone thinks they’re the fiercest queen in the world, but I really do think that about myself. To see that my runways really held me back, I mean I know that that is something I really do know how to do, but for some reason I went with the bare minimum and it kind of bit me in the butt. So for me, that is something that I can fix quickly. I can get better clothes, I can do that overnight. I wanted to go back to show everyone, make no mistake—this is who I am.

When you came into the workroom who were you surprised not to see as part of your cast?

I was surprised that I didn’t see Ongina from Season 1. She had been having a big presence on social media, so not seeing her was kind of surprising. I had some really good reads for her too! (laughs).

Everyone goes into All Stars wanting a Ru-demption in one way or another. Do you think you accomplished that for yourself?

I did. I am so proud of my performance on All Stars 4, I think I did great. Except for the singing challenge, which is really ironic since that’s what I have a degree in. I think I showed really well on All Stars, I came in and did my best. There is nothing that I would change and I don’t regret anything. I really don’t think I could have done better at anything, and I gave my all and I 150 perfect every time; sometimes it was good enough, sometimes it wasn’t. That’s just the facts. I also believe that everything happens for a reason. Had I won a challenge that I did not win, maybe I would have sent someone home and then I could have sent me home. My All Stars path has gotten me to the Top 2 and I am happy about it.

You definitely had a strong opinion when someone showed their lipstick after an elimination and your name was on it. In particular when Manila Luzon showed her lipstick with your name on it after Latrice Royale’s first elimination. Do you think the way you felt about a fellow competitor intending to send you home was represented fairly?

I was really honest. I tried to skim around the truth and all that, but I just can’t—but be an honest person and express how I feel. I felt really shaded because I had been doing better than Latrice and we had all been talking about report card. The fact that she chose me really gagged me.

Season 11 of RuPaul’s Drag Race is upon us and your drag mother Honey Davenport is part of the cast. What do you think Honey is going to bring to the cast this season?

I think Honey Davenport is gonna bring really fierce performer. Honey is a great performer. God forbid she ever ends up in the bottom two they’re gonna have a tough time sending her home, she’s fierce.

Your podcast with Bob the Drag Queen (and The Only Productions) Sibling Rivalry has become one of the most buzzed about podcasts around nowadays, especially with the Drag Race fandom. So popular that you now have the Sibling Rivalry LIVE tour!

Sibling Rivalry is really fun. Like we tell everyone at the live show, Bob and I talk on the phone almost everyday for hours on end, and it normally ends up with us arguing about silly mundane things, and sometimes we talk about really important stuff. We thought, why not share this with the world? I told Bob, I am normally right all the time and I want other people to tell you that; that’s how the podcast came out. I love Bob a lot and regardless of whether there is a microphone there or not, we would still talk everyday. Why not let the world in on a little bit of our conversation so they can share them and enlighten someone maybe.

Your new EP has dropped, aptly titled “Unapologetically.” Tell me about it.

I have been working on “Unapologetically” for a while now, and I am super excited about it. “Soak It Up” was co-written with a woman that I met Eritza Laues. She has really great credits behind her name, she has worked with literally almost everyone in the industry and she has written some of the biggest songs you have heard on the radio. She is a drag fan and she fell in love with me and we wrote songs together. After “Soak It Up” I really wanted to release music that sounds like what I listen to, like SZA and Beyonce and all that stuff. That was the premise of the album. I also have a classical piece that I am singing, Ave Maria, it shows a different side of who both Monet and Kevin are.

As a New York City girl, you can look at Pride and Stonewall with a different set of eyes. As the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall is fast approaching us, what is giving you the most pride as a performer and as a person today?

What gives me the most pride is celebrating the black experience in the type of music and lip sync that I do. Up until my early twenties, I was not proud of being black. Through the lens of drag and a little more maturity, drag has really opened my mind up as to how beautiful being black is. I love celebrating that experience every moment that I can, in my drag and in my life. On top of that, being a black queer person of color, we are so essential in the gay experience that many people are not aware of. Being a black person of color and being gay, girl-icing on the motherfucking cake. SFGN

“THROUGH THE LENS OF DRAG AND A LITTLE MORE MATURITY, DRAG HAS REALLY OPENED MY MIND UP AS TO HOW BEAUTIFUL BEING BLACK IS.”

-Monet x Change
Co-Winner of All Stars 4

MONÉT X CHANGE / UNAPOLOGETICALLY NEW EP /
PRE-ORDER NOW iTunes: https://apple.co/2Ee9mnh
As one of only two co-winners in the history of RuPaul’s Drag Race, Trinity The Tuck has come full circle. After coming close to snatching the crown during Season Nine, she came back with the intention to prove naysayers wrong, and she made good on that promise. Putting all of her concentration into the challenges and letting her body of work speak for itself, it was no surprise to anyone that it came down to her and Monet X Change at the end of the finale. I caught up with Trinity post-finale to chat about her path to the crown, her new album “Plastic” and what exactly constitutes the perfect tuck!

Credit: VH1.
Congratulations on being the first co-winner of RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars! After a stellar season on Season 9, which brought you to the finale, what was it like going back and now taking it all the way?

Everything happens for a reason. Season 9 wasn’t my season. I felt phenomenal with where my placement was, but I knew once we got to the end, Shea (Coulee) had the most wins. The best track record wins, and I knew she was gonna win. There was no way that I thought Trinity was gonna win, I just thought I had a great run. The twist for Season 9 was a shock for everyone! For All Stars, I felt good. This is something I worked really hard for and that I have wanted to for so long. I did it; I proved to myself that I could do it.

When you walked into the workroom, who were you surprised not to see as part of your cast?

Absolutely Ongina. I had pinpointed her to be on the season since All Stars 2, and I just knew that she would be on. I hope she is on a future All Stars season; I think that she is so amazing. I was surprised not to see her, but the girls that we got were phenomenal and I was so happy with them.

You went back somewhat soon after your amazing showing on Season Nine. Any reason why?

Girl, I am not getting any younger and I have been doing drag for sixteen years. To say that it was a quick turnaround was irrelevant to me; I have been doing drag for so long and I’m old as hell (laughs). The experience is there. I had some unfinished business to take care of and this is something that I have wanted to for a long time; it’s time.

It’s safe to say then, that you have gotten the Ru-dempton that you wanted.

Yes. I could not have possibly done better than what I did. I did everything that I possibly could do. I have the best track record, I had the most wins on lip syncs, I was in the bottom the least, I had great confessions, the fan base was behind me, I don’t know what else I could have done than what I already did. I am very proud of how everything has turned out for myself and I am happy.

There is something only you can tell us; what constitutes the perfect tuck?

First things first, you can’t have a proper tuck without duct tape-obviously. Second thing is a very small penis (laughs). The perfect tuck can also be seen on my YouTube channel where I did a video on how to create the perfect tuck. Bitch, it is origami under there (laughs).

You have new music out post-All Stars finale. Tell me about it.

A new song called “I Call Shade” featuring Peppermint, a great music video with Phi Phi O’Hara, Thorgy Thor, Yuhua Hamasaki, Blair St. Clair, and a ton more. It’s hilarious and I cannot wait for everyone to see it. I don’t claim to be a vocalist, but I am doing this purely because it’s fun and it’s entertaining for myself. Hopefully everyone else agrees. My album “Plastic” is on pre sale today and you get the first track immediately. A good description of it is it’s a dance-comedy album, and there are some other people featured on the album, like Aja on one track and Alaska on another. I am so excited about it.

All Stars is done, and “Plastic” is forthcoming. Where does the journey for Trinity the Tuck go now?

My journey is ever evolving. I am going to constantly push the boundaries of where entertainment can take me. I would love to break into more acting, I would love to be a host for an awards show or for a red carpet, on a network like E! There are so many possibilities that I think I could do that I am just exploring and am going to see where it takes me. There are so many opportunities now with the show and doors opening for me. I am really excited to see what’s going to happen.

The 50th anniversary of Stonewall is rapidly approaching. You have a special connection after being a performer that performed regularly at Pulse nightclub. What gives you the most pride?

There is so much talk right now with the fandom and being so negative about some of the other queens. Aside from that amount of negativity, I see so much love and positivity being sent to all of us. It makes me smile-and you know I don’t smile that much because of the Botox internally I am smiling because it’s just amazing to see that a show like Drag Race reaches millions of people, no matter how they identify.

No matter what, it reached them and speaks to them on some level and it’s amazing. I think our community is constantly going forward in the right direction and being positive is all going to be better for us all. I believe in the universe, and I believe that what you put out, you get back. Being positive will only bring positive things your way.

“My journey is ever evolving. I am going to constantly push the boundaries of where entertainment can take me.”

-Trinity The Tuck
Co-Winner of All Stars 4
From “Brown Cow Stunning” looks (as well as a single of the same name) along with stunning lip sync and challenge performances, Heart traveled all the way up the ranks to a Top Four contestant this time around. I caught up with her post elimination to chat about what it was like coming back to the competition so soon after her own season, the big change she’s made in her personal life, and why the “Gay Oprah” may have a few more tricks up her sleeve yet!

You made it through All Stars 4 with a fantastic showing! Are you proud of yourself and your amazing showing?

Yes I am, thank you! I was happy, very much so!

We were pleasantly surprised to see you come back to quickly after Season 10. Was there ever any hesitation to come back so quickly after your own season was over?

You know, there wasn’t, not at all. The only issue that I had with Season 10 was really that the “butterfly killer” (Asia O’Hara) sent me home because her costume was better than mine!(laughs).

When you first got into the workroom this season, was there anyone that you were surprised not to see?

Actually no. I was not really worried about any of them other girls, I was just worried about getting myself to the finish line! (laughs).

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When you first got into the workroom this season, was there anyone that you were surprised not to see?

Actually no. I was not really worried about any of them other girls, I was just worried about getting myself to the finish line! (laughs).

Do you think it’s fair to say that you got the Ru-demption that you wanted?

No—I didn’t win.

Was there an inner saboteur this year that you had to really overcome to make it through to the Top Four this season? It seemed that on Season 10 you got into your own head a bit.

You know, I didn’t really have an inner saboteur the time around. All I really had to do was to rebuke the devil and take each of these ho’s out one by one. And you know what-Manila and Monet and each of them one by one, got the chop; bloop!

“Brown Cow Stunning” was both your performance in the season premiere talent show as well as your new hit single, complete with eye popping video directed by Assaad Yacoub. What was it like creating such music that essentially defined you and your journey this season?

Oh, the music was great, but it was definitely hard! ‘Brown Cow Stunning” was initially a bleak moment for me on Season 10 and they wanted a song, so I gave them one! It turned out we got to use it for the variety show, so BOOM!

What is next for Monique Heart?

Well, I am currently finishing my one woman show, we just finished rehearsals yesterday and tomorrow we are officially hitting the road. We start in Canada the last week of February, then I am back in March for the other half of the country. I am doing film in Los Angeles, and I just moved out there to give myself some more opportunities. I just filmed for two weeks with a major television network, and I meet with an agent very soon.

As you move forward in your post All Stars life, what gives you the most pride in your career going forward?

When I look back over the entire experience, I may have been on television for a year, but for me this was a ten year journey. Seeing the preparation for success I went through and for television, I am gagged, I am gooped, the goopery is very real. I can look at my life and say “Wow Jesus, you really did hear the dreams and plans of my heart and allow them to come true in time.” I am very happy.

Monique Heart on Twitter: Twitter.com/IAmMoniqueHeart

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2.20.2019 • 111
From the moment Naomi Smalls took to the runway on Season Eight of RuPaul’s Drag Race, this high fashion queen showed that she was a force to be reckoned with. From a Top 3 showing on Season 8 to a Top 4 showing on All Stars 4, Smalls was stealth about her ascent up the ladder, but had no problem taking out fan favorites like Manila Luzon and making no apologies.

While she did not snag a spot in the All Stars Hall Of Fame, she has grabbed herself a legion of new fans, and for the first time, is presenting her own music. I caught up with Naomi post elimination to talk about her Top 4 showing this year, the new appreciation she has for a certain genre of music, and why the moment you put your wig on before you take the stage is definitely the most important one of all.

Congratulations on an amazing showing on All Stars! What made you want to return for All Stars after such a fantastic Top 3 showing on Season Eight?

On my season I was a kid! I was twenty-one years old and had been doing drag for about two years. You grow up a lot in your twenties, but for me it excelled a lot being on the road constantly with professionals and having so much alone time to find yourself. It was nice to go back into the completion with a whole new sense of confidence. I was able to go in there and was able to say, this is what I do well, as opposed to figuring out what I was doing while on Season 8. I was definitely much more comfortable.

Who were you surprised not to see in the workroom when you first walked in?

I had heard rumors that Adore Delano was going to be back this season. Her time on All Stars 2 was cut short, and I had heard she’d had some regrets. I was very excited to see her!

You had a very strong showing on Season Eight; do you think you got the Ru-demption that you wanted?

I definitely think I got the Ru-demption that I wanted. I don’t know, there is something about makeover challenges with me (laughs). It is very flattering though, my favorite part of drag is conceptualizing and creating something out of nothing and trying to tell a story out of it. The fact that I could do that for both seasons is amazing. I definitely wanted to go in and get the crown, but then I kind of saw that that was not going to happen, but I did not let that stop me from trying to give the judges and the runway my best every single week.

Is there any inner saboteur that you had to conquer on this season of All Stars?

I thought that I had gotten rid of it on Season Eight, but then the same thing was happening to me during All Stars 4. It is really hard in a competition setting to not compare yourself to your competitors. What I have realized is that I cannot do what Bob the Drag Queen can do, but Bob the Drag Queen cannot do what I do. You have to have that confidence and be able to say this is what I do, this is what I do well, and this is why I am here. You cannot get distracted about why you are “not like the other girls.”

You will now go down in history as the queen who sent home the iconic Manila Luzon on All Stars 4.

And I would do it again (laughs). I came to play a game and to get myself to the top. If I had bombed during the Sex and The City challenge and Manila had still been in the competition, I don’t know that she would have necessarily saved me. RuPaul’s Drag Race fan-dom can get a little intimidating though, especially when you are going to make decisions; because you are concerned with what the fans are going to say. At the end of the day though, I was definitely more focused on the competition.

The fandom for Drag Race definitely can get a little intense, is that fair to say?

Yes, absolutely. I was kind of a crazy fan when I was in middle school myself. You have so much emotion in your little pubescent body, sometimes you just don’t know where to take it. (laughs).

You did the video for “Go Fish” with Manila Luzon, so all is thankfully forgiven. Speaking of music, you have your own music coming out I hear.

You know, I used to be one of those girls who would go on Drag Race and say “I will never make any music, I am not that girl.” Then I realized you could have so much fun creating videos and visuals and tour and present to your audience something that you came up with that is one hundred percent you. Music has been really fun and when I moved to Chicago I really go into house music. That was not a style of music that I was not really familiar with before, and I can really identify with it now! Frankie Knuckles, Derrick Carter, Michael Serafini, all those guys; Smart Bar in Chicago has really opened my mind to another whole style of drag.

As a performer and as a person, what continues to give you the most pride?

At the end of the day, it is really amazing to have a goal. When we are sitting on our own putting on our makeup or putting on our wig, there is always this end goal and image in the back of your head. I always try to quote RuPaul with this one; “when we can see ourselves in the image of our own imagination, it is the most powerful thing you can ever do.” That gives me so much pride to have a plan and make it happen. To have an audience be there and also enjoy it is definitely the cherry on top.
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A’keria Chanel Davenport is part of the Davenport drag legacy, and like her family members before her, is known as the quintessential pageant girl. This Texas stunner comes from a long line of girls from the Lone Star State who have shown us what they can do, including her drag aunt, Season 7/All Stars 3 stunner Kennedy Davenport. Starting in Dallas and now residing in Houston, Texas, this Lone Star lady has a great deal to live up to based on her family members’ previous performances, but something tells me if there is anyone that can do it, it’s A’keria Chanel Davenport.

Like her drag mother Season Five’s Coco Montrese, I think it is safe to assume that we can expect Kahanna Montrese to absolutely slay when it comes to lip syncing against her fellow Season 11 sisters. Coming out of the ever burgeoning Las Vegas drag scene, Montrese got into the drag scene on a bet with a bartender in her hometown. Citing both Season 1 showstopper Nina Flowers and Coco Montrese as her biggest influences, she currently is part of the cast at Drag Brunch at Señor Frogs Las Vegas, Something tells me Las Vegas will have to share Kahanna Montrese with the rest of the world after everyone gets a taste of what she can do on Season 11.

Columbus, Ohio has one of the best drag scenes in the Midwest and a large part of that is due to the dynamite Nina West. This bawdy broad is known as one of the leading queens in the Midwest, with her own nightly shows at numerous hotspots, but also putting on her own one woman productions, making this queen so much more than a typical “nightclub” queen and elevating her name throughout the drag community. Her talents should serve her well in acting challenges, and like Latrice Royale before her, West is the consummate professional and will most likely hold others to that very same standard. As a queen who has been rumored to be cast on the show for several seasons, it is interesting of finally be able to see what she is made of on the Drag Race main stage.

Honey Davenport is the current Miss Paradise and is a former Miss’d America, an annual pageant held at the Borgata in Atlantic City. She has a weekly show at Paradise in Asbury Park on Friday nights, “A Taste Of Honey” and has been wowing the crowds with her electric performances, eye popping fashions, and even had Drag Race sisters from previous seasons join her. Dida Ritz (Season 4) Vivacious (Season 6) and Mystique Summers (Season 2) all have taken the stage at A Taste Of Honey this past year. With a pedigree that includes being the
ARIEL VERSACE has long been rumored to appear on the show, and with polish only matched by her professionalism, Versace is poised to make a splash this season. Her New Jersey roots run deep. She has been a frequent guest at Paradise in Asbury Park, placing as first runner up in the Miss Paradise pageant several years ago. She also is part of the Vixens of Vera Drag Brunch in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, which has been selling out consistently since its inception. Along with partner Chastity St. Cartier, Versace is behind Drag by Chariel, which specializes in, among other things, truly outstandingly crafted hairpieces for fellow queens. This girl is a pro on and off the stage, and can lip sync a pop anthem with the best of them; it will be interesting to see how this East Coast stunner meshes with her sisters from all over the nation this season.

Like Season Ten’s Kameron Michaels, BROOKE LYNN HYTES is poised to be the “thirst trap” of Season 11. Statuesque in drag and smoldering when out, this Nashville stunner started drag to have a career where she was in control of both her life and her art. Citing Annie Lennox and Cher as among her influences, she merges eye popping looks with beyond unique fashions (her Instagram @blytes is truly a sight to behold). Fellow southern sister Kameron was a quiet contender, showing what she was made of when it truly mattered, propelling her to the final four. While Hytes may try a similar tactic, she could also let her fellow competitors know what they are dealing with from the beginning; either way, viewers will be watching Brooke Lynn Hytes closely.

With Muslim and African influences throughout her performances, Mercedes Iman Diamond is truly a queen like no other we have seen on RuPaul’s Drag Race before. This Minneapolis queen is a long time pageant winner, with wins such as Miss Gay 90’s. She was also a second alternate to Miss Minnesota Continental. Notoriously, pageant queens have done fairly well in this competition, with previous season queens like Trinity Taylor and Eureka O’Hara going all the way to the finals. It remains to be seen if Diamond’s pageant chops can take her through the Drag Race competition as well.

PLASTIQUE TIARA doesn’t just have one of the best names to ever grace RuPaul’s Drag Race, she comes from pretty good stock herself. As part of the House of Edwards, Tiara shows that she has learned plenty from house mother Alyssa Edwards and sister Shangela. Tiara is the youngest queen this season (at twenty one years old) and has already gained a massive following on social media, where she consistently pulls killer looks together and demonstrates a polish like few other girls well past her age have. Her live performances are epic as well, with splits and dips being part of her vast repertoire. It will be interesting to see how Plastique Tiara stacks up against queens that have been in the game decades more than she, but something tells me that Tiara is up for the challenge.

A returning queen always gets a good amount of buzz, but when the queen is one that has become as much of a part of the lexicon as VANESSA VANJIE MATEO, you know she is returning with a splash. Like Shangela and Eureka before her, “Miss Vanjie” is strutting back into the competition after becoming a viral sensation and a constant topic of conversation during Season Ten (where she was eliminated first). The drag daughter of Season 3 finalist Alexis Mateo is known for turning amazing looks and absolutely killing her performances (she is a trained dancer and a makeup artist respectively) and has even released her own song (“I’m Vanjie”) since her appearance on Drag Race. The real question that remains is how the sudden rush of exposure will serve her now that she is back in the competition once again.

Brooklyn, New York’s SCARLET ENVy is as she calls herself, the “cheapest lady with the highest price wig.” This East Coast enchantress gives you old Hollywood realness, but while keeping with her own unique drag style. Like Season Nine (and fellow Brooklyn sister) Sasha Velour, Scarlet believes that “gender is a construct” and plays with its confines consistently throughout her performances. Starting at the Fashion Institute of Technology and ending up as a drag performer, Envy may be able to tap into that New York energy that several other winners from the drag mecca of New York City have been able to do in season’s past.

It’s rare that you won’t see more than a handful of New York City girls in one season of RuPaul’s Drag Race and Season 11 is no exception.

SHUGA CAIN is one of Manhattan’s leading hostesses, and she is well overdue to be hitting the RuPaul’s Drag Race workroom. Her live performances merge live singing with show-stopping performances. Winning the Look Queen competition (like Season Ten Winner Aquaria and Season Ten’s Dusty Ray Bottoms before her) only elevated her profile in the drag community in New York City and beyond. A triathlete in her non-drag time, Shuga will need all of those talents and more to take on her fellow Season Eleven sisters.

SOJU is defined as a clear, colorless distilled beverage of Korean origin, but this queen is anything but “clear or colorless.” Like Kim Chi, Shea Coulee and a litany of other queens before her, Soju comes straight out of the Chicago drag scene, which has been known to churn out some legendary Drag Race queens. An experienced YouTube interviewer of other girls she has also kicked off a number of K-Pop drag parties nationwide, paying tribute to her own legendary K-Pop drag performances. Using her own Korean influences, as well as her black belt in kwon do abilities definitely helps her stand out from the crowd in Chinatown, but will it do the same on the Drag Race main stage?

RuPaul’s Drag Race has always been the place where the “big girls” could always find a place to play. From Stacy Layne Matthews to Eureka O’Hara to Latrice Royale, their drag has served as a template for many girls of subsequent seasons to follow. SILKY NUTMEG GANACHE is sure to set a whole new set of standards when she hits the work room on Season 11.

She’s also a queen of innumerable talents, with a degree in music and can play the piano as well. A Southern queen who now calls Chicago home, Ganache has competed in well over one hundred pageants (yes—one hundred), so she is well versed in the art of drag competition and how to play the game. It will be interesting to see how she takes her numerous talents and uses them all to her own advantage during the competition.

If there was ever a queen from a beyond perfect pedigree, it’s RA’JAH O’HARA. Straight out of the Dallas drag scene, she is the drag daughter of Silke O’Hara and is connected to the iconic Kelexis Davenport (and the rest of the Davenport family) through her mother. Rahaj has been doing drag for well over a decade, and is seasoned on and off the stage. She is also a seamstress and paints her own artwork, which is available for purchase. This title holder has also won numerous pageants, including Miss Texas FFL, which is a title that Kennedy Davenport, Asia O’Hara, and Alyssa Edwards all have been privileged enough to snag. Watching this queen stepping away from her family and standing on her own during her own season of the competition will be a true journey for this queen.

It’s not a season of RuPaul’s Drag Race without a unique and diverse queen to make the competition that much more exciting, and YVIE ODDLY fills that bill and more. This Denver superstar (and protege of Season 1 finalist Nina Flowers) will be “pushing boundaries” and takes pride in her beyond outrageous looks. Oddly has been known to work with unconventional materials, with her looks running the gamut from alien creature to standard gorgeous queen. The loud cackle that she is known for will no doubt become a soundbite on the show, but she will need more than a viral moment to knock out the rest of this dynamite group of ladies.
**THEATER**

**BROWARD COUNTY**

### Deaf Singer-Songwriter Mandy Harvey

Wednesday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 201 SW Fifth Avenue, Fort Lauderdale. Harvey lost her hearing but overcame her adversity by “feeling the beat” and using visual tuners and muscle memory to hit her pitch. She wowed audiences all over the world during her run on America’s Got Talent with her jazzy, upbeat and soul-filled vocals. Tickets $35 to $59. Visit BrowardCenter.org.

### The Devon Allman Project w/ Duane Betts

Thursday, February 21 at 8 p.m. at the Parker Playhouse, 707 N.E. Eighth Street, Fort Lauderdale. Allman and Betts, the sons of Gregg Allman and Dickey Betts, are joining forces and the concert will feature new music, songs from their solo projects and classic Allman Brothers and Gregg Allman tunes in honor of the 50th anniversary of The Allman Brothers Band. Local jazz and blues singer Haven Star opens the concert. Tickets $30 to $46. Visit ParkerPlayhouse.com.

### Southside Johnny and the Asbury Dukes

Saturday, February 23 at 8 p.m. at the Parker Playhouse, 707 N.E. Eighth Street, Fort Lauderdale. With their classic blend of hardcore R&B and street-level rock, molten grooves, soulful guitar licks and blistering horn section, Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes put their unique stamp on the Jersey Shore sound. Tickets $38 to $68. Visit ParkerPlayhouse.com.

### Ian Maksin

Sunday, February 24 at 7 p.m. at the Arts Garage, 94 NE 2nd Ave, Delray Beach. Russian-American cellist and composer Ian Maksin's has gained worldwide recognition by having created his own unique style bringing together jazz, classical and world music. Tickets $35 to $45. Visit artsgarage.org.

### Every Brilliant Thing

February 14 to March 3 at the Carnival Studio Theater in the Ziff Ballet Opera House. An exhilarating, participative play that strikes a delicate balance between sobering loss and cathartic laughter. In this one-person tour de force, a man attempts to cure his mother's depression by creating a list of the best things in the world. Tickets $50 to $55. Visit arshtcenter.org.

### Mill Fire

February 15 to February 24 at the Studio One Theatre, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton. Told through a magnificent tapestry of memory, Mill Fire, explores the mysterious causes and devastating effects of a steel mill explosion as seen through the eyes of Marlene, a defiant young widow desperately in need of closure. Tickets $22. Visit fauevents.com.

### ‘We Will Not Be Silent’

February 7-24 at the Heckscher Stage theater space in Parliament Hall, Boca Raton. “We Will Not Be Silent” tells the true story of Sophie Scholl, a German college student who led the only major act of civil disobedience to the Nazis during the Second World War. Tickets $25 to $35. Visit fauevents.com.

### Free Friday Concerts

Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at the Delray Beach Center for the Arts, 51 N. Swinton Ave. in Delray Beach. Enjoy live music from the comfort of your picnic blanket or lawn chair every week, for free! Returns in October. Call 561-243-7922 or visit DelrayArts.org.

### Palm Beach County

### Music for the Mind

Tuesday, March 19 at 7 p.m. at the Harriet Himmel Theater at CityPlace. The Kretzer Music Foundation’s popular MUSIC FOR THE MIND concert series will return with the legendary pianist David Crohan. All proceeds from the concert will benefit children's programs of Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches. Tickets $15 to $75. Visit palmbeachdramaworks.org.

### Spitfire Grill

February 1-24 at the Don & Ann Brown Theatre, 201 Clematis Street, West Palm Beach. The Spitfire Grill, a warm and uplifting show by James Valcq (book and music) and Fred Alley (book and lyrics) about starting over and second chances, forgiveness and redemption. Tickets $15 to $75. Visit palmbeachdramaworks.org.

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**TOP PICKS**

- Ian Maksin
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**Every Brilliant Thing**

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**Siudy Flamenco Intimo**

Friday, March 1 at 8 p.m. at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center. Artistically directed by dancer and choreographer Siudy Garrido, featuring original music from Spanish guitarist José Luis de la Paz, the extraordinary production is a modern flamenco performance which reflects the pureness of flamenco art from a contemporary perspective. Tickets $45 to $49. Visit Aventuracenter.org.
Openly gay actor and model Ronnie Kroell, one-time Playgirl feature and a pit crew member in Season 5 of RuPaul’s Drag Race, announced at the Pump gay club in West Hollywood he would be running as an independent candidate in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election.

“Donald Trump wouldn’t know how to handle a candidate like me, it’s not in his wheelhouse,” Kroell told Towleroad.

Kroell, 36, joins Democratic Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg in the 2020 race for the White House.

The former actor in the gay indie comedy “Eating Out 4: Drama Camp” has set up a website and campaign donation tab with a $150,000 goal. It has made $5,401 at the time of writing.

Under “Issues” the website proclaims “Ronnie is taking a page from George Washington’s book and looking to YOU, The People, for guidance in developing his platform.”

After moving to LA from NYC in 2012, Kroell was a part of “The New F-Word – Giving Bullying The Bird,” a campaign that aimed to encourage friendship and prevent bystanders to bullying. Kroell and fellow campaigners visited schools, businesses, and organizations to talk about bullying and suicide. The group committed to a 921 mile walk while visiting these establishments.

“Vulnerability and empathy are key to opening up and reducing stigma around mental health, but for this work to be truly successful — we must shift the conversation from “anti-bully” to “pro-friendship,” Kroell went on to tell Towleroad.

“My wanting to be president is rooted in a passion for the people, a desire to remind ourselves that the power belongs to US, and a deep inner calling that I cannot ignore that wants me to find a way to help heal our Nation’s wounds,” Kroell went on to say.
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**BROWARD COUNTY**

*GLNN Happy Hour*
Thursday, February 21 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Good Spirits, 476 N Federal Highway, Fort Lauderdale. Join the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network for a night of networking. Happy Hour prices all night and free appetizers.

*Innovation Nation – Live!*
Sunday, March 3 at 3 p.m. and Monday, March 4 at 10 a.m. at the Parker Playhouse, 707 NE Eighth St, Fort Lauderdale. Like its TV counterpart, two correspondents engage with the audience and illustrate how innovators of the past continue to influence science, technology, agriculture, design making and social justice movements today. Tickets $23 to $63. Visit ParkerPlayhouse.com.

Runway Fashion Show
Thursday, February 21 at 7 p.m. at the Hard Rock Event Center, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Hollywood. Pride Fort Lauderdale opens with a glamorous runway fashion show hosted by “RuPaul’s Drag Race” All-Star Naomi Smalls and fashion guru Carson Kressley and featuring creative garments by talented “Project Runway” alumni designers. Tickets $25.

**BROWARD SUPPORT SERVICES**

PFLAG
Tuesdays in Fort Lauderdale, Coral Springs and Southwest Ranches. A support group for parents of LGBT youth 13 to 21. Free. Visit SunServeYouth.com for dates and locations.

**SURVIVOR SUPPORT**
First and third Wednesdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Broward Health Imperial Point Hospital cafeteria, 6401 N. Federal Highway in Fort Lauderdale. Find support from counselors and peers who have lost loved ones to suicide. Call the Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention at 954-384-0344 or visit FISPOnline.org.

**Palm Beach County**

**Palm Beach County**

**Invasion**
Friday, February 22 at 6 p.m. on Wilton Drive, Wilton Manors. The Pride Fort Lauderdale celebration moves to the “gayborhood,” Wilton Manors. Participating restaurants, bars and nightclubs along Wilton Drive will offer live entertainment, drink and food specials and more—all night long.

**Pride Block Party**
Saturday, February 23 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at 5th Street at Seabreeze Blvd. There will be hot boy and girl dancers and special performances all evening long. It’s going to be an epic evening on Fort Lauderdale Beach. Free, $5 donation requested.

**Pride Festival**
Sunday, February 24 from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Fort Lauderdale Beach Park, 1100 Seabreeze Blvd. The highlight of the weekend is the Pride Fort Lauderdale festival, held on the pristine sands of Fort Lauderdale Beach. Explore the products and services offered by more than 120 vendors and exhibitors, taste cuisines from around the world, and dance to the music of internationally-acclaimed DJs Sushiman and Kidd Madonny.

**34th Annual Palm Beach International Boat Show**
March 28 to March 31. Attendees will enjoy live music and refreshments at the show’s famous floating cocktail lounges. Guests are invited to come by boat and may tie up to free docks located south of the in-water displays. Tickets $18 to $52. Visit PBboatshow.com.

**Coffee Clutch at Compass**
First Monday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at Compass, 201 N. Dixie Hwy, Lake Worth. A social group focusing on the mature LGBT+ community in Palm Beach County, providing a relaxed environment for meeting friends, discussing interesting topics, and engaging in community projects. Free to attend, email joekolb@compassglcc.com for details.

**Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Sculpture**
September 29 to March 31 at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens. Organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the thirty works by sixteen artists comprise the first-ever comprehensive exhibition of contemporary Japanese lacquer sculpture. They have all been drawn from the Clark Collections at Mia, the only collection in the world to feature this extraordinary new form. Tickets $9 to $15. Visit morikami.org.

**Family Nights with Food Truck Invasion**
Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Sunset Cove Amphitheater, 8802 Boynton Beach Blvd, Boynton Beach. The event features rotating entertainment activities and a large collection of Food Trucks on site! Admission is free.

**Draw Event**
Friday, February 22 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Art and Culture Center, 1650 Harrison Street, Hollywood. Exposed turns art patrons into buyers during a fun and exciting night in which every ticket holder goes home with an artwork. Visit artandculturecenter.org.

**Monica Lewinsky**
Saturday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m. at the Temple Emanuel, 1701 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach. Lewinsky will be discussing our online culture of humiliation, offering advice on how to overcome bullying, and drawing from personal experience. This event is open to the public, but will be a closed event to press and media. As such, the speaker’s remarks and Q&As will be off the record. Tickets $75 to $200. Visit tesobe.org/monicalewinsky.

**Arts Center Farmers Market**
Mondays from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Parker and Vann Thomson Plaza for the Arts, 1300 Biscayne Blvd. in Miami. Purchase fresh food from local farmers, including fruits, vegetables, meats, prepared foods, as well as chefs, live music, and cooking demonstrations. Tickets $45 to $75. Free. Visit ArshtCenter.org/en/Visit/Dining.

**The Tea Dance After Party**
Sundays from 7 p.m. until close at Mangoes, 700 Duval St. Upstairs Ricky Ricardo Room. Boogie the night away with a little help from delicious drinks, great music and free admission. SFGN

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