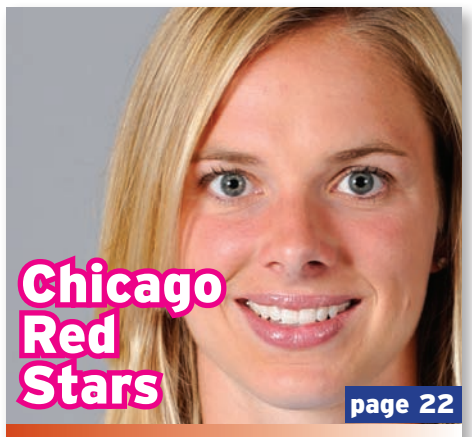
WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985 APRIL 8, 2009 • VOL 24 NO 28











Iowa says 'I Do' to gay marriage

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In an enormous victory for equal marriage rights for gay couples, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled unanimously April 3 that gay couples should have the right to marriage licenses the same as heterosexual couples.

The decision represents the first time a state supreme court has ruled unanimously in favor of equal marriage rights for gay couples, and it is the first time a state in America's "heartland" has done so. The decision, which goes into effect in 21 days, will make Iowa the third state to be currently offering marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

"We are firmly convinced the exclusion of gay and lesbian people from the institution of civil marriage does not substantially further any important government objective," wrote Justice Mark Cady, for the seven-member court. "The legislature has [with its 1998 law banning marriage] excluded a historically disfavored class of persons from a supremely important civil institution without a constitutionally sufficient justification."

The court said the law violated the state constitution's guarantee of equal protection of the law and that the court's own constitutional duty "requires" it to strike the law down.

Noting that other supreme courts have allowed legislatures to provide "equal benefits" of marriage through civil unions, the Iowa court

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Ingrid Olson (left) and Reva Evans of Council Bluffs, Iowa, talk with news reporters April 3 after that state's supreme court ruled unanimously in favor of same-sex marriage. Olson and Evans are one of the couples who were represented in the lawsuit by Lambda Legal. Photo courtesy of Lori Blachford

Anti-gay charges leveled at police officer

BY YASMIN NAIR

Homophobia within the Chicago Police Department (CPD) has been an issue for several gay activists and attorneys of clients alleging homophobic slurs and misconduct by police officers. A recent press conference by, among others, Jon Erickson of Erickson & Oppenheimer Attorneys at Law, Gay Liberation Network and local activists spotlighted lawsuits recently filed against Officer Richard Fiorito, an officer at the the 23rd District police station at Addison and Halsted.

The press conference was held April 2 in Dirksen Federal Court Building, 219 S. Dearborn. The bulk of the charges against Fiorito involve allegations that he excessively tracked innocent drivers and charged them with DUIs. Erickson is representing clients who allege that they were routinely targeted. According to a memo released by Erickson, "For too long, Officer Fiorito has stopped innocent motorists without cause, conducted sham investigations, refused to give breathalyzers, manufactured false reports and committed perjury as matter of routine."

Erickson wrote that Fiorito, who is currently 60 and started with CPD late, is not eligible for a pension and is using overtime pay for court appearances to increase his salary. Fiorito is said to have made 300 DUI arrests in the past year. Of interest to LGBT-rights activists is that Fiorito is alleged to have routinely targeted gays and lesbians.

Erickson spoke to Windy City Times about the allegations of homophobia. Two of the clients he represented are lesbians, but Erickson acknowledged that they did not face direct homophobia in the form of slurs. In the case of the lesbians, said Fiorito, "It's really more tone than actual words. He'll say things like "The Closet [a local

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Gay-rights activist Candace Gingrich (above) was in Chicago to support Congressional candidate Mike Quigley. Read more on page 6.

Photo by Andrew Davis



U.S. Sen. John Kerry (above) has a message for same-sex couples. Read more on page 10.

Photo courtesy of Jody Seth

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Features include:
–Dish List: More (right) and Sunda
–Derek Hartley op-ed on gay media
–Pete Subkoviak op-ed on the pope
–"Couples Connecting" with Dr. Bruce Koff

Photo courtesy of Patty Bauer

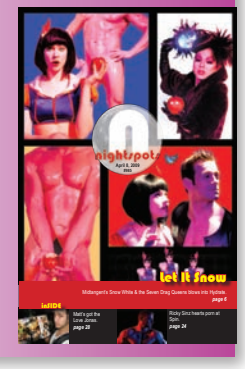




nightspots

LET IT SNOW
Midtangent Productions' Snow HIte and the Seven Drag Queens hits Hydrate.

Photo by Adam Veness

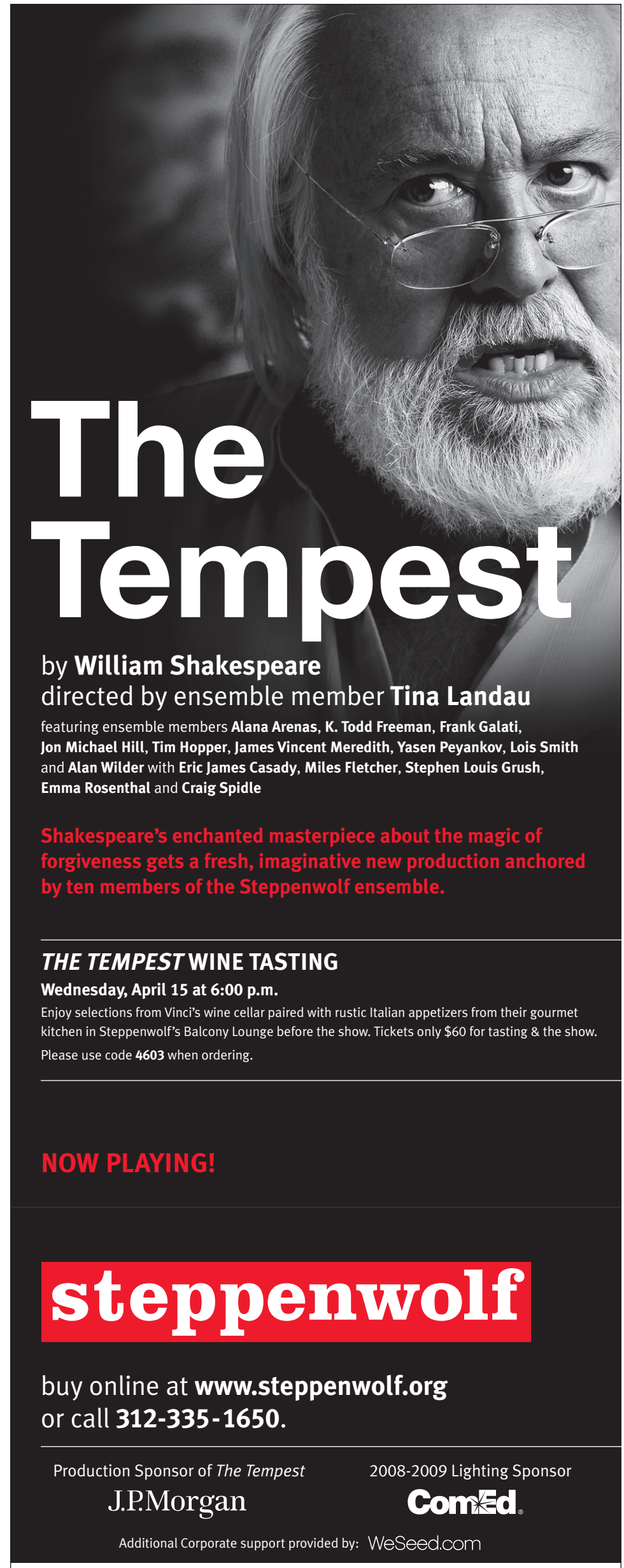




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Vermont's marriage bill: A winding road

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The Vermont House voted 95-52 April 2 to approve a bill that will allow same-sex couples to marry.

"It's been an extraordinary evening," said openly gay Rep. Bill Lippert, D-Hinesburg, who led the effort to pass the bill in the House. "There was such powerful, emotional and very, very positive testimony. The House was filled with supporters. It's an extraordinary achievement."

Beth Robinson, who heads the Vermont Freedom to Marry group that has spearheaded support for the measure both in and out of the legislature, called the vote "absolutely gratifying."

The vote in the House came after more than four hours of dramatic speeches that included choked up voices, tears and even apologies.

Rep. Sonny Audette, R-South Burlington, said he was voting against the measure with "a heavy heart" because, as a "devout Catholic … my religion will not allow me to vote for this bill. I wish I could."

But many others could, including legislators who said they had voted against civil unions 10 years ago, when Vermont became the first state to provide any legal recognition for same-sex relationships.

"I'm not particularly religious and I voted against civil unions in 1999," said Rep. Rick Hube, R-South Londonderry. But since then, he said, had come to believe this vote was about "being true to a set of principles" about individual choice, and he voted for the measure.

Suzi Wizowaty, D-Burlington, said she had been in a same-sex relationship for 30 years, did not enter into a civil union and had done nothing to support the Freedom to Marry effort.

"In recent weeks, I've given more thought as to why," said Wizowaty. "It's because it's been too painful to have to … supplicate myself in that way." She thanked Freedom to Marry supporters for their work and their courage.

Another openly gay legislator, Jason Lorber, D-Burlington, said he, too, was intimidated by the process of having to ask his colleagues to approve his marriage. Choking back tears, he told the story of he and his husband sending their wedding photo to a local paper and opening up the paper's wedding section to see all the beautiful straight couples under the weddings banner and their photo sequestered in a corner under the title "civil unions."

"Why do we have to differentiate?" asked Lorber. "Why do we have to say, 'You are different.' Why can't we just say, 'Congratulations.'"

The 95 to 52 vote on the bill was foreshadowed earlier in the evening when the House voted on an amendment that sought to delay action on the bill until voters were given a chance to weigh in through a referendum. That measure failed 52 to 96.

On April 3, the House took what was essentially a *pro forma* third and final vote on the measure. On April 6, the measure passed the Senate. However, Republican Gov. Jim Douglas vetoed the bill, arguing saying it does not provide any more rights than under civil unions. The bill then went back to the state Senate and the House for override votes. Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, issued a statement saying, in part, "This move by Governor Douglas denies basic human rights to lesbian and gay couples who live in the State of Vermont. We ask all fair-minded residents of Vermont to call their legislators immediately and urge them to stand up for equality by overriding Governor Douglas' veto."

If Vermont passes the bill and overrides the veto, it will become the first legislature to approve same-sex marriage. California's legislature approved same-sex marriage twice but was not able to overcome the governor's veto either time.

Note: As Windy City Times went to press, the Vermont House voted 100-49 April 7 to override Douglas' veto of the measure, following the Senate's 23-5 vote the same day; the legislation will go into effect Sept. 1. Visit Windy City Times online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com to find out more about this development.

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—Assistance provided by Andrew Davis

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In Michigan, a lawsuit has been filed that challenges the state's ban on funeral protests, according to the Associated Press. The ACLU filed the federal lawsuit on behalf of 64-year-old Army veteran Lewis Lowden and his late wife, Jean; during the funeral processional, they were arrested for being in a van that had signs criticizing then-President George Bush. The federal government and at least 37 states have **funeral-protest laws in response to the anti-gay Kansas preacher the Rev. Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church's picketing of military funerals**.

Lesbian travel company Sweet and Southwest Airlines launched a new marketing partnership where Southwest will serve as the exclusive domestic airline of the Sweet Caribbean Cruise, Nov. 8-15, according to a press release.

Harry Knox, director of the Human Rights Campaign's Religion and Faith Program, is among the additional members named to President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, according to a White House press release. The council is part of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and is composed of religious and secular leaders and scholars from different backgrounds. Each member of the council is appointed to a one-year term.

Read more national news online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

IOWA from cover

said such a "new distinction based on sexual orientation would be equally suspect and difficult to square with the fundamental principles of equal protection embodied in our constitution." The state's marriage law—minus the ban for gay couples—must now be applied, said the court, "in a manner allowing gay and lesbian people full access to the institution of civil marriage."

"When all is said and done, we believe the only lasting question about today's events will be why it took us so long," said Iowa Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal and House Speaker Pat Murphy, in a joint statement. "It is a tough question to answer because treating everyone fairly is really a matter of Iowa common sense and Iowa common decency. Today, the Iowa Supreme Court has reaffirmed those Iowa values by ruling that gay and lesbian Iowans have all the same rights and responsibilities of citizenship as any other Iowan."

The Des Moines Register put a different spin on it. The paper –which published procedures for how to impeach a judge after the district court judge ruled in favor of gay marriage—today "reported" the ruling was "a victory for the gay rights movement in Iowa and elsewhere, and a setback for social conservatives who wanted to protect traditional families."

There is no doubt that the decision is a victory for people seeking equal treatment of gay people under the law."

"Today's victory is a testament to the strength of love, hope and courage—our clients have shown an abundance of all three for many years and now at long last they will be able to marry," said Camilla Taylor, an attorney at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund that spearheaded the lawsuit. "This will go down as another proud day in Iowa's long history of protecting individual rights."

Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry group, said: "There's a rainbow over Iowa today and equality in marriage has come to America's heartland."

The case, *Varnum v. Brien*, originated with six same-sex couples in Polk County, Iowa—including Kate and Trish Varnum—who sought but were denied marriage licenses by the county registrar, Tim Brien. The lawsuit, filed in 2005 by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, challenged a state law banning same-sex marriage in 1998.

A state district court judge ruled on behalf of the couples last year but delayed enforcement of the ruling until the state supreme court could weigh in. Even so, one gay male couple was able to obtain their marriage license before that suspension went into effect.

The Iowa high court heard oral arguments in the case last December.

Polk County assistant attorney Roger Kuhle relied heavily on arguments frequently used by other states to justify a ban on same-sex marriage: to create a stable environment for procreation and to provide an "optimal" family environment for children.

Eight other state supreme courts have weighed in on same-sex marriage bans: Massachusetts, Connecticut and California have said their state constitutions required equal treatment of gay couples in marriage licensing. (California voters last November amended the constitution to ban same-sex marriages; a state supreme court ruling on the validity of that vote is expected by June of this year.)

Vermont and New Jersey said equal benefits of marriage are required but that the state legislatures could provide for those benefits through civil unions, which both legislatures did. (Vermont's legislature, however, has just passed legislation to provide for equal marriage rights. The governor is expected to veto that legislation over the weekend and the legislature will attempt to override that veto early next week.)

The state supreme courts in New York, Maryland, and Washington State have ruled that laws banning gay marriage are rational even though the states' reasons wouldn't pass many people's laugh test. New York, for instance, said banning gay marriage provided an inducement for straight people to marry. Washington said it "furthers procreation" among straights.

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Camilla Taylor of Lambda Legal's Midwest office, based in Chicago.

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The Iowa decision: Reflections

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

Though local activists are heartened by the Iowa Supreme Court's recent unanimous decision to extend marriage benefits to same-sex couples—a decision that will remain in effect until at least 2012, the earliest it could be overturned by constitutional measure—leaders behind the marriage equality movement in Illinois say that it will not change their overall strategy, which does not rely on the court system.

State Representative Greg Harris, author of a civil union bill now pending in the State House, is nonetheless hopeful about the broader implications of the Iowa decision. "In the Midwest, there is a core value of fairness," he said at a forum on Saturday. The "will of the people" as expressed through elected representatives, said Harris, is what will ultimately institutionalize marriage equality in Illinois.

The aversion to a court-based strategy, said Equality Illinois' Rick Garcia, has to do with both the make-up of the Illinois Supreme Court and the language of the state constitution itself; the Iowa decision relied upon a "very strong equal protection clause" in that state's constitution.

Though Garcia said that he is "thrilled" about the Iowa victory, he reminded LGBT people in Illinois that while it will now be possible to get married in Iowa, they are still "legal strangers" in their own state.

Camilla Taylor, a senior staff attorney for Lambda Legal who was the lead counsel in the Iowa case, said that she thinks the decision will have a "transformative effect" on the marriage movement as a whole, and in the Midwest particularly. "Everyone will be watching all the happy families in Iowa," she said, and see that the "sky is not falling."

Taylor said that she is confident there will not be a constitutional effort to overturn the decision and downplayed the chance of there being a significant regional backlash.

Her comments were echoed by Lori Blachford, a professor of journalism who lives in Des Moines and was present for the announcement of the court's decision. "I would really be surprised if people would be swayed to write discrimination into constitution," said Blachford. "The common sense of people in Iowa is going to win out."

Blachford also said that she thinks she'll get married this summer to her partner when they celebrate twenty-five years together. "We're so far beyond needing toasters or towels," she joked, but said that the decision gives her and her partner—and their two teenage sons—necessary legal protections.

"We'll have to worry a lot less about stuff that other married couples don't have to worry about at all," Blachford said.

'Day of Action' held at Center

BY SAM WORLEY

About 50 people gathered April 4 for a community "Day of Action" on civil-union legislation now pending in the Illinois House of Representatives. Held at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, speakers at the event included openly gay state representatives Greg Harris and Deb Mell as well as Equality Illinois Interim Executive Director Jim Madigan. Activists affiliated with Equality Illinois and the newly formed Join the Impact signed audience members up for canvassing days, to be held later in April, and a lobbying day at the state capital on April 29.

Additionally, three vans were reserved to take volunteers on a canvassing trip to the Chicago suburbs after the event.

Longtime Chicago activist Vernita Gray, who works for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, introduced and emceed the event. Noting the disparities in pension and insurance benefits between married heterosexual couples and partnered LGBT people, Gray said that she while she makes important contributions to society in the form of work and taxes, she and other LGBT people are denied many of the government benefits that they, in effect, help to fund.

Harris and Mell talked to the crowd about the overall political strategy being undertaken to attain civil unions and, ultimately, marriage equality in Illinois. Harris said that since certain state legislators who "live in a very different world than we do" are put off by what he called "the M word," activists who want to see gay marriage in Illinois chose to first introduce equal benefits legislation using the language of "civil unions."

"We're going to go with civil unions first," said Harris, and afterwards— when skeptical legislators can be convinced that "the sky is not falling" —agitate for gay marriage.

Under the proposed legislation, the option of civil unions would be extended to any arrangement of "two persons, or either the same or opposite sex," though certain relationships (such as first cousins) would be excluded. The legislation also recognizes relationships between opposite-sex senior couples whose Social Security benefits would be adversely affected by marriage.

The act introduced by Harris, called House Bill 2234, includes provisions for medical decision making, hospital visitation privileges and survivor benefits such as pension payments.

Madigan and Caroline Staerk of Allied for Equality, a joint project of Equality Illinois and PFLAG, addressed canvassing strategies. Madigan said that since most public polls indicate majority support for civil unions, the success of the legislation depends largely on voters' articulation of that support to their legislators. Without giving detailed information, Madigan said that canvassers would be targeting specific suburban and rural districts whose state representatives were "uncertain" about what their vote would be.

Canvassers plan to ask prospective supporters to sign a form letter to be sent to legislators. "They have to look you in the eye and say 'yes' or 'no,'" said Staerk.

Harris' cancer bill becomes law

State Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, had a bill signed into law by Gov. Pat Quinn that will work towards reducing breast-cancer mortality rates and treatment disparities for low income women, minority women and immigrants.

"For over 20 years, we have seen an increase in disparities between minority and non-minority women and the mortality rates they face after being diagnosed with breast cancer," Harris said. "A woman's life should not be placed in greater jeopardy because of who she is and where she resides. All women, regardless of their background should receive the highest quality care and treatment available to them."

Among other things, Senate Bill 1174 will require insurers to cover pain medication for women undergoing breast-cancer treatment and reduce financial barriers to allow for easier access to screenings.

Same-sex wedding expo April 26

The Chicago Same Love, Same Rights GLBTQ Wedding Expo will take place Sunday, April 26, 12:30-3 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 West Mart Center.

This exciting first-annual GLBTQ Wedding Expo will spotlight over 50 gay-friendly businesses, including wedding coordinators, travel professionals and floral designers.

See www.SameLoveSameRights.com.

Bon Foster taking place April 23

Lambda Legal's annual Bon Foster civil-rights celebration, "Winning the Case for a More Perfect Union," will take place Thursday, April 23, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, 5:30-9 p.m.

The 2009 Bon Foster reception will occur against a backdrop of a special Chicago History Museum exhibition commemorating the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth.

For more information, contact Jeff Souva at jsouva@lambdalegal.org or 312-663-4413, or purchase tickets at www.lambdalegal.org/bon-foster.

YPC spring-break fest April 18

Youth Pride Center will hold its spring-break fest/organizing summit Saturday, April 18, at its facility at 5480 S. Kenwood.

A concert will begin at 5 p.m. and an after-party with a special celebrity DJ will start at 10 p.m. Admission is $5, but free with a ticket; e-mail youthpridecenter@gmail.com for a ticket.

PASSAGES

Curtis M. Wright

Curtis M. Wright, of Oxnard and Palm Desert, Calif., died March 22 at Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura, Calif., after a sudden illness. He was 49—and the devoted life partner of Mark Peloquin for nearly 14 years.

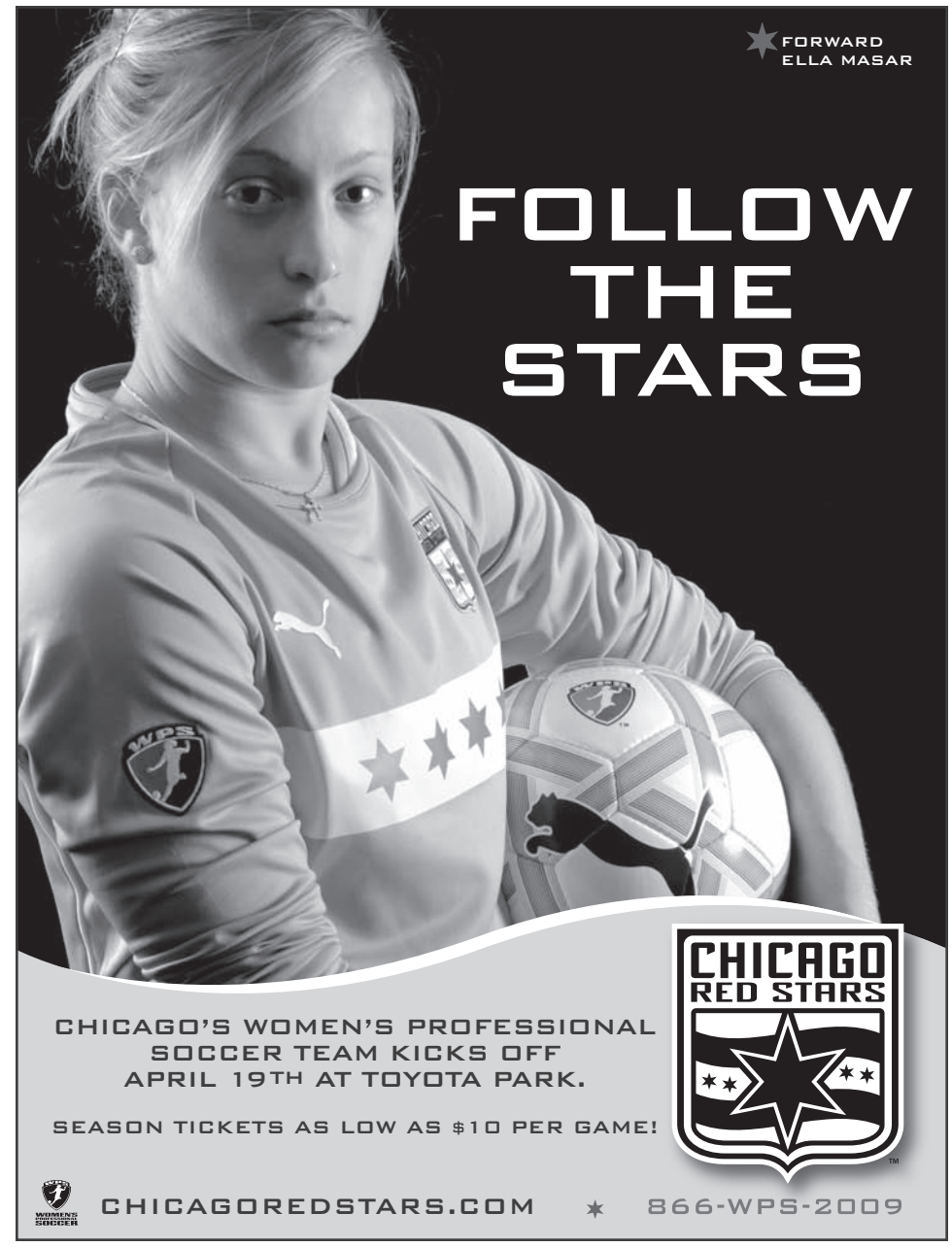
Born in Marion, Iowa, on Dec. 12, 1959, Wright was the son of Esther (Stoos) Wright and the late Dr. Thomas Wright of Marion. He was raised in Marion and had resided in Omaha, Neb.; Chicago; Palm Desert; and, most recently, Oxnard. He was a graduate of Linn-Mar High School and was very active on the gymnastics team.

Wright was a dedicated employee for 25 years with Travel and Transport Inc., working for the past 20 years as an international rate specialist. He was an active member of the Church of Religious Science in Palm Springs. He was very passionate about cooking and all would agree, a meal prepared by Curtis was certainly a memorable and a delicious experience. In addition, Curtis was very much the world traveler.

He also was very involved with his community as well, a dedicated volunteer with Greater Palm Springs Pride Inc., as well as Team Greater Palm Springs Inc, a non-profit organization that brought 85 athletes from the Coachella Valley to the Gay Games in Chicago in 2006. While residing in Chicago, Wright was very active with Horizons Community Center, working for many years on its help line. An avid volleyball player, he was a member of the Windy City Athletic Association, as well as Front Runners/Front Walkers for many years.

In addition to Peloquin, he leaves a stepson, Jordan Peloquin of Chicago; five brothers—Craig Wright of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Keith Wright of Marion, Dave (Anne) Williams of DeWitt, Iowa, Kevin Wright (Lauri) of Houston, Texas, and Christopher Wright (Stacia) of Marion; and 11 nieces and nephews.

"A Celebration of Life" will be held Saturday, April 11, at 12 p.m. at Unity Chicago, 1925 W. Thome. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Curtis M. Wright Memorial Scholarship, established for a deserving student interested in the Culinary Arts. Make your tax-deductible contribution payable to: Career Education Scholarship Fund, 2895 Greenspoint Parkway, Hoffman Estates, Ill., 60169: Restricted for the Curtis M. Wright Memorial Scholarship.





Jay Paul Deratany. Photo by Andrew Davis

Deratany running to replace Quigley

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Jay Paul Deratany, an attorney who ran for Cook County Board of Review against County Democratic Party Chairman Joe Berrios last year, is seeking appointment for the Cook County Board seat expected to be vacated by Mike Quigley. If appointed, Deratany would make history as the first openly gay member of the Cook County Board.

Deratany—who has also announced the launch of a petition Web site to gather signatures in support of his candidacy (www.JayPaulForCook.org)—said in a statement, "Mike Quigley has delivered real reform for Cook County residents, and his constituents deserve someone who will carry on his legacy on the County Board. I've proven that I won't back down from the machine and that I will stand up against the powerful anti-reform interests."

Deratany told Windy City Times said that he was running for the position because "we don't have any gay male in Cook County and no LGBT person at all at the county board level. Also, we need someone to find [who's] against the tax increases, the property-tax disparity and the overbloated budget. I ran for the Board of Review [last year], and I believe there's an inequality in our tax system." He added that he has two specific proposals, including the creation of "green enterprise zones, which would take blighted areas of Cook County ... and [ultimately] building wind turbines. We can provide up to 40 percent of electric power by wind." The other proposal involves a "clinic on wheels to help people in underserved areas."

Four other people vying for the post are Bridget Gainer, an executive at Aon Corp.; attorney Michele Smith, who is also a 43rd Ward committeeman; Kim Walz, Quigley's chief of staff; and Michael Hickey, a county electrician, according to the Chicago Tribune.

The Democratic Cook County Board District Committee for the 10th District of the Cook County Board of Commissioners will meet Saturday, April 11, at 10 a.m. at Truman College, 1145 W. Wilson, to appoint a person to fill a vacancy in office caused by the anticipated resignation of Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley, should he be elected to replace Rahm Emanuel in the Fifth Congressional District. The meeting is open to the public.

Those interested in filling Quigley's seat on the county board are required to give a presentation to the committeeman and answer their questions. Also, they must submit a resume and Statement of Economic Interests form by April 9; the form is available at the office of the Cook County Clerk, 69 W. Washington, Suite 500. For more info, see www.www.voterinfonet.com.

Congressional candidates meet at Sidetrack

BY SAM WORLEY

Three candidates hoping to fill Rahm Emanuel's vacated House seat in the 5th Congressional district greeted voters March 24 at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted. At the reception, Republican Rosanna Pulido, Democrat Mike Quigley and Green Party candidate Matt Reichel gave brief speeches and chatted informally with a crowd numbering about 20.

Pulido's presentation began with an apology. Without referencing it directly, Pulido asked the crowd's forgiveness for "something" that she had written several years ago on the popular conservative blog Free Republic. Saying that she was "ashamed about it," Pulido said that she nevertheless showed up at the Sidetrack event because "I care about you." (Pulido got one question out of 16 correct in Windy City Times' Congressional questionnaire.)

"Courage is the word of the day," said Pulido—noting that it took considerable courage to speak to a crowd of gay voters after the revelation.

(On March 5, NBC News confirmed that Pulido was a commenter on Free Republic under the handle "chicagolady." As "chicagolady," Pulido said—among other comments that could be considered impolitic—"it's better to be in a meat packing town than a fudge packing town." In another comment, she referred to "drug addicted, alcohol abusing, FUDGE PACKERS!").

Quigley, who spoke next, highlighted his history with Chicago's gay community, saying that he had marched in the Pride Parade for 27 years and sponsored domestic partner registration before the Cook County Board of Commissioners. He affirmed his support for gay marriage and the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.

Though in his remarks Quigley aligned himself with the agenda of reform promoted by President Barack Obama, Green Party candidate Matt Reichel said that the broad acquiescence of Obama's supporters "would be the envy of Joseph Stalin." Reichel spoke in favor of universal single-payer health care and restructuring the global economic system. He also criticized the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, saying that since the election of Obama, the public conception of American military entanglements has evolved from "the bad war to the good war."

See WCT online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com. and next week in print for results of the April 7 general election.

Quigley's thank-you



With time winding down before the 5th Congressional District general election (April 7), Democratic candidate Mike Quigley held a private LGBT reception at the Lakeview home of Jonathan Pizer and Brad Lippitz April 2. Among the guests were 44th Ward Alderman Tom Tunney, Equality Illinois' Jim Madigan and gay-rights activist Candace Gingrich.

In introducing Quigley, Gingrich used a sports metaphor, comparing the candidate to an American hockey player "...who goes through people. Mike is just the person we need to check a few people into the boards. But he is going to stand up for what he believes in, and we're very lucky that he believes in all the right things." Quigley thanked the attendees for their support and evoked laughs when he mentioned his first meeting with Dewey Herrington, the late "Mayor of Boystown:" "Dewey would say the most unique things to me. The first thing he said to me—who had just moved here from Carol Stream—was 'If you were gay, you'd never be lonely.' I [responded], 'What an odd thing to say.'" Photo (of, L-R, Max Pizer-Lippitz, Brad Lippitz, Alderman Tom Tunney, Quigley, Kelly Cassidy, Jonathan Pizer and Gingrich) and text by Andrew Davis

POLICE from cover

gay bar] as if it's a dirty word" in a voice "dripping with disdain." Also, in the cases of the two lesbians, both are hearing-impaired and Fiorito is alleged to have ignored their disability, made fun of it and insisted on them taking verbal sobriety tests.

More germane to the allegation of homophobia is what Erickson describes as systematic references to his clients as "fags." In one instance, said Erickson, Fiorito asked his client, "Where are you coming from?" The answer, Hydrate, apparently prompted Fiorito to respond, "That fag place." In another instance of marked homophobia, according to Erickson, "A client had just come from from Taco Bell and had spilt some sour cream on his shirt; his passenger was a Hispanic gentleman. Officer Fiorito said to him, 'Did your Puerto Rican boyfriend come in your mouth?' That gives you an idea of the kinds of things he's said to people."

Erickson said that he has personally witnessed Fiorito's "ongoing pattern and practice" of homophobia since 2002, when he got his first Fiorito DUI client. Erickson also said that he has spotted Fiorito in Boystown waiting outside gay establishments like Hydrate.

Andy Thayer also spoke to Windy City Times and said, "The central issue here is that you've got a guy working out of a "Town Hall" police station that's supposed to be gay-friendly and an oasis of LGBT sensitivity. And he's demonstrated his anti-gay animus for a period of years." As for solutions to such instances of homophobia, Thayer said that it was important to get people like Fiorito fired because "that sends a message to others that such activity is unacceptable and will have consequences." Erickson concurred that the first step was to take officers like Fiorito "off the street immediately," followed by "better training with regard to gays and lesbians and gay and lesbian life. The city needs to make an effort to not place officers who are homophobic in a predominantly homosexual or somewhat homosexual place. They need to do a better job of policing themselves with regard to placement. I think it's a management problem to a great degree and that the sergeants and commanders are primarily responsible. Given the amount of complaints an officer has received and the consistency of homophobia this one has, they should take them off the street while conducting their investigation. After that, they need to educate these officers as to cultural lifestyle differences."

On April 2, seven federal lawsuits were filed against Fiorito. According to Erickson, 10 more similar suits will be filed against Fiorito over the next six weeks.

Windy City Times contacted CPD for comments but was told that the department does not comment on cases that are pending litigation.

SEEKING NOMINATIONS!!!

30 UNDER THIRTY AWARDS

THE WINDY CITY TIMES TENTH ANNUAL

Deadline: Fri., April 24

Nominees should be under 30 years of age as of July 1, 2009 and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health and/or other areas.

The nomination should be 100 words or less and should state what achievements or contributions the nominee has made. Nominators should include their own names and contact information as well as the contact information of the nominee.

Please email nominations to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com or fax to Andrew Davis' attention to 773-871-7609.

Following the policy instituted in 2005 that individuals can only win once, those who have won the award since that year are ineligible for this year's awards. Honorees will be notified in May and recognized in June in Windy City Times and at a ceremony at Center on Halsted on Tuesday, June 23.

The 2009 Awards are co-sponsored by:

WINDY CITY TIMES · AIDS Foundation of Chicago · Center on Halsted · Better Existence with HIV · Howard Brown · Chicago House



Mike Murnane (left) and Michael Segobiano. Photo by Andrew Davis

Chicago 2016 reaches out to LGBT community

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Two days prior to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) visiting Chicago, the Chicago 2016 team reached out to the LGBT community with an information-filled presentation for about 70 individuals at Circuit, 3641 N. Halsted.

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago and the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues co-sponsored the event.

Mike Murnane, Chicago 2016's director of ethic and regional outreach, gave a comprehensive talk that covered fundamentals about the team as well as its quest to become the host city of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

First, Murnane stressed that Chicago 2016 is supported 100 percent through private donations and that the department is not a City of Chicago agency, even though Mayor Richard Daley is the honorary chairman.

Chicago is one of four candidate cities, along with Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Tokyo, Japan; and Madrid, Spain. According to Murnane, Rio may have an edge because the Olympics have never been held in South America; Tokyo has experience, having hosted the 1964 Olympics; and Madrid may have backing from the European Union.

However, Chicago has its own strengths, Murnane said, including a venue plan that would have 91 percent of the athletes within 15 minutes of their competition venues; the city's passion for sports, which results in 8 million tickets being sold yearly for sports-related events; a huge network of hotels and shops; the mass-transit system; ethnic/cultural diversity; and (last but not least) the support of such dignitaries as President Barack Obama and basketball superstar Michael Jordan, who both taped video messages for the visiting contingent.

Murnane also talked about the goals, which obviously include hosting the Games, but also included "contributing to the Olympic movement and the lasting legacy to the city of Chicago." He added that reaching youth, providing a home-field advantage for U.S. athletes, "building bridges of friendship" and "transforming the urban landscape" were also motivating factors in Chicago's attempt to secure the bid.

The economic impact of the Games is likely another motivational aspect. According to Murnane, the Games would bring 315,000 new job-years (encompassing temporary and permanent positions) to Chicago. In addition, the city could expect 2.5 million visitors, with some arriving a year before the Games begin, Murnane said.

Lastly, Murnane said that people can do several things to help, including visiting www.Chicago2016.org; linking that Web site to organizational sites; and including information in corporate newsletters.

A Q&A took place after the talk. Bob Zuley of the Lakeview Action Coalition asked about the possible impact on homeless youth, including displacement. Michael Segobiano, the chief bid liaison for the City of Chicago, said that "no one will be displaced."

Israel Wright, a board member of the Federation of Gay Games, commented that the presentation should be modified to include the LGBT community. Both Segobiano, who is openly gay, and Murnane agreed. In response to someone else's question regarding homophobia, Segobiano stressed how gay-friendly Daley (a member of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame) has been.

Also, for those who are concerned about Cubs games taking place at Wrigley Field during the Olympics, should Chicago get the nod, they will not be played. It turns out that the tennis games would be played at the Waveland Tennis Courts at Addison Street and Lake Shore Drive. In addition, Segobiano said that there would be no moratorium on community events during the Games.

In June, the official presentation to the IOC will take place in Lausanne, Switzerland. The IOC will select the host city Oct. 2 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

For more information, see www.Chicago2016.org.

E. Patrick Johnson at Wild Pug April 9

An open mic featuring E. Patrick Johnson (Sweet Tea), "Prose, Poetry and Pints at the Pug," will take place Thursday, April 9, at Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway. Lambda Literary award finalist Drew Ferguson will host.

Sign-ups begin at 7:30 p.m.; readings start at 8 p.m. Readers are encouraged to sign-up early with two, typed double-spaced pages of poetry, fiction or creative nonfiction.

For more info, e-mail drewferguson@mac.com or call 773-504-2010.

Sapphic Adventures throughout April

Sapphic Adventures—which hosts all-female get-togethers—has several events planned for April.

The monthly ethnic dinner will be held Friday, April 10, at 7 p.m. at Cafe Bolero, 2252 N. Western; cosmic bowling is Saturday, April 18, 2-4 p.m. at Waveland Bowl, 3700 N. Western; a singles mingle is the same date at 9 p.m. at Fine Spirits, 5420 N. Clark; and brunch at La Touche, 1475 W. Balmoral, is Wed., April 29, at 7 p.m.

See www.meetup.com/sapphicadventures.

'Queering the Night' at Insight April 10

Every second Friday of the month Insight Arts hosts Queering the Night, an LGBTQI open mic that invites writers and performers to talk about what it's like to be queer in a time of war and socioeconomic crisis in the United States.

On April 10 at 7 p.m., Chicago dance artist/writer JSun Howard will take center stage at the Center for New Possibilities, 1505 W. Morse. See InsightArtsLiberation.org.

Trans aging intensive at Center April 17

FORGE's (For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression) Transgender Aging Network (TAN; based in Milwaukee, Wis.), in conjunction with SAGE-Chicago and Center on Halsted, will hold a transgender aging intensive Saturday, April 17, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Center, 3656 N. Halsted.

TAN's founding executive director, Loree Cook-Daniels, will lead the intensive. The intensive costs $100 and includes lunch and snacks, a take-home reference binder and a CEU certificate. E-mail tan@forge-forward.org or call 414-559-2123.

Block and roll









The Chopping Block, 222 Merchandise Mart, hosted TrueChild's (formerly GenderPac) 5th Annual Chicago Celebrity Cook Off with former Top Chef contestants Carla Hall and Stefan Richter April 4. The event, hosted by the entertaining duo of Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allen, also featured Kimpton chefs' Chris Lateano (South Water Kitchen) and Luca Corazzina (312 Chicago), with panel judge Heather Terhune (Atwood Café).

The celebrity cook off event has proved successful for co-chairs Jeff Grinspoon and Jon Foley. Together they developed the culinary idea and hosted the first couple of events in the kitchen of their Lincoln Park home. Gina Reiss, vice-President of development said, "TrueChild is a new organization that has been formed by concerned parents, built on the intellectual capital of GPAC (GenderPac), and rooted in 15 years of new breakthrough academic research on the harms that gender stereotypes harm children." The event raised over $55,000 for TrueChild. To see a video of the event, visit QueerTVNetwork.com at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Text by Emmanuel Garcia; photos by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)

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CENTERONHALSTED

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Joffrey Dancer: Derrick Agnoletti Photo: Herbert Migdoll

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Merle's story

Historians can get pretty jaded. Over the course of our work lives, we read hundreds and hundreds of books in our field. Does anyone need to read that much about the U.S. since World War II? Add to this the research trips to libraries or, these days, the hours at our computers looking at archives online. Often I find myself thinking "nothing new here" as I yawn my way through whatever I'm reading.

But then, inevitably, a surprise comes: something unexpected, a story with a different twist, an individual whose life captivates me.

Working on Chicago's sexual history has given me several of these moments. Merle's story is one of them.

*****

Merle Markland was born in 1902 into a working-class family in Cuba, Illinois, a small downstate mining community. She had an older brother and two younger half brothers, and a stepdad whom she loved dearly. Growing up, she recalled, "I'd never heard of the word lesbian or gay. I didn't know what that meant. I just knew I was different."

She played baseball with her brothers and "aggravated" them because "I'd be better than they were." From an early age, she "had a feeling for little girls." She wanted to walk them home from school and hold their hands and look after them. "I knew there was something wrong, but that was my secret. I didn't know what it was."

At this point in Merle's 1981 oral history, I remember thinking "another tomboy on the road to coming out." But then her story took a surprising turn.

When she was eighteen, her stepfather, who was a line inspector, relocated the family to Canton, Illinois. Next door was a family, the Browns, with a thirteen-year-old named Lil. "My God," Merle exclaimed, "when I seen her, I fell in love with her at first sight." Since Merle thought that Lil's older brother, Les, was a nice enough fellow, she started dating him "to be near her. So him and I, we went together. But the reason I went with him, really in my heart, was to get to be near her."

Merle and Les dated for several years. The Browns liked Merle, especially because she always seemed willing to have young Lil tag along on these dates. And Merle's parents could feel secure that Les wasn't taking liberties with their daughter, since his younger sister was with them. Merle and Les took in movies, went on picnics, and drove through the countryside—and young Lil accompanied them.

After a few years, Les relocated to Rock Falls for employment. Merle concocted a plan for her and Lil to go too. The two young women lived together, and Merle continued—at least for a while—to go out with Les.

From the beginning, Merle sensed that Lil "wasn't like me. I knew her feelings didn't run that way." But, as she said, "I was just nice to her and she gradually learned to care for me." Eventually, Merle confessed her love and, to her delight, Lil agreed to be with her.

Merle's description of this key moment in the story is maddeningly vague. I'm desperate to know more. I wish I could hear the conversation when Merle declared her love. With no words to describe herself other than as "different," how did she explain to Lil how she felt and what she wanted? Did she say something like "I love you as a husband loves his wife?" Or, "we make a good pair, Lil." Or, touchingly, "I care for you, Lil. Let's stay together."

I—and you—will never know. And, curiosity aside, it doesn't really matter. What does count is this: Merle and Lil stayed together for more than five decades. "We was never apart" is how Merle described it.

They were two small-town working-class women on their own, through the Great Depression, a world war, and a postwar decade that made war on queers. It could not have been easy. But to hear Merle tell it, their time together had more than its fair share of rewards.

First they moved to Sterling, Illinois where each got a job waitressing at a café. "We got our own place and boy, we did alright. We always made a living." When they wanted a night out, plenty of male customers were ready to escort them. "We never paid our way," Merle said. "Anywhere we wanted to go, we'd always get a date. We saved our money."

Every few years they'd relocate. "We've been everywhere," Merle recalled proudly. Once, they even got jobs on a ship. In 1952, after more than 25 years together, they settled in Chicago. For a long stretch, they worked in the establishment of a restaurant owner named Maury Saperstein. Lil was head waitress, and Merle often worked night shift.

By today's standards, Chicago in the 1950s was not a great place to be a woman-loving-woman. It was the McCarthy era, and along with the fierce anticommunist witch hunts came a "lavender scare." The Tribune was featuring articles about perverts and moral degenerates. The police raided bars at will. Yes, there was a gay and lesbian community life, but it wasn't easy to find and women had many fewer options than men. Even so, the possibility of building a network of lesbian friends was a lot greater in Chicago than in Sterling or Rock Falls.

But Merle, in her own words, "wasn't even interested." Though she claimed not to care what society thought ("I was headstrong"), she worried lest anyone find out about the two of them: "I knew, for my sake and for her sake, we had to go along. As long as we was working and making a living in the straight world, then we had to be straight. When we came home and were together, that was our business. But we conducted ourselves like ladies when we was out." Lots of people believed they were sisters, "so nobody thought anything about it." As far as Merle was concerned, "we had each other. We didn't need nobody."

Today we might say Merle was deep in the closet. But Merle would have stared at you like you were nuts if you accused her of that. To this tough skinned woman, she was merely being prudent. Lil was everything to her, and as long as she had Lil, why self-disclose?

As long as she had Lil ... Soon after turning 70, Lil became sick. It was terminal, and Merle nursed her at home through the final weeks of life. Merle had loved Lil for 58 years and now, in 1978, she faced life alone. In Merle's words, "I didn't care if I died or if I lived. I didn't care for nothing. I wished God had taken me right with her... . I couldn't go to my straight friends and tell them. They didn't know how I felt. I had to keep that all inside of me."

Reading this part of the interview made me teary-eyed. What, I wondered, will this woman, who had never confided in anyone, do?

Well, this was 1978, not 1958 or 1938. In the 1970s, a new world took shape in Chicago. A cohort of activist and feminist lesbians was building community—a public community—like there was no tomorrow. Besides the bars, there were coffee houses and restaurants and newspapers and softball teams and bookstores and community centers and music concerts.

Merle went looking—through the telephone directory. "All I could find in there was gay bars," she remembered. "I'd call up and there'd be a man answering the phone, and I'd say to him 'any lesbians in there? I'd like to talk to them.'" Some bartenders just hung up, thinking it a crank call, but others engaged this strange old woman in conversation.

Finally, after months of this, she came across mention of a counseling service for lesbians. "My God, I thought I had hit the jackpot." Whenever she called, she'd get an answering machine, but "I would call, just to hear that voice, because I knew it was a lesbian talking, just to hear her voice on the recording."

One day, someone called back. She and Merle talked for hours, and soon other volunteers were calling her too. They enticed her out, to a service of MCC's Good Shepherd congregation and the social hour afterward. She asked her escort, Pat, "Are these all gay people?" Merle couldn't believe it. "I couldn't imagine it was that many. I thought to myself, "My goodness, can't be. Now figure that!" Soon she was going to lesbian bars, like His and Hers.

By the time Merle was interviewed in 1981, she had made a new life. Some of her younger friends were into the lesbian music scene and began taking her to concerts and music festivals. The first time she went to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, she was beside herself. "My God, there were ten thousand of them, just a whole ten thousand lesbians. Just think of that. A year ago, I'd give anything in the world if I could have just met one, and here they are, by the ten thousand."

It turned out that Merle had a bit of musical talent. Listening to women perform at bars and coffee houses, she spontaneously improvised her own lyrics. The younger women, Merle chuckled, "get a bang out of a woman my age getting up and singing." At the Michigan festival, she was invited on to the stage. As she sang, "Oh, I'd like to meet someone my age/So come on, baby, and give me a call," women crowded the stage, eager to hug and kiss this woman more than twice their age.

Merle's story was unique to me, a real mind-bender. I say this not because there was no other life like hers, but because not many stories like this one have come down to us. Who knows how many working-class women, in small towns across America, made a life with one another? They did it without big announcements, without family dramas, and without taking on labels—or even knowing of labels—that would have marked them as evil or sick. These were queer lives that weren't so queer.

And then there's the magic of Merle's rebirth. It's almost as if she was Rip Van Winkle, who sleeps for a generation and wakes up to discover a new world. Merle took hold of it with gusto, and the way she remade herself is inspirational to me.

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Thursday, April 16
7:30 p.m.
Gerda Lerner
Living With History / Making Social Change

Friday, April 17
7:30 p.m.
Poetry Reading
Pam Garvey: Fear
Regina Buccola: Conjuring
Janet Wondra: Emerging Island Cultures

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WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Sweden legalizes same-sex marriage

Sweden's Parliament legalized same-sex marriage April 1. Gay couples can begin marrying May 1.

The vote was 261 to 22 with 66 abstentions and absences.

Six of the seven political parties in Parliament supported the decision, with the Christian Democrats the sole holdout.

Sweden has had a registered-partnership law since 1995 that grants registered same-sex couples the rights, benefits and obligations of marriage.

That law no longer will be used, though currently registered couples will have the option of maintaining that status or converting their partnership into a marriage.

Same-sex marriage is also legal in Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Iowa (starting April 24) and Massachusetts.

Zurich gets a lesbian mayor

Voters in Zurich, Switzerland, elected an openly lesbian mayor March 29.

Corine Mauch, 48, won the seat after her predecessor took an early retirement.

She has agreed to deliver a speech in May at the opening ceremony for EuroPride, which is being held in Zurich this year.

EuroPride spokesman Michael Rüegg called Mauch's election "a real stroke of luck (that) none of us really expected."

Other European cities with openly gay mayors include Berlin (Klaus Wowereit), Paris (Bertrand Delanoë) and Hamburg (Ole von Beust). Iceland has an openly lesbian prime minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir.

French Senate OKs foreign unions

France's Senate voted March 25 to recognize foreign same-sex unions.

The measure now moves to the National Assembly.

"We congratulate the French Senate for finally moving forward to solve this unfair situation which is discriminatory on the grounds of nationality as well as a hindrance to freedom of movement within the (European Union)," said Michael Cashman, president of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights.

"We have been approached by many European citizens, especially British, who suffer discrimination because their same-sex partnership is not recognized in France," Cashman said. "One man was forced to sell his house after his partner's death because he could not afford to pay 60 percent inheritance tax. Otherwise this tax is not applicable to same-sex married spouses or couples in a French partnership."

British hotel sued by gay couple

Gay couple Martyn Hall and Steve Preddy have sued the Chymorvah Private Hotel in Marazion, Cornwall, England, for not letting them stay in the same room.

They seek £5,000 (US$7,374) in compensation from owners Peter and Hazelmary Bull for "direct discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation."

The hotel openly flouts the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007, which prohibit such discrimination.

"Double bedded accommodation is not available to unmarried couples," confirms the hotel's Web site. "As Christians we have a deep regard for marriage (being the union of one man to one woman for life to the exclusion of all others)."

Morocco targets promotion of homosexuality

According to various news reports, Morocco's government has launched a crackdown on promotion of homosexuality, saying it threatens religious and moral values.

The Interior Ministry said activities that go against such values will be "repressed."

The move apparently is a response to increased media coverage of gay issues, couples and weddings.

The ministry denounced media outlets "that defend ignoble behaviors that constitute a provocation of national public opinion and fail to take account of the moral values and doctrines of our society."

Euro court: No expedited hearing for Russian pride cases

The European Court of Human Rights has rejected a request for expedited hearing of several cases stemming from Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's repeated bans of gay pride marches.

Some of the cases are more than two years old. The court has a huge backlog of cases of all kinds from Russia.

"If no action is taken, the Moscow Pride bans will take five to six years to be overturned by the European Court," said chief pride organizer Nikolai Alekseev. "Whether through the court or via the Committee of Ministers, a solution has to be found in Strasbourg (at the Council of Europe). We are in contact with several diplomacies."

In a similar case from Warsaw, the court issued a ruling within 18 months mandating that city officials let gays march.

"Council of Europe officials write wonderful letters to Russian authorities about the necessity to respect the rights of LGBT people," said Moscow Pride co-organizer Nikolai Baev. "But year after year we see the same violence, the same aggressions and the same breach of human rights."

This year's pride march is scheduled for May 16, the same day the popular, campy Eurovision Song Contest takes place in Moscow. The contest—a high holiday for many European gays—is staged in the country that won it the previous year.

Mayor Luzhkov has called gay parades "satanic" and "weapons of mass destruction," and said he will never allow one to take place in Moscow.

Japan OKs gay marriages abroad

Japan's Justice Ministry said March 26 that it has begun issuing marriage-eligibility certificates to Japanese citizens who plan to marry someone of the same sex in a foreign country where same-sex marriage is legal.

Japanese citizens are required to obtain the certificate before marrying a foreigner abroad—submitting information about both parties such as name, birthday, sex and nationality.

The latest version of the certificate will confirm that an individual is single and of legal age.

Gay activists said the change also means Japanese gays will be able to bring a foreign spouse to live with them in Japan.

Same-sex marriage is legal in Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden (starting May 1) and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Iowa (starting April 24) and Massachusetts.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"I WAS ALREADY A SUPPORTER OF OBAMA BEFORE HE DECLARED HIS CANDIDACY AND REMEMBER DISCUSSING IT WITH FRIENDS. If you look at LGBT rights in the U.S., 'DOMA' and 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' were passed under Clinton. But having said that, looking at the situation of the world and the U.S. in particular I think that there are too many hopes in President Obama and he will hardly be able to satisfy everyone, LGBT community included. Still, I believe he will do better than Clinton. A first step, that will not cost him anything, will be to put the signature of the U.S. on the (recent) U.N. statement which already 66 countries endorsed (that calls for the decriminalization of gay sex worldwide and affirms that international human rights standards include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity)." — *Moscow Pride founder Nikolai Alekseev to this column, Jan. 18.*

I believe [Obama] will do better than Clinton.
—Nikolai Alekseev



Photo by Andrew Davis

"EVEN WERE THE PUBLIC STILL IN THE MOOD FOR FIERY INVECTIVE about family values, the G.O.P. has long since lost any authority to lead the charge. The current Democratic president and his family are exemplars of precisely the Eisenhower-era squareness—albeit refurbished by feminism—that the Republicans often preached but rarely practiced. Obama actually walks the walk. As the former Bush speechwriter David Frum recently wrote, the new president is an 'apparently devoted husband and father' whose worst vice is 'an occasional cigarette.'" — *New York Times columnist Frank Rich, March 14.*

"THE TWO TOP CANDIDATES FOR LEADER OF THE POST-BUSH G.O.P, Rush and Newt, have six marriages between them. The party that once declared war on unmarried welfare moms, homosexual 'recruiters' and Bill Clinton's private life has been rebranded by Mark Foley, Larry Craig, David Vitter and the irrepressible Palins." — *New York Times columnist Frank Rich, March 14.*

"THE FAMILY-VALUES DINOSAURS THAT ONCE STALKED THE EARTH—FALWELL, ROBERTSON, DOBSON AND REED—are now either dead, retired or disgraced. ... Americans have less and less patience for the intrusive and divisive moral scolds who thrived in the bubbles of the Clinton and Bush years. Culture wars are a luxury the country—the G.O.P. included—can no longer afford." — *New York Times columnist Frank Rich, March 14.*

"BELIEVE ME, I THINK MOTHERHOOD WOULD BE AMAZING AND EXCITING and wonderful, but it isn't really something that's on the immediate horizon for us. How this IVF rumor started, I really, really have no idea. But I can tell you that it is definitely not happening in the near future. ... It's great that Ellen (DeGeneres) and I are a gay couple and people are open-minded enough to talk about us having a family. The only thing I'm trying to avoid by denying it is, I just don't want those horrible pictures in magazines where they circle your stomach and point and go 'baby bump!'" — *Actress Portia de Rossi to the Los Angeles Times, March 15.*

"IT IS A QUESTION WE ALL MUST ASK OURSELVES: AM I A TOP OR A BOTTOM? I have posed this question to myself many a time and find difficulty settling on an answer. However, now that I have started seeing someone—a man—I know I need to find a clear and decisive answer." — *Columnist Trevor Nutley in the Vancouver gay newspaper Xtra! West, Feb. 26.*

"IT IS EXHILARATING TO SEE BUSH GONE AND, for the first time in a while, actually believe something positive could take hold—for us (GLBT people) and for the world. Make no mistake; we will be fighting all kinds of battles. Rick Warren was nothing. We'll be disappointed and even outraged at Obama, at the Democrats, at the media and at assorted other sellouts. But at least we're in the game. What we must do is finally learn to play that game well. These are politicians—there are no saviors, so people should just forget that kind of thinking—and they respond only to pressure and a show of power. We've got to use our collective power right instead of being used as doormats. That's another discussion, and we're all going to have to finally stand up to the doormat crowd in our movement and give them the boot. For now though, I'm relieved, excited and totally ready for the next phase." — *Gay Sirius Satellite Radio host Michelangelo Signorile to this column, Jan. 17.*

"I AM OPTIMISTIC BECAUSE WE HAVE A CHANCE TO pull ourselves up and out of the morass George Bush has left us in on so many fronts. I am realistic about what Barack Obama faces as he assumes the presidency. We have a country in an economic shambles, a tattered international reputation, and a divisive political climate that will make it difficult for him to accomplish all that is expected of him from those who cast their votes for him—those who believe in hope, as well as those who marked their ballot for him out of sheer desperation to end the national nightmare. I hope Obama's been getting a good amount of shut-eye prior to inauguration, because there are likely a lot of sleepless nights ahead of him." — *Popular lesbian blogger Pam Spaulding (Pam's House Blend) to this column, Jan. 17.*

"ONCE UPON A TIME THE GOP WAS THE PARTY OF FISCAL PRUDENCE and containing communism and strong national defense. Now the GOP is the party of keeping my boyfriend's tongue out of my mouth. Hatin' on homos—it's all the GOP has anymore. It's a platform, I guess, but one wonders if freaking out about gay sex is a big enough issue to sustain a national political party." — *Gay writer Dan Savage on his blog, Jan. 13.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

VIEWPOINTS



REV. IRENE MONROE

Frank need not explain calling Scalia homophobic

When Democratic U.S. Rep. Barney Frank called Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia a "homophobe," criticizing his likely support of the Defense of Marriage Act, his remarks were wrongly taken as only a personal attack on Scalia.

But Frank's remark was an accurate statement about the present-day climate and culture in our country's highest judicial body, where Scalia is an important and influential voice—the U.S. Supreme Court.

"At some point, [the Defense of Marriage Act] is going to have to go to the United States Supreme Court," Frank stated. "I wouldn't want it to go to the United States Supreme Court now because that homophobe Antonin Scalia has got too many votes on this current court."

In spite of the fact that President Obama is an advocate for our rights, Frank foresees the legal challenges before us.

And given the overwhelmingly conservative composition of the Court, thanks to the anti-gay legacy of the Bush administration, Scalia is the prism through which we can see the Court denying gay civil rights.

For example, in the 2003 landmark Supreme Court case "Lawrence v. Texas" that struck down the nation's sodomy laws between consenting adults, a law that especially targeted gay men, Scalia, not surprisingly, was one of the dissenting voices.

"Many Americans do not want persons who openly engage in homosexual conduct as partners in their business, as scoutmasters for their children, as teachers in their children's schools, or as boarders in their home. They view this as protecting themselves and their families from a lifestyle that they believe to be immoral and destructive. "

With Scalia's dissenting tone on queer civil rights comes not only an homophobic attitude toward LGBTQ Americans, but also an animus toward us simply because we exist that Barney Frank aptly points out.

Scalia's animus toward us is rooted in his adherence to a philosophy of Natural Law that states there are unchangeable laws of nature which govern us, and that our laws and institutions should try to align with this natural law. These legal opinions Barney Frank state "makes it very clear that he's angry, frankly, about the existence of gay people."

In the 1996 Colorado case that ruled against an amendment to the state constitution, which would have prevented municipal governments from taking action, to protect LGBTQ Americans from discrimination, Scalia, a dissenting voice, of course, to the ruling defended his position by stating the following:

"I had thought that one could consider certain conduct reprehensible—murder, for example, or polygamy, or cruelty to animals—and could exhibit even "animus" toward such conduct. Surely that is the only sort of "animus" at issue here: moral disapproval of homosexual conduct, the same sort of moral disapproval that produced the centuries old criminal laws that we held constitutional."

Scalia's nomination to the Court in 1986 came under President Ronald Reagan, a president who, at best, was ambivalent about gay rights and who, at worst, was indifferent to our rights. And it signaled the beginning of a hostile time for LGBTQ Americans.

Reagan who saw the first signs of the AIDS epidemic in 1981, his first year in office, did nothing. Why? Because Reagan used his theological view on the AIDS epidemic to influenced the laissez-faire attitude his administration exhibited, stating, "Maybe the Lord brought down the plague because illicit sex is against the Ten Commandments."

Scalia, a devout Catholic, also allows his religious views to shape his judicial decisions. And the theology of St. Paul, who forms Christian's negative opinions about homosexuality, governs Scalia's action.

"This is not the Old Testament, I emphasize, but St. Paul.... [T]he core of his message is that government—derives its moral authority from God...We are a religious people, whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.... All this, helps explain why our people are more inclined to understand, as St. Paul did, that government carries the sword as "the minister of God," to "execute wrath" upon the evildoer, " Scalia stated at an address he delivered at the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2002.

For Scalia, LGBTQ Americans are evildoers creating "a massive disruption of the current social order."

Activists on both sides of the the Defense of Marriage Act will expect the U.S. Supreme Court to decide the constitutionality of state bans on same-sex marriage. And Congressman Barney Frank is on our side.

Barney Frank needed not to explain why he called Scalia a homophobe.

However, given Scalia's horrific record on gay rights he needs to explain why he is.



SEN. JOHN KERRY

Justice can't come too quickly for some couples

Tim Coco and Junior Oliveira should not have had to wait this long to start their married life together.

But because the wheels of justice often move too slowly, I have asked the Obama Administration to help me reunite the couple as soon as possible. I have asked the administration to come down on the side of fairness, justice and compassion and allow Junior to return home to Massachusetts to his husband.

Tim and Junior met in 2002, and they were legally married under Massachusetts law in 2005. But they have been separated since 2007, when Junior's request for asylum was denied by a federal immigration judge and appeals board and he was forced to return to his native Brazil.

Junior asked for asylum because he had suffered a brutal attack and rape at the hands of government officials in Brazil. The judge who presided over the asylum request found that Junior's testimony was "credible" and his fear of Brazil "genuine." Indeed, there is ample evidence that homosexuals in Brazil are subjected to intimidation and violence. The ministry of health there reported 180 killings of homosexuals in 2004.

Incredibly, though, the judge ruled that Junior "was never physically harmed" by the rape and, consequently, denied his asylum request. An immigration appeals board upheld the ruling and shortly thereafter Junior returned to Brazil, where he has remained for nearly two years, away from his husband.

Tim and Junior are legally married in Massachusetts, but federal law does not recognize their marriage, one of the reasons why, when Junior's asylum request was unjustly denied, he was forced to leave his husband.

I understand the critics who believe that the asylum request is a shortcut for reuniting Tim and Junior, and who would prefer that the battle be fought over the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Make no mistake: I support legislation to amend our immigration laws so that this kind of injustice does not occur again, and I vehemently opposed the wrongheaded 1996 so-called "Defense of Marriage Act" that helped put loving couples like Tim and Junior in this position in the first place.

But Tim and Junior have been waiting for years for a fair shake under the law. Congress is unlikely to act quickly enough for Tim and Junior. That's why I have asked Attorney General Eric Holder to review Junior's case to determine whether the denial of his asylum request was an error. Such a determination would allow Junior to return home to Tim.

We are where we are—and we can't afford to ignore the legitimacy of Junior's asylum claim.

Massachusetts has been at the forefront of ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation, be assured equal protection under the law. I am proud to be a part of those efforts. I worked with Governor Deval Patrick and progressive legislators to help defeat a discriminatory constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. And at the federal level, I have supported legislation to provide domestic partners of federal employees the benefits available to spouses of federal workers. I have voted against DOMA—only one of 14 senators to do so.

Yes, I will continue to work toward the day that DOMA and other such misguided laws and policies are overturned. But I'm not willing to force Tim and Junior to wait for that day. No couple should, and no senator should take off the table the immediate step that can be taken to reunite a loving couple—today.

Send letters to Editor@WindyCityMediaGroup.com or Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

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NATIONAL SALES Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863
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(773) 871-7610 FAX (773) 871-7609
e-mail: editor@windycitymediagroup.com

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com
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5315 N. Clark St. #192, Chicago, IL 60640 USA
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GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Brenda Schumacher

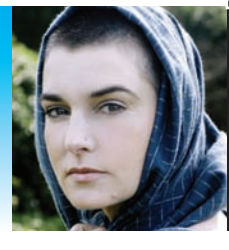
CHO-STOPPER

Amanda Palmer (left) and Margaret Cho were among the celebrities at this year's South by Southwest Music Festival. See page 16.

MUSIC

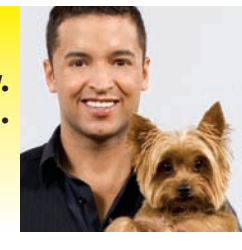
Nothing compares to Sinead. Page 16.

Photo by Kevin Abosch



TV

Jai anxiety. Page 17.



SPORTS

Seeing stars. Page 22.

Photo of Cristiane courtesy of Chicago Red Stars



Dancin' Feats

BY ZACHARY WHITTENBURG

Even just five years ago, Chicago was consistently left off the itineraries of the world's touring dance companies. Whether it was due to our venues' rental fees, a perceived lack of audience or reticence by presenters, there were perhaps only half a dozen weekends a year during which Chicagoans were given a sense of current trends in global dancemaking. The situation, I'm happy to report, couldn't be more dramatically different than it is now.

So much dance has visited our city recently that I feel like I've circumnavigated the globe. French, Japanese, Iranian, Mexican and Israeli companies have packed houses here with enthusiastic and receptive audiences all winter long, and it's not over yet. Particularly ambassadorial have been the Auditorium Theatre at Roosevelt University and the Dance Center at Columbia College. The latter's program coordinator, Mary Carpenter-Rechner, recently regaled me with stories from her office: It sounded more like the Department of International Logistics at the United Nations than a desk in the South Loop.

This (hopefully permanent) increase in performing visitors makes this year's International Dance Day, April 29, even more a cause for celebration than usual. Professor Alkis Raftis, president of the International Dance Council (the division of UNESCO which sponsors International Dance Day), has offered a beautiful message of inclusion in honor of the holiday. Saying "the future of dance lies where there are persons who do not dance," Raftis specifically proposes that dance instruction be brought to the needs of those with physical and mental disabilities, adding that "integrating marginalized persons into the practice of dance is as important as integrating them into the workforce." Dance has long been an inclusive art form, especially as integral as GLBTQ populations continue to be to the development and vitality of the the only language spoken fluently by everyone on Earth.



Marie Chouinard's Orpheus and Eurydice. Photo by Chouinard

Whether you secretly work on your moves in the kitchen or have to be forcibly removed from the club at 4 a.m. every Sunday, ask someone to dance with you this month.

More information on International Dance Day can be found at the CID Web site, www.cid-unesco.org.

Onstage in Chicagoland this month:

—**DanceWorks Chicago** covers April like a Snuggie: There's a free performance of their Dance Bytes series at the Harold Washington Library this Thursday at 12:15 p.m., and Friday the company is at Northwestern University's Pick-Staiger Concert Hall for a collaboration with the Canadian Guitar Quartet, choreographed by former River North Chicago Dance Company member Miguel Perez. Dance Chance follows on Monday, while April 25 finds the group at Northeastern Illinois University. More events follow May 9,11 and 12 at FermiLab in Batavia and the Ruth Page Center for the Arts in the Gold Coast. Visit www.danceworkschicago.org for details.

—Two new groups have taken exploratory movement to the streets: **Ncounter**, a monthly site-specific improvisation group, most recently commandeered the Red Line subway station at Lake to the entertainment and surprise of downtown commuters, and Donnell Williams, Szewai Lee and Suzy Grant's equally wanderlusty **Portable Dance** will stay put only long enough to do three shows at Links Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield, April 10-11 at 8 p.m. and April 12 at 7 p.m. Ncounter is free and online at ncounter.me; "Portable Dance House Party" is $12. More info is at www.linkshall.org

—For those who think dancing is only for the young, it bears mentioning that vanguard and still-creating choreographer **Merce Cunningham** turns 90 April 16.

—**Chicago Dance Crash**'s men are an impressive bunch despite being outnumbered by the company's many (also strong) female performers. Their latest show, however, throws boys in the spotlight. It's title—Movement/Gentlemen—says it all. It's the DCA Storefront Theater, 66 E. Randolph, Fridays-Sundays April 17-May 3. $17-22. Call 312-742-8497 or visit chicagodancecrash.com.

—Some have called Montréalaise choreographer **Marie Chouinard**'s work "profane," often adding "brilliant" in the same breath. Her Canadian troupe is touring a dance-theater work that takes the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and abstracts it into a succession of provocative, surreal scenes organized around both movement and text. The production is definitely not recommended for children, but for adults with a taste for the avant-garde it's going to be a must-see. It's at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago, April 17-19 at 7:30 p.m.; $40; www.mcachicago.org.

—Saturday, April 18, **River North Chicago Dance Company** performs for one night only at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie, Skokie, at 8 p.m. Tickets are $46 at www.centreeast.org; 847-673-6300.

—Dancing with the Wind is **Perceptual Motion, Inc.**'s celebration of 25 years, featuring works going back to 1988; alumni dancers from even earlier will be on hand to perform "Intersections," a premiere by Lin Shook, and five other pieces. At the Hamlin Park Fieldhouse, 3035 N. Hoyne, April 23-24 at 7:30 p.m.; $25. Call 773-549-3958 or visit www.perceptualmotiondance.com.

—Chicago jazz dance kingpin Eddy Ocampo is currently choreographer in residence at **Inaside Chicago Dance**, who will perform his "The Alarm Will Sound" and "Beckoned," along with works by Artistic Director Richard A. Smith, Amanda Farrar, Lisa Scurlock, Elijah Gibson and Lizzie MacKenzie. At the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St., April 24-25 at 8 p.m. and 26 at 3 p.m. $25 at 773-960-4909 or www.brownpapertickets.com

—**Joffrey Ballet** Artistic Director Ashley C. Wheater is passing intimate knowledge from his performance past down to a new generation of dancers: He danced Helgi Tomasson's "Valses Poeticos" upon its creation at the San Francisco Ballet in 1990. Joining it on the company's spring mixed bill are Gerald Arpino's "Round of Angels," dance-history lesson "Les Noces" by Bronislava Nijinska and hot choreographer Christopher Wheeldon's much-hyped "Carousel." The performance will take place at the Auditorium Theatre at Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress, April 29-May 10; $25-145. Schedule and details are online at www.joffrey.org.

—**"In the Simplest Manner"** is an intimate evening featuring three of the city's most intriguing female dancers (Asimina Chremos, Ayako Kato and Julia Mayer) and three male bass players (Darin Gray, Kent Kessler and Jason Roebke) performing together in a variety of combinations. It will be at the Hamlin Park Fieldhouse, 3035 N. Hoyne, April 30-May 1 at 7:30 p.m.; $10-20. Visit www.artunionhumanscape.net.

—Next month begins with "Progress," an evening of works by **Mike Gosney's Elements Contemporary Ballet** at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts. It takes place May 1-2 at 7:30 p.m.; $20; www.elementscontemporaryballet.com.

—Big news last week was the announcement that the founder of **Luna Negra Dance Theater**, Eduardo Vilaro, will take the helm at New York's Ballet Hispanico later this year. See what he'll be running when the New York-based company comes to the McAnich Arts Center at the College of DuPage, Fawell and Park, Glen Ellyn, May 2 at 8 p.m.; $44.; www.cod.edu/artscntr.

THEATER REVIEW

Class Dismissed

Playwright: Jeffrey Sweet
At: Victory Gardens
Biograph, 2433 N. Lincoln
Telephone: 773-871-3000; $20-$48
Runs through: April 26

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

At the onset of Class Dismissed, the cast comes bouncing on stage while '60s folk music plays in the background. They stretch and smile and embrace and strain mightily to emit groovy vibes before introducing themselves with a forced folksiness that's one step removed from a kumbaya sing-a-long. It's all fine and good, if you're in the mood to embrace hippie-dippie clichés. But if you're in the mood for complex, thoughtfully written characters, a dramatic arc that pulls you in and an intelligent, provocative story that leaves you thinking, you best skip Jeffrey Sweet's Class.

This is the 1960s as filtered through the sensibility of the Brady Bunch although to be sure, the Bradys actually had better storylines. And can someone—anyone?—explain why giant steel wool pads are woven through the tree branches in the depressingly expensive set that adorns this non-starter? It looks like some sort of spirit in the sky is preparing to scrub pots.

Class Dismissed reveals its shaky foundations immediately as Jackson, a professor, introduces himself by describing a class wherein he jumped out the window. There's no context, no rhyme and no reason for the leap other than to show the audience that Jackson cares not for pleasing the Man and has the wild-child, spirit-of-the-'60s cojones needed to stray from a syllabus that apparently requires professors remain with their students while teaching.

Why stepping five feet down from windowsill to campus ground should count as an act of profound rebellion I'm sure I don't know. But Jackson implies that it is, and thus we know he's an anti-authoritarian and also as hip as his long-haired pupils.

After Jackson's fourth-wall-breaking introduction, the others take their turn—each character addressing the audience with a casual, we're-all-pals-here friendliness that hasn't been earned. The effect is that of being shanghaied by a group therapy session of compulsive huggers.

In addition to Jackson we meet Meg, whose defining characteristic is an arch, sarcastic tone that's maintained through every word of every sentence she utters. There's also Pete, a hang-dog stoner who confuses spinelessness being easy-going, and Roy, a rich kid who plays poor in college so as to ... well, what exactly is never clear. Finally, there's Wendy the Waitress, who serves fries, disappears and then returns a few scenes later to explain that she's an important part of the story, so please don't forget about her. Class Dismissed is littered with such cloying, direct-address asides. The worst one comes when Lisa, a teenager, walks on stage (in a sassy side-pony tail, ostensibly to let us know she's a child of the '80s), points to the baby Meg is holding, stage whispers, "That's me!" and exits giggling. My. Sweet. Lord.

Sweet follows this group through the 1980s, from college to commune to marriage and entrepreneurship. Toward the end Lisa wonders about the circumstances of her conception, the professor leaps into what feels like another play entirely with the introduction of a (never developed and out-of-left field) subplot involving an undocumented worker, and Roy loses his hair but learns to embrace his wealth. There's a lot of talk about "projects"—the professor spends most of the play working on an "economic history" of something or other—but none of it pans out into anything worth caring about.

Director Dennis Zacek has a cast of Chicago's finest—all of whom are stuck in characters no deeper than the shallow end of a wading pool and prone to spouting eye-rolling dialogue along the lines of "Sexual possessiveness is part of the bourgeoisie orthodoxy!" History is reduced to winking asides ("Nixon, for godssakes!" "And then Chicago happened!"), which add nothing to the story and, in fact, cheapen its context by their reductiveness.

When you consider the resources that went into producing "Class Dismissed," the piece becomes maddening rather than just annoying. An A-level cast—not to mention a set-budget that allows for so much steel wool—is a terrible thing to waste.

THEATER REVIEW

Curtains

Authors: John Kander, Fred Ebb, Peter Stone and Rupert Holmes
At: Drury Lane Oakbrook, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace
Phone: 630-530-8300; $29-$35
Runs through May 17

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Let's just start by saying that the 2007 Broadway musical Curtains is not up to the standards of composer John Kander and the late lyricist Fred Ebb's previous work.

Cabaret, Chicago and Kiss of the Spider Woman—The Musical each outclasses Curtains with more sophisticated song scores and better plotting.

That said, Curtains is still a must-see for any musical theater fan. Now receiving its regional premiere via a smashing production by director William Brown at Drury Lane Oak Brook, Curtains is a celebratory love letter to classic musical comedy.

Originally conceived by the late playwright Peter Stone, Curtains was completed by playwright/songwriter Rupert Holmes (who also provided extra lyrics with Kander). The premise is loads of fun and insider theater jokes abound.

During the curtain call of a troubled Broadway-bound musical called Robbin' Hood (a lame agglomeration of Annie Get Your Gun, the Lone Ranger and Oklahoma!), the terrible leading lady is killed on stage. The entire Boston Colonial Theatre becomes a crime scene, and Lt. Frank Cioffi of the Boston police force is called in to investigate.

But Cioffi is also a diehard musical-theater fan, so he becomes just as involved with fixing the troubled musical as he is in solving the murder. Plus, Cioffi falls head over heels for the ingénue and prime suspect of Niki Harris (a fine and earnest Jessie Mueller).

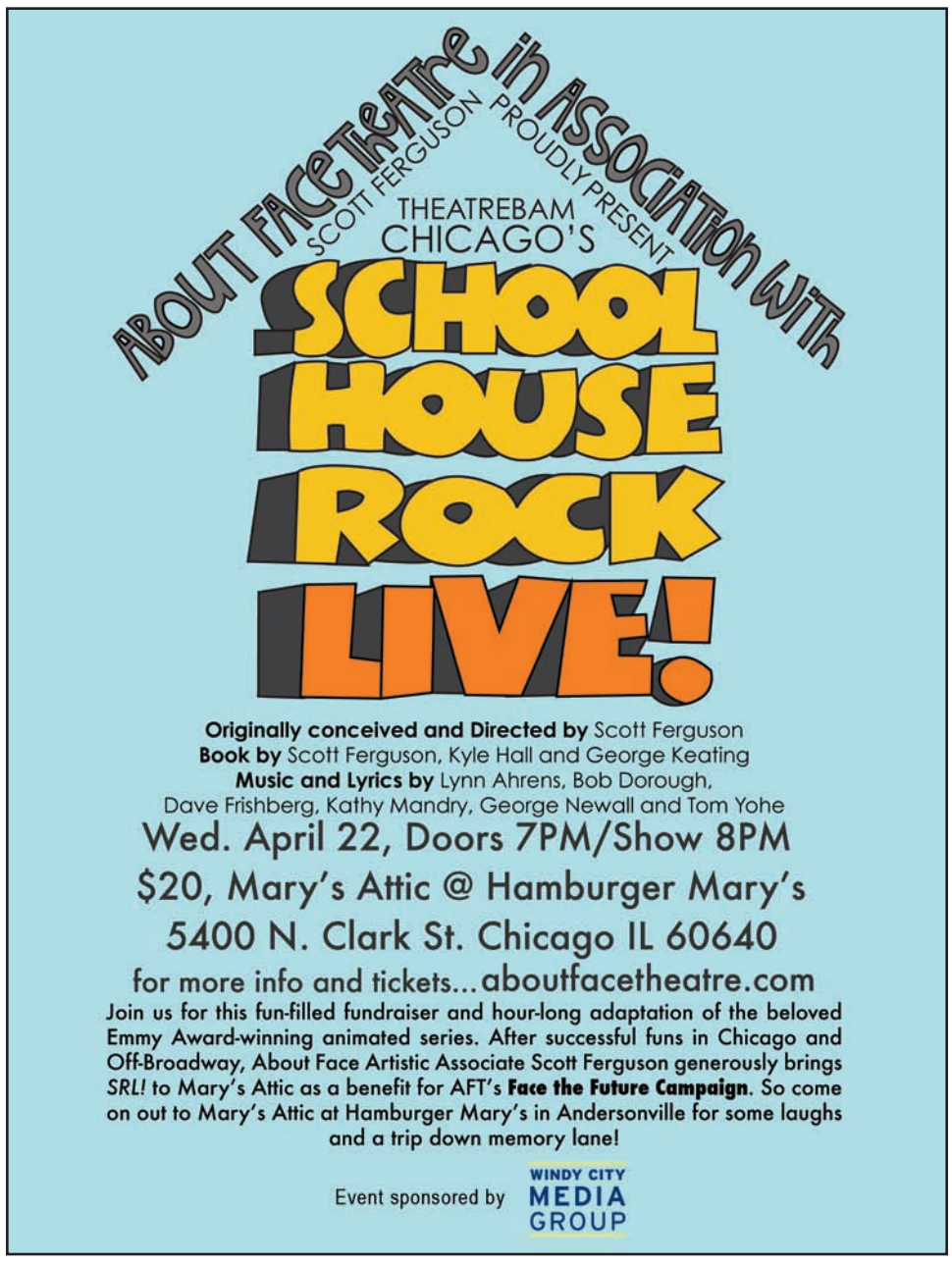
On Broadway, the role of Cioffi won Fraiser star David Hyde Pierce an acting Tony Award. But after seeing Chicago actor Sean Fortunato comically inhabiting the role so naturally, you'll think that Pierce was probably miscast.

A rogue's gallery of theater types fill out the suspect list, each played to the comic hilt by the entertaining ensemble. Nancy Voigts is great as the brash producer Carmen Bernstein, crassly sparring with both her cheating husband, Sidney (Jim Corti), and her defiant daughter, Bambi Bernet (a very limber Nicole Hren, who executes Linda Fortunato's fun Agnes de Mille-spoofed chorography with the balletic Michael Parker Ayers).

More humor comes courtesy of John Reeger as the pompous director Christopher Belling and Paula Scrofano in the thankless role of awful star Jessica Cranshaw.

On the serious side, Christine Sherrill and James Rank beautifully play the divorced songwriting team of Georgia Hendricks and Aaron Fox. Their pained separation is reflected upon in the wonderful song "I Miss the Music," which can also be read as John Kander's own elegy for his long-time writing partner, Fred Ebb.

Curtains may ape other classic musical comedies (and the film Singin' in the Rain) too much to make its own magic, but you won't see a better professionally produced version of Curtains anytime soon. So make the suburban trek out to Oakbrook Terrace now.





Curtains. Photo by Johnny Knight

CRITICS' PICS

Evita, Theo Ubique Theatre at No Exit Café, through April 19. Oh what a circus, oh what a show. Andrew Lloyd Webber's early mega-musical has an immediacy not possible in more traditional venues. Chalk up another triumph over seemingly impossible logistics for director Fred Anzevino. CS

Mary Poppins, Cadillac Palace Theatre, through July 12. There's no hiding the scripted seams binding this mega-musical together, nor its sheen of a corporate Disney product. Yet there's a valuable message of family togetherness to be found in this stage adaptation of the beloved 1964 Disney film, plus loads of fun special effects (She flies!). SCM

Our Father, Seanachaí Theatre at the Atlantic Bar & Grill, through April 13. The family may disagree on whether their "Da" was a good man or a bad, but we're right there with them at the wake, held in the back room of a fully-functioning Lincoln Square pub. Slainte! MSB

Playing with Fire, Bohemian Theatre, through April 11. Based on (and true to) Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, this passionate and intelligent work emphasizes psychological horror over physical horror, with powerful acting and sparely effective design. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

PRESENT

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Old Times. Photo by Johnny Knight

THEATER REVIEW

Private Lives/ Old Times

Playwright: Noel Coward/Harold Pinter
At: City Lit Theater at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr
Phone: 773-293-3682; $25
Runs through: May 3

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

A distinctive feature of perfect companionship, according to the late Carolyn Heilbrun, is "the continuing possibility of conversation." In these strikingly dissimilar plays by English playwrights Noel Coward and Harold Pinter, we meet two long-married couples confronted by issues rooted in the past that, for better or worse, guarantees that their futures together will never be boring.

In Private Lives, Coward presents us with Elyot and Amanda—married for three years, divorced for five, both recently wedded to second partners, only to discover on their respective honeymoons that they were meant for each other. Pinter's Old Times introduces us to Deeley, a husband racked with jealousy, despite 20 years of marriage, by the pre-marital bond between his enigmatic wife and her girlhood friend, Anna.

Standard interpretations of Coward's witty romantic comedies play them for madcap giddiness, frozen-lipped caricatures swapping repartee at warp speed with no more moral introspection than a hit squad spraying the room with verbal tommyguns. Director Terry McCabe, however, recognizes the need for us to *like* his caddish lovers and to that purpose, has instructed his principal players to search for textual clues to their personae's gradual progress toward mutual compatibility—as contrasted to the shallow second spouses, hopelessly mired down in stubborn prejudices.

Pinter's minimalist dialogue, on the other hand, too often provides troupers an invitation to glut themselves on introspective silences untempered by any regard for audiences stranded outside the subtextual continuity. But under McCabe's direction, the two adversaries dueling for the affections of the passive women they both covet forge a steely undercurrent that never lets up, but instead holds us riveted right up to the author's characteristically cryptic ending.

City Lit Theater's twin productions, running in repertory, are a veritable showcase for storefront-circuit favorites Don Bender and Cameron Feagin, who generate a chemistry, reminiscent of Cary Grant (well, David Niven, maybe) and Katherine Hepburn, to unite Elyot and Amanda as much in their irrepressible candor as in their penchant for grand passions and flying fisticuffs. Both acquit themselves just as skillfully in the roles of the professorially rumpled Deeley and the swinging post-war bachelorette Anna. Supporting actors Maggie Kettering, George Seegebrecht, Gianine DeFrancesco and Shawna Tucker all do their part, assisted by impeccable dialects and an uncredited score of carefully selected incidental music, but Bender and Feagin are the reason to reserve your tickets without delay.



Pangs of the Messiah. Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

Pangs of the Messiah

Playwright: Motti Lerner
At: Silk Road Theatre Project at Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington
Phone: 312-857-1234; $30-$34
Runs through: May 10

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's no questioning the important subject matter of Motti Lerner's drama Pangs of the Messiah. It takes itself so seriously that "important" should be spelled with a capital "I."

Of course, anything dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict has to be thoughtfully approached, and playwright Motti Lerner certainly does in his 2007 revision of his 1987 play of "what-ifs."

Set in 2012, Pangs of the Messiah explores what desperate tactics Jewish Zionist settlers in the West Bank might take if Israel and Palestine brokered a peace agreement. Lerner depicts the multiple extremes people take though the extended Berger family led by the fiery Rabbi Shmuel.

Some family members are confused, some calculatingly protest losing their homes by putting children at harm's risk, while others are shocked as their loved ones turn into violent militants willing to do anything to prevent the peace accord. Lerner covers his bases pretty well, and as a longtime Israeli peace activist, he shows a simultaneously critical and empathetic approach to his characters who increasingly feel betrayed by their government and their own people.

Silk Road Theatre Project's Midwest premiere of Pangs of the Messiah is downright respectable and professionally produced. There's no denying that the play and the production will make you think. Whether you enjoy it is another matter.

Lerner doesn't temper the drama with much humor (other than a running gag about Rabbi Shmuel always changing his shirt). Without any moments of true levity for relief, Pangs of the Messiah progresses like one heavy stone after another being laid atop your chest.

I would have liked director Jennifer Green to allow her actors to lash out with more outrage and anger, not only at the situations, but at each other. At the opening night performance, it felt like some of the actors were holding back, which muffled some of the intensity.

As the family patriarch, I would have liked Bernard Beck to bring more gravitas to Rabbi Shmuel as he increasingly loses his sway on government officials and the actions of his extended family.

As the wives in the family, Susan V. Adler, Dana Black and Stacie Green do great jobs of showing their resentment at their concerns receiving second-class treatment by the men. They also do very well at holding grudges against each other for not doing as much as they perceive necessary to help the settlers' cause.

Pangs of the Messiah is a cautionary tale about the extremes of religious zealotry as applied to Jewish settlers. But as far as theatergoing experiences go, this drama is more akin to taking medicine because you know it's beneficial rather than something you'll truly enjoy.

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THEATER REVIEW OF:
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SPOTLIGHT



Disney's High School Musical is ripe for parodying, but what about Chicago's own storefront theater scene? The Cornservatory spoofs both in the new production **Storefront Theater Musical**. See what happens when two young lovers from different companies (an improv comedy troupe and a serious feminist theater collective) try to audition for a musical fundraiser put on by a campy drag-queen theater company. Storefront Theatre Musical plays 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays April 11-May 16 at the Cornservatory, 4210 N. Lincoln. Tickets are $7-$15; call 312-409-6435 or visit www.cornservatory.org. Photo by Robert Bouwman



Observe and Report; Paris 36; Film notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.



Observe and Report.

Two films opening in Chicago this week vividly illustrate the difference between the tastes of the "vulgar" mainstream masses and the "cultured" indie snobs. **Observe and Report**, the mainstream effort, is indeed a vulgar but often hilarious comedy starring Seth Rogan, and it's a million miles from the sentimental, sophisticated theatrical artifice of the French film **Paris 36.** But both films play shamelessly to their core audiences and both movies work because they mine familiar stereotypes that expertly draw in their audiences.

In the lowlife comedy Observe and Report Jody Hill—writer-director of The Foot Fist Way and Eastbound & Down HBO series—serves up the same jaw-droppingly crude, unredeemable lead character that has quickly become his stock in trade. This character is so appallingly inappropriate in his language and behavior that he draws laughs from an incredulous audience. Hill then challenges his audience to shift its allegiance and end up rooting for this coarse white-trash character—a feat he pulls off consistently. In the process Hill also presents a rancid portrait of a culture so dim-witted, self-involved, materialistic and immediately identifiable one almost feels a palpable, uncomfortable embarrassment when confronted with it—when not laughing in recognition.

Hill's leading man of choice, Danny McBride, is replaced this time by Seth Rogan (although McBride provides a very funny cameo). Rogan has quickly risen to the front ranks playing a sort of human embodiment of Homer Simpson. Here he plays Ronnie Barnhardt, the bipolar head of security at an indoor shopping mall whose hold over the mall is threatened by the arrival of a real-life cop (Ray Liotta) trying to capture a persistent flasher when Ronnie fails to nab him.

Though it's hard to identify with defeated losers like Ronnie and his cohorts it also feels just great to feel superior to them and to watch them hilariously, hopelessly screw up over and over again. Observe and Report is the latest in a long line of mean-spirited, snark-filled, low-down comedies that, while it lasts, gives stereotyping a good name.

In its way, so does the oh-so precious Paris 36 from writer-director Christophe Barratier (best known here for 2004's *Les Choristes*). Set in 1936, the action centers on the performers and stage hands at the once mighty, now closed music hall the Chansonia, situated in a seedy district of Paris. The action centers on Pigoil (Gerard Jugnot), a stage manager who has lost his livelihood and contact with his son when his wife, the star of the show, leaves town for another man with the boy in tow. Eventually, a desperate and destitute Pigoil and his allies secretly begin hosting shows in the theatre, bringing in new talent to go with the old (including a hambone comic and a foppish choreographer) with hopes that their new star, the songbird Douce (Nora Arnezeder), will win the day.

The plot is a familiar cross between Mrs. Henderson Presents and Moulin Rouge (with the film having the same artificial lighting, sets and costumes that added to the theatrical feel of those two), and the characters sing a lot of original French songs that Piaf would have adored. To a man, every character and situation has been seen in dozens of previous French movies; the sentimentality is so thick it could be cut off with a guillotine; and nothing here lasts in the mind beyond the final "*alouette,*" but while Paris 36 is unfolding Barratier manages to wrap up the strands of this stereotypical "little" French film into an awfully sweet package.

Film notes:

—**Queer Cinema 101**—the new five-week, Monday-night series showcasing the best of gay cinema chosen and hosted by gay film critics—debuts this coming Monday, April 13. I'll be hosting this premiere offering, the tremendous 1996 documentary The Celluloid Closet. The screening will be preceded by a meet-and-greet with all the critics and a post Q&A roundtable as well. The series is being partly sponsored Sidetrack and by www.HannahFree.com. The trailer for the forthcoming lesbian-themed film Hannah Free starring Sharon Gless will also be shown. The event starts at 7 p.m. at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. Seating is on a first-come, first-seated basis. A $5 suggested donation is requested; visit www.centeronhalsted.org or call 773-472-6469, ext. 245.

—Hell in a Handbag Productions, the theater company noted for its hilarious film parody shows, presents a staged reading of the Joan Crawford classic Mildred Pierce, part one of their **Dueling Divas! (Joan Crawford vs. Gloria Swanson)** staged readings on Friday, April 10. Handbag Artistic Director David Cerda once again channels Crawford, this time in her Oscar-winning role. The reading will be presented at Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, at 8 p.m. Tickets are $25 for each. Proceeds from the series will help finance Handbag's forthcoming revival of their original hit musical Poseidon! Reserve tickets and further information on the Dueling Divas! series at www.handbagproductions.org.



Paris 36.

—**Off the Cuff**—a mockumentary from writers-producers Jessica Hardy and Brent Kado about improvisation that was shot in Chicago and that features Chicago talent—will screen Tuesday, April 14, at 7 p.m. at Sonotheque, 1444 W. Chicago, as part of the monthly Film Culture Chicago's Indie Flicks series. The $7 admission includes free popcorn and drink specials. See offthecuffmovie.blogspot.com.

—If the screen captures of Hugh Jackman's shapely booty burning up the Internet gossip sites from the forthcoming **X-Men Origins: Wolverine** have whet your appetite for more, how about the possibility of seeing Mr. Jackman in the flesh? Chicago could be the host city for a promised star-studded April 27 premiere of the film if fans drum up enough votes for Chicago. Voting ends April 17, and the winning city will beannounced April 20. Visit x-menorigins.com/premiere.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site.

Lesbian film submissions sought

Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark, and Dyke Delicious are issuing a call for entries for their May Shorts Program. Dyke Delicious has shown short lesbian-themed films each May since its inception and continues this tradition with the Lesbian Film Showcase.

They are asking for short, lesbian-themed films with a maximum time of 20 minutes. Formats accepted include 16mm, 8mm, Beta SP, miniDV and DVD; preview copies should be sent on DVD or miniDV. The deadline is Wed., April 15; call 773-293-1447.





BY DAVID BYRNE AND TONY PEREGRIN

Maybe now she will be singing "all the flowers that you planted, mama, in the backyard, all are back in bloom." On Tuesday, April 21, **Sinead O'Connor** will release a special edition of I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got, just shy of the opus' 20-year anniversary. Although this breakthrough is the Irish songbird's second album, it marks her first as a mother. This influences "Three Babies," "Emperor's New Clothes" and "Black Boys on Mopeds." This multi-platinum album also features the number-one smash "Nothing Compares 2U" and the live favorite "The Last Day of Our Acquaintance," which R.E.M. has added to its repertoire. The bonus disc includes rarities, oddities and a stripped-down recording of the masterpiece "Troy." Also present are a previously unreleased cover of John Lennon's "Mind Games;" a sexed-up version of Cole Porter's "You Do Something To Me" from the Red Hot + Blue benefit compilation; and a remix of the James Brown sampling "I Am Stretched on Your Grave." On the one-off-single "My Special Child," the Grammy winner's voice rings purely as she sings about the baby she lost. The gorgeous Enya-like "What Do You Want" is in Gaelic. This is such a deserving reissue from a madly talented artist. O'Connor is already working on new material for an early 2010 release per an optimistic statement she issued on her official web site.

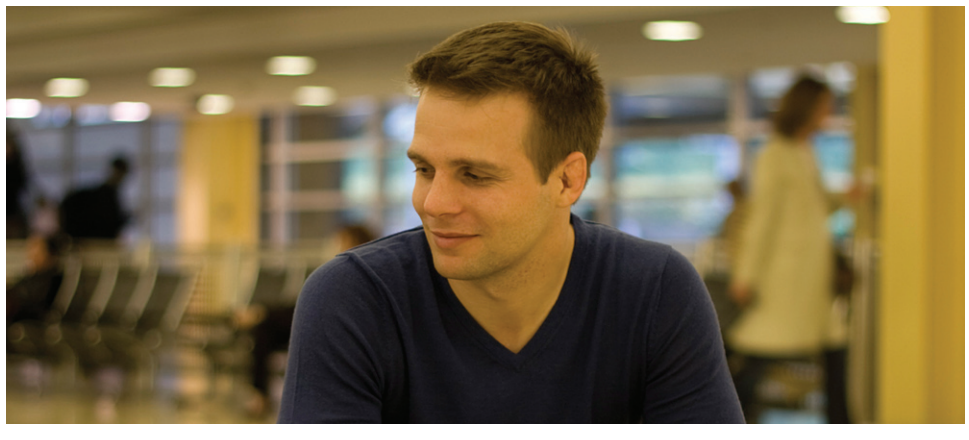
Love it or hate it, few could escape the popularity of Katy Perry's monster hit "I Kissed a Girl." Out singer-songwriter **Jen Foster** boldly delivers the ultimate response song with "I Didn't Just Kiss Her." Here, Foster uses her Americana rock style to confess, "I didn't just kiss her, we went all the way and I liked it." The object of Foster's affection insists the fling was an attempt to get a guy's attention and then blames the drinks for the same-sex encounter. But Foster knows better than to believe these after-thought claims. Dance remixes and an accompanying music video are in the works. The Nashville artist just released the EP Songs from Thirty-Nine as a precursor to her full length Thirty-Nine. This summer Foster will be performing at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in Walhalla on Saturday, Aug. 8. To hear "I Didn't Just Kiss Her," visit myspace.com/jenfoster.

The sun beautifully reflecting over the water on the cover of **Linq**'s third album, Life Goes On, perfectly suits the set's mood. It captures the assuring serenity of the harmonies on the title track's reprise and even catches a glimpse of the potential environmental loss as heard on the opener "Where Will the Wild Ones Go." The out musician brings up the paranoia of big brother on "George Orwell Where Are You?," then offers a fun introduction to queer sexuality on "Diversity Dance." This one should be incorporated into high school and collegiate sociology curricula. Linq has a knack for harmonies and captivating choruses, like on "Will You Care" and "Ode to the Butterworth Boys." But it is the repetition of Linq singing "life goes on" throughout the reprise that I want to play on repeat for all perpetual pessimists and overreacting drama queens, so they can put life's curveballs into perspective. The Massachusetts-based Linq provides sound advice in her storytelling and makes the listener think about global consequences while harmonies melt over her folk-pop sound.

Coming from the City of Brotherly Love, **Balloons** takes off with its debut, the EP Definition of Forever. This partially queer quartet proudly shows influence from the greats of the goth, alternative and electronic scene like Love & Rockets ("Pass the Lines"), Morrissey ("Daddy Was a Looker") and Orgy ("Injection"). This EP proves not all Balloons are not filled with hot air; every cut here is solid and steps away just far enough from its predecessor to emphasize versatility. This young, promising, eyeliner wearing outfit is releasing its debut teaser EP Definition of Forever on April 14, leaving me waiting for more like a possible spot at Northalsted Market Days, The Flesh Hungry Dog Show or even Lollapalooza.

Kenosha, Wis., native **Tom Goss** returns with his third outing, Back to Love. The openly gay Goss' finest moments come when the focus is on his voice, as heard on the slower numbers "Till the End" and the outstanding "Lover." If Billy Joel and Elton John's camps were wise, they would consider having Goss open for the pair's summer tour. Not only would Goss' music complement those of these legends, but Goss' presence definitely would add an overwhelming breath of fresh air. Back to Love will be out April 7 and Goss is due to be at The Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln, on Friday, April 10.

After hitting the road this spring to support its debut, Filthy Nasty, in a fuel-efficient car, **The Kristen Ford Band** is concluding its spring tour at The Red Line Tap, 7000 N. Glenwood, on Saturday, April 18. Steff Mahan and Ripley Caine are in the night's line-up too. Ford will also celebrate Earth Day with a solo performance at Columbia College on Monday, April 20. Need more of The Kristen Ford Band? The all-queer trio will also be performing at Milwaukee's PrideFest on Saturday-Sunday, June 13-14.



Tom Goss.



Perez Hilton hosting his party at SXSW. Photo by Brenda Schumacher

MUSIC

Messin' with Texas: SXSW 2009

BY BRENDA SCHUMACHER AND T. KHYENTSE JAMES

Now in its 23rd year, the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival in Austin, Texas, has become one of the most important gatherings in the music industry, drawing agents, labels, bookers, radio programmers, critics, trendspotters and fans from around the world—all in the search of the next big thing. Set in sunny, springtime Austin, and featuring more than 2,000 acts at over 100 venues, SXSW is a near-utopian musical immersion.

Music (featured at the festival March 18-22) echoes from city parks, gritty alleys, street corners, rooftops, churches, restaurants and clubs—creating the enviable problem of choosing between the likes of Margaret Cho, Amanda Palmer, PJ Harvey, MC Lady Sovereign, the Indigo Girls, Yelle, Ida Maria, Ebony Bones, or dozens of emerging indie buzz bands at any given hour.

Even Whole Foods got into the act with rooftop concerts from Austin Girls Rock Camp, featuring 11- to 18-year-old hipster campers jamming for enthusiastic crowds. Northern State's Hesta Prynn's surprise appearance gave due props to the teens and left the audience drenched in sweat.

Performing at several showcases and parties throughout the week, Margaret Cho unveiled yet another brilliant incarnation –this time as a musician. Cho, having completed a few months of guitar lessons, workshopped songs from her new album, Guitarded, which she is currently writing with Amanda Palmer, Tegan & Sara, Patty Griffin and other musicians she met on the True Colors Tour. Offering fans a deluxe double bill, Amanda Palmer accompanied Cho, before launching into her own set featuring a preview of her first solo album, "Who Killed Amanda Palmer."

Lady Sovereign, arguably the reigning queen of MCs, performed in more than a dozen shows, including the Club Deville Biz 3 Showcase and the Rolling Stone Magazine Party, before losing her battle with laryngitis. The hard-working, hard-partying Lady Sovereign, epitomized the SXSW musician experience, where acts play at all hours to build brand, impress labels and satisfy intense fan interest. The Vivian Girls clocked in a record eighteen sets.

One of the festival's hottest debuts came from eccentric Brit, Ebony Bones, who performed new songs from her upcoming LP, W.A.R.R.I.O.R. Drawing comparisons to MIA and Tina Turner, Bones was named one of SXSW's best acts of 2009.

A-list industry parties and independent productions have become essential to the SXSW experience. Serving as the surprise act, Jane's Addiction rocked the *uber*-exclusive Late Night Party hosted by C3 and Playboy Magazine. Dave Navarro and Perry Farwell gave arguably their best performance of a decade at the gutted Safeway Grocery store, where Playboy bunnies danced and free drinks flowed until 4am.

The independently produced Levi Fader Fort is a veritable festival within the festival. The smartly designed "fort" creates a world unto itself, with a graffiti aesthetic infused into playful lounges with swing sets, photo studios, internet café, and an on-site Levi store. Thousands attended the closing night (the organizers reportedly distributed 17,000 wristbands for the show), and hundreds more lined up outside to catch a glimpse of the not-so-surprise guest performers Kayne West, Erykah Badu and Common.

The much anticipated invite-only "One Night in Austin with Perez Hilton" lived up to the self-generated hype. The notorious gossip blogger's professed "girl powered extravaganza" served as a very queer SXSW gran finale featuring star power the likes of Margaret Cho and the Indigo Girls, and many of the week's most raved about break-out acts such as Ida Maria, Yelle, Amanda Palmer, Ladyhawke, Thunderheist, Natalie Portman's Shaved Head, Solange, Little Boots, Rye Rye, Aaron Lacrate, Jeppe and Kraak & Smaak.

Perez Hilton, decked out in a pink Aretha Franklin-style inauguration hat and matching suit, served as emcee and adoring fan. Aside from Hilton's brief, foul tirade against Lady Sovereign for her last-minute cancellation, the event was a love fest of sorts, with Hilton lavishing praise on the talent, dancing stage-side, and creating a paparazzi rush with his every move.

Kayne West seemed to steal the show with his second "surprise" appearance of the evening that had frenzied guests jamming the stage and waving hands in the air. But after a short intermission, Ida Maria and Yelle took back the stage with the evening's most memorable performances.

Ida Maria, the Norwegian indie-rock phenom, made her first and only SXSW appearance at 2 a.m., and was raucously received by the die-hard crowd. Having missed the entire SXSW week due to visa problems, Ida Maria made up for her absence with a soaring, physical performance that had her kicking the air in "Queen of the World," falling to her knees in a show-stopping "Stella," and dousing her head with a bottle of water during the crowd favorite "Oh My God." As she left the stage, the rapt and exhausted audience knew they had just witnessed a historic SXSW moment.

Yelle closed the evening with their brand of scintillating French electro-pop. Heading up the playful trio, namesake Yelle charmed the house with all-franco lyrics, and danced across the stage in a red-fringed lycra top and matching Budweiser logo-emblazoned tights. With no translation needed, their single "Ce Jeu" provided the week's closing anthem.

Although SXSW abounds with queer musicians, fans, writers and cultural arbiters from around the world, it is a notably label-free environment. Any qualifying terms such as "gay" or "woman" before artist or rapper or filmmaker were decidedly uncool and unnecessary. The exception is the fabulous and cheeky GaybiGayGay festival, which serves as the all-queer unofficial closing day of SXSW.

The distinctly DIY event, hosted by Austin drag icon Rebecca Havemeyer, drew hundreds who gathered in her expansive East Austin backyard to rock out with Gretchen Phillips, Yo Magesty's Shunda K, and an impressive list of local bands and DJ's mixing it up until dawn. With no guest list and no cover, this freaky all night bash provided a great super-charged, yet casual close to a brilliant week in Austin.

To see a video of the event, visit QueerTV-Network.com at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com



Jai Rodriguez.

NUNN ON ONE: TV

Jai Rodriguez: Animal magnetism

BY JERRY NUNN

The Animal Planet channel is styling its way into season two of the reality series Groomer Has It. Jai Rodriguez returns as host to the show and catches up with Windy City Times about what's gone on since the last time he was interviewed.

Windy City Times: How are you, Jai? The last time I spoke with you, you were wrapping up Queer Eye for the Straight Guy in 2007.

Jai Rodriguez: Wow, time flies.

WCT: How has life been since winning an Emmy for that show?

JR: Busy, really super-busy. I have started a couple of series since then. I am in the process of doing a couple of more. In about two weeks I am going to Miami to shoot a new series for *Si* TV. It is very similar to America's Top Model but the Latin-formatted version. And, of course, there is "Groomer."

WCT: Tell me about the new season of Groomer Has It.

JR: Well, unlike last year, these guys bonded right out of the gate. They were best friends instantly, which is interesting because this is a competition. It definitely made for a fun show this year. There were a lot of challenges. We kept everyone on their toes.

WCT: They have to groom a potbelly pig in a challenge?

JR: Yes, we do take them to a pig farm. They don't know what they are doing until they get there and then we show them. It's pretty hilarious.

WCT: There is a doggie wedding on the show? This interview should go in our Pets section!

JR: Yes, there is. This is Los Angeles and people do things like that very seriously. It was an opportunity for us to have a little fun.

WCT: I saw a lot of tears on the preview.

JR: There was a lot more crying this year. There were tears from the judges. The prizes have gotten a lot better for one thing. The winner receives $50,000 cash, a mobile grooming truck, a brand-new Subaru Forester and, of course, the title in that industry is extremely prestigious. You can charge whatever you want after winning that.

WCT: One of your dogs is the "messenger dog" on the show?

JR: It's funny to see Nemo's role bumped up. Which is hilarious to see that your dog is a bigger star than you are!

WCT: You have an upcoming movie called Oy Vey, My Son is Gay. It looks hilarious and touching from the preview.

JR: It's a coming-out story. John Lloyd Young is my boyfriend. Lainie Kazan plays his mom and Vincent Pastore from the Sopranos is in it, along with Carmen Electra.

WCT: A good group to work with there. Are you still singing?

JR: I am releasing a summertime single called "Moves." It is a fun dance song in the vein of Lady GaGa's "Just Dance." I am shooting a video for that next week.

WCT: You are busy.

JR: Trying to be. In a city that is very unstructured and laid-back, I need structure for myself.

WCT: Chicago is pretty well-structured, like where you are from in New York.

JR: I was just saying how I hope I will actually get to Chicago soon. There was a little doggie shop that I visited downtown near the shopping area. It was a really great store—gay-owned—and these guys were fantastic. They totally helped me out and gave me all this cool swag.

WCT: You have a one-man show called "My Truth," correct?

JR: I just finished that show, produced by Wayne Brady. It was kind of Moulin Rouge-style, as in the story was new and all of the music was familiar. It was fun because I got to show L.A. what New York already knew. Wayne was able to add comedic edge to what touching moments from my life that a lot of people don't know about. I am hoping to tour with that.

WCT: You could come to Chicago on tour.

JR: Where would I go? I wouldn't know where to begin.

WCT: I could work on that for you, some cool venue.

JR: You get on that!

The new season begins Saturday, April 11, on Animal Planet. See www.discovery.com for details.

Bebe Zahara Benet: Winning the 'Race'

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Bebe Zahara Benet doesn't have to lip-sync for her life anymore—she's the winner of the first season of RuPaul's Drag Race (A second has already been green-lit.) Hailing from West Africa's Republic of Cameroon—"Camerrooooooooon," as Ru frequently bellowed during Bebe's runway struts—and currently based in Minneapolis, Bebe (aka Nea Marshall Kudi) called just before the climactic episode was aired to dish about the show, those other bitches … er, contestants, and what's next for America's next top drag queen.

Lawrence Ferber: Congrats! Now that you've had five seconds to think about it, what's next for you aside from the Absolut Pride Tour?

Bebe Zahara Benet: There are so many things I want to do. One of my priorities is to create a show for Bebe to share her own experiences and where she comes from with a lot of people. That's where my mind is right now. And I'm hoping other opportunities come along. I'm hoping I don't have to stay in Minneapolis for too long because I've done everything I can do there and it's time to go different places. It just depends on where my opportunities are."

LF: Did they shoot the show through a layer of gauze? What's with the soft filter effect? It looked like a Liz Taylor perfume commercial.

BZB: [*Laughs*] I didn't get it at all. I wish I could answer that question for you! I think you need to ask the producers, what were you thinking? Were you trying to hide our faces or something? Do you think we're not attractive enough? Right?

LF: What was the show's most ridiculous challenge?

BZB: I don't know if I'm going to say ridiculous but I think it was the [Absolut Drag Ball challenge]. I had to work with raspberries. It's a beautiful fruit but so delicate to work with. That was a challenge for me but when you get in a situation you do what you have to do to pull through. And it worked.

LF: Was there any on-set drama or sassing we didn't get to see?

BZB: Well, I think a lot of what you saw on the show is how it went. I really appreciated that. Coming in I was skeptical and wanted to make sure drag was represented the way it should be. This is what I do for a living. I want to take it to the highest height. So I wanted drag portrayed with no stereotypes. Everybody came with a professional attitude and respected the art. Obviously personalities rubbed here and there but generally it was how we were.

LF: Who got booted too early, in your opinion?



Bebe Zahara Benet. Photo courtesy of Logo

BZB: Jade. I think she was just coming into her own element. I feel there was more of her we could have seen if she stayed longer but then again we're in the hands of judges who have their own opinions and we don't control that.

LF: Who needed to get booted sooner?

BZB: Everybody. [*Laughs*] Is it OK for me to say that?

LF: Who did you become closest friends with?

BZB: I got along with every single girl but the one I bonded the most with was Nina Flowers. There were a lot of similarities between us—where we come from, how our cultures are and how they look at men, and how we look at drag and how far we want to take it.

LF: What sorts of secrets can you spill about your fellow contestants? Now's your chance for revenge!

BZB: Honestly, I got along with everyone. I have no hard feelings with anybody. Not even Akashia. You'd be surprised. I talk to her all the time.

LF: Did you sample Victoria "Porkchop" Parker's famed pork chops?

BZB: No, but I'm planning it! I told her they need to be grilled. I love that whole barbecue smell!

LF: Any final words on being the first winner of this title?

BZB: I'm just hoping I can be a good role model and represent what drag is all about and can be and inspire other people who have the passion for the craft.

See www.rupaulsdragrace.com and bebezaharabenet.com for more information.

Read the entire interview online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and find out what Bebe was up to in Chicago on page 21 of this issue.

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Queer Cinema 101

A film series showcasing the best of gay cinema chosen and hosted by gay film critics

Monday, April 13
*The Celluloid Closet**
Hosted by Richard Knight Jr.
Cinema Writer, *Windy City Times*

Monday April 27
The Killing of Sister George
Hosted by Charlie Shoquist
Film Critic, *Gay Chicago*

Monday, May 11
*Victor/Victoria**
Hosted by Jonathan Lewis
Editor and Film Critic, *Gay Chicago*

Monday, April 20
Velvet Goldmine
Hosted by Hank Sartin
Film Editor and Critic, *Time Out Chicago*

Monday, May 4
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WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, April 8

4 Women Only, hosted by Kat Fitzgerald, dedicated to new women artists 9 p.m. Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon Ave. 773-465-9801

Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division, Cleis Press book tour launch of Jon Ginoli's journey of self-discovery, musical passion, and drive to become the founding member of Pansy Division, the first out and proud queer core punk rock band to hit it big. 7 p.m. Quimby's , 1854 W North Ave

Staceyann Chin, outspoken queer performance poet and author of The Other Side of Paradise 7:30 p.m. Women & Children First 5233 N. Clark St. 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com www.staceyannchin.com/

Thursday, April 9

Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division, Cleis Press Book Tour Launch Jon Ginoli's journey of self-discovery, musical passion, and drive to become the founding member of Pansy Division, the first out and proud queer core punk rock band to hit it big time 7 p.m. Borders, 2817 North Clark St.

Dr. Stephanie Maj, speaking on her new book, "You Can Be Well," 7 p.m.-8 p.m. Flourish Studios, 3020 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-528-8485 www.communitychiropractic.net

Prose, Poetry and Pints at the Pug. Open mic with E. Patrick Johnson (Sweet Tea). Host: 2009 Lambda Literary award finalist Drew Ferguson. Sign-up 7:30 p.m. Readings 8 p.m. Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway; 773-784-4811

The Cliks 8:30 p.m. Subterranean, 2011 West North Ave.

Friday, April 10

Brian Tilton architectural watercolors show opening reception 6:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m. Show through May 31. Center on Halsted's 2nd floor Art Gallery from www.centeronhalsted.org

Hell in a Handbag Productions presents Dueling Divas, Joan Crawford vs. Gloria Swanson starring Nora Dunn and David Cerda. A pair of staged readings to benefit Poseidon! An Upside Down Musical. 8 p.m. Hydrate Nightclub, 3458 N. Halsted Ave. (Round Two: Sunset Boulevard, May 15) $25 Brown Paper Tickets 800-838-3006 or www.brownpapertickets.com/event/60116

Queering the Night, hosted by Lani T Montreal. 2nd Friday of the month, 7 p.m. Insight Arts. 1505 W. Morse Ave

Sapphic Adventures, 7 p.m.Café Bolero, 2252 N. Western Ave. www.meetup.com/sapphicadventures

Saturday, April 11

Affinity Community, Forty Plus presents Table Talk, all ages welcome. 6 p.m. Affinity Community Services 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave 773-324-0377

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth Chorus forming, Saturday open rehearsals. www.centeronhalsted.org and Evan Trad 773-799-4979 chicagolgbtyouthchorus@gmail.com

Monday, April 13

Actor Slash Model with Colbalt and the Hired Guns, $6, 9 p.m. Double Door, 1572 N Milwaukee Ave

Hedwig and the Angry Inch opening night including post-show reception $50. 7p.m. Through May 17. American Theater Company, 1909 W Byron St. $35; Fri & Sat evenings and late nights $40. Reservations by April 10. orschoenly@cathytaylorpr.com; www.atcweb.org

The Celluloid Closet, hosted by Richard Knight, Jr., part of Queer Cinema 101, five week film series through May 11. The best of gay cinema chosen and hosted by gay film critics. Partially sponsored by www.HannahFree.com, the forthcoming lesbian themed film shot in Chicago and starring Sharon Gless (trailer shown before screenings). Roundtable with critics follows. Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. 773-472-6469 www.centeronhalsted.org

Tuesday, April 14

Civil unions and health insurance reform benefit, hosted by Greg Harris, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway

Meet Michael Steele, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, 4 p.m. Union League Club of Chicago 65 West Jackson www.gop.com

Sam Weller, author The Bradbury Chronicles: the Life of Ray Bradbury, part of Columbia College Chicago Library's BIG READ celebration of Fahrenheit 451, Bradbury's classic dystopian novel. 7-9 p.m. in Columbia's Film Row Cinema, 1104 S. Wabash, 8th flr. 312-369-7153 www.colum.edu/bigread

Wednesday, April 15

4 Women Only, hosted by Kat Fitzgerald, dedicated to new women artists 9 p.m. Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon Ave. 773-465-9801

Kenn Nesbitt, author of My Hippo Has the Hiccups, Revenge of the Lunch Ladies and The Aliens Have Landed at Our School, storytime appearance. 2 to 5 years olds and their grown-ups invited. 10:30 a.m. Women & Children First 5233 N. Clark St. 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Windy City Gay Naturists join Men Nurturing Men to hear Ms. Margaret Kemp, organist 12:15 p.m. Nichols Music Institute, 1490 Chicago Ave., Evanston. RSVP 312-494-2654

Thursday, April 16

An Evening with the Anaphora Ensemble, $10, 7 p.m. Elizabeth Stein Company, 410 S. Michigan Ave, www.lizsteinco.com

Gerda Lerner author of Living with History / Making Social Change. Feminist pioneer and scholar of Women's History. 7:30 p.m. Women & Children First 5233 N. Clark St. 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Peppino D'agostino Italian acoustic guitarist, composer, singer, teacher and all-around entertainer 9 p.m. $10 advance/$15 at door. Heartland Cafe www.heartlandcafe.indietickets.com

Lettice and Lovage, featuring Bev Spangler. Opening night reception. Through May 1. $10 cash only. 7:30 p.m. The Stage Center Theatre, Northeastern Illinois University 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue. Bldg F . Reservations, campus location, parking info: 773 442 4274

Windy City Gay Idol, Chicago's biggest GLBT contest, eight rounds in eight bars, over $5,000 in cash and prizes. 8 p.m. signup/9 p.m. start Spin 800 W. Belmont. cynthia@windycitymediagroup.com www.windycitymediagroup.com/Idol2009.html

Friday, April 17

Chicago Latino Film Festival opening night film Chile, The Gift and cocktail reception 312-431-1330 www.latinoculturalcenter.org

Day of Silence/Night of Noise Youth speak out about their Day of Silence, with performances, live music, a DJ. 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Thompson Center, 100 W Randolph St. www.illinoissafeschool.org

Frames of War, Judith Butler, professor of rhetoric and comparative literature at University of California, Berkeley, and leading scholar on feminist and political theory 3 p.m. University of Illinois at Chicago Forum, 725 W. Roosevelt Rd. Free. Reserve by April 10 at www.uic.edu/depts/huminst

Windy City Gay Naturists Karaoke Party @ Rumors, 2433 Des Plaines Ave. N. Riverside. RSVP 312-494-2654

State Senator Heather Steans LGBT fundraiser 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. $50/$150. Big Chicks 5024 N. Sheridan. RSVP to info@heathersteans.com

Transgender Aging Intensive for service providers and advocates 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. $100 includes lunch. Info 414-559-2123 Register at www.forgeforward.org/tan/intensive.php Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. 773-472-6469 www.centeronhalsted.org

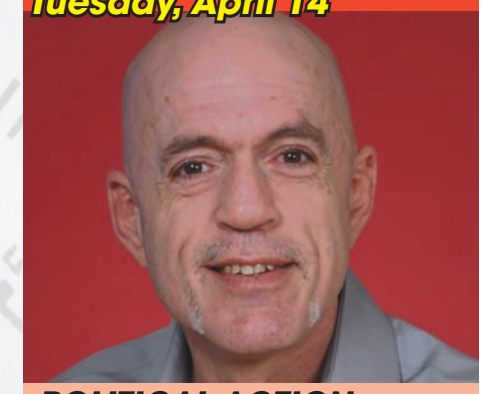
Youth Pride Services University workshops on topics related to LGBTAQ youth of color and not offered in most high schools. This week: Leadership/Service, leading a group of peer, running a meeting, conflict resolution. 6-8 p.m. Preregistration required: youthpridecenter@gmail.com

Saturday, April 18

2009 Spring Black Gay Youth Fest and After Party, 5 p.m. entertainment, 10 p.m. DJ $5. youthpridecenter@gmail.com

Kristen Ford Band's 100% queer, DIY tour with Steph Mahan and Ripley Caine. 9 p.m. $5. Red Line Tap 7006 N. Glenwood 773-274-5463 www.heartlandcafe.com

Tuesday, April 14



POLITICAL ACTION

State Rep. Greg Harris will hold a benefit related to civil unions and health-insurance reform at The Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway.

Photo by Hal Baim

Monday, April 13



KNIGHT MOVES

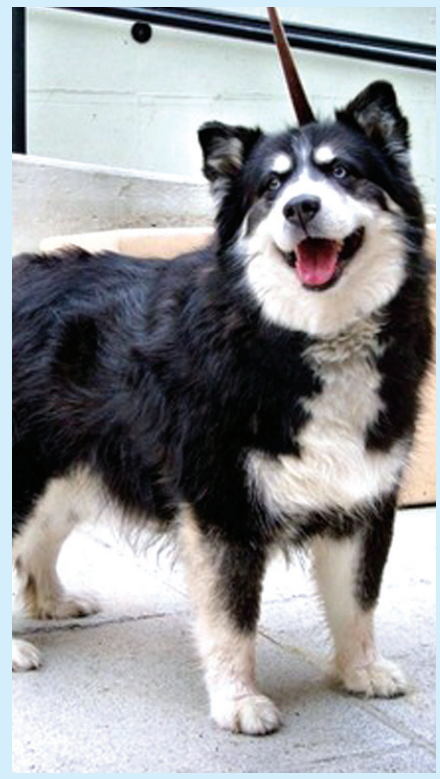
Windy City Times film critic **Richard Knight, Jr.** will host a showing of The Celluloid Closet at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted.

Photo by Rick Aguilar

See our online calendar: www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar



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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook Country. File no. D09116713 on the FEB 20 2009 under the assumed name of Writing Revisited Press with the business located at 3332 W. Foster Ave. Suite 308 Chicago IL 60625. The true name and residence address of the owner is: Gerald Cole 4159 W. Fletcher Chicago IL 60641. *(4/22/09-3)*

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN:, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook Country. File no. D09117126 on the MAR 23 2009 under the assumed name of Ferry Acupuncture, Ltd. with the business located at 1241 N. Leavitt Apt. 2 Chicago, IL 60622; 2764 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago, IL 60614; 1425 W. Diversey Pkwy. Chicago, IL 60614; 700 N. Carpenter St. Chicago, IL 60622. The true name and residence address of the owner is: Michelle Ferry, L.A.C. 1241 N. Leavitt Apt. 2 Chicago, IL 60622. *(4/22/09-3)*

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1543 N. Kingsbury St.

47 **The Prop House**
1675 N. Elston Ave.

THE SOUTHSIDE

48 **Club Escape**
1530 E. 75th St.
ClubEscapeChicago.com

49 **Escapades**
6301 S. Harlem Ave.

50 **InnExile**
5758 W. 65th St.
InnExileChicago.com

51 **Jeffrey Pub**
7041 S. Jeffery Blvd.

THE BURBS

52 **Club Krave**
13126 S. Western Ave.
Blue Island, IL
ClubKrave.com

53 **Hideaway**
7301 W. Roosevelt Rd.
Forest Park, IL

54 **Hunters**
1932 E. Higgins Rd.
Elk Grove Village, IL
HuntersNightclubs.com

55 **John L's Place**
335 154th Pl.
Calumet City, IL

56 **Maneuvers**
118 E. Jefferson St.
Joliet, IL
JolietManeuvers.com

57 **Rumors**
2433 Desplaines Ave.
North Riverside, IL
RumorsPubOnline.com

58 **Velvet Rope**
728 W. Lake St.
Oak Park, IL
VelvetRopeOakPark.com

INDIANA

59 **Dick's R U Crazee?**
1221 E.150th St.
Hammond, IN
DicksRUCrazee.com

60 **Encompass**
2415 Rush St.
Lake Station, IN
EncompassNightclub.com

BILLY MASTERS

The annual GayVN Awards (or gay porn awards) were held last week in San Francisco—an apt place for me to showcase my new outfit. Since everyone was wondering exactly what possessed me to wear this fetching "ensemble," let me explain. A designer fan in Australia offered to make



Go to BillyMasters.com to see this one's "huge ackman."

me something he called "goth/alternative rock/gender fuck." I asked if he's ever seen photos of me—clearly this is not my usual "look." But, being bold, I went for it—eliciting compliments and confusion along the way (which is hard to do in SF). Pics will undoubtedly follow on BillyMasters.com. Little did I know I'd be the least memorable thing of the evening.

Kudos must go out to Alec Mapa. The show announced two hosts—Margaret Cho and Janice Dickinson. Alec was listed as a "special guest." Some fella who I didn't know seemed to be running things on stage—ably but unmemorably. Alec became the de facto host, and he ran with it. Nothing against Miss Cho, who did a fabulous 15-minute set towards the end of the evening (including a sung homage to the man-meat of Ricky Sinz, which we'll post on our Web site), or Miss Dickinson, who managed to remain upright throughout her presentations. But Alec was on point, spontaneous, and hysterically funny.

None of that mattered—you put Michael Lucas anywhere near a mike and there's a good chance he'll steal the show and piss someone off. One of the big nominees was Brent Corrigan—an industrious porn pup who got his beginnings as a minor in bareback videos. Add in his notoriety regarding the murder of a former employer and he's a controversial character in a business filled with 'em. Brent won a few awards. As luck would have it, this year the GayVNs also honored the Association of Sites Advocating Child Protection. After this presentation, Lucas was enraged—how could the GayVNs honor a group trying to prevent minors from being lured into porn and then give an award to someone who did underage porn? It's a fair criticism, but what made it controversial was Michael leaping to the stage from his front-row seat rather than making his ire known at a more appropriate time. The audience reception was mixed—applause and boos throughout the theatre.

It didn't end there. At the after-party, I was leaving after snuggling with Michael and the devastatingly handsome Dean Flynn. As I was walking out, I bumped into Brent and his boyfriend. I knew that everyone's paths were about to cross, but I wanted to avoid the drama (for a change). Michael claims that Brent's boyfriend threatened him with bodily harm. The next morning, Lucas called the police, which led to an interrogation.

Before we move completely away from gay porn, I think its fun to note that sexy Dustin Lance Black, who won Best Screenplay at the Academy Awards, was at the event and parties. Why was he there? To meet hottie Tony DiMarco, who won the Best Screenplay at the GayVNs! Of course, I helped facilitate this meeting and have the photo to prove it. I call this one "When award shows collide." And it can only be seen on BillyMasters.com.

While I was up in San Francisco dealing with the allegedly less savory section of show business, some "legit" actors (and I use that term loosely) were filming a pilot for Fox called My Slutty Girlfriend. Obviously, not my cup of tea. But sexy Eric Balfour is in the cast, and you all know how he lives to show off his cock. Any opportunity he has to swing those four inches in a circle (albeit a small circle), he does. I'm not sure what the scene was about, but it was filmed at Here Lounge in West Hollywood on Sunday night—one of the busier shifts. Eric and his two friends are naked and their nether regions covered with a sock. Not sure if the sock is part of the show or just the typical "cock sock" used on sets when you want to avoid a penis shot. The only thing I do know is that Eric and his buddies looked awfully hot—hot enough to stay after the shoot and go-go dance for tips (and maybe get a little under-the-sock action, if you catch my drift). You can catch the pics on BillyMasters.com.

Congrats to Wanda Sykes, who also signed with Fox to host a Saturday night talk show (replacing "MadTV"). This is not her first experience with the network. Wanda At Large was a constant battle and was eventually cancelled. Says Wanda, "Yes, my relationship with Fox hasn't been the best. But if Rihanna can go back to Chris Brown, I can go back to Fox. Oprah tried to talk me out of it, but I think Fox has changed."

This week, Kathy Griffin came out in favor of gay marriage while two performers came out publicly. Sexy Gavin Creel, who is showing all in

Turn to page 21



SKYY VODKA Miller Lite present

Windy City Gay Idol - Star Gaze



Congratulations to finalists Marla and Jennifer, who emerged victorious at the kickoff event of Windy City Gay Idol 2009, held Sunday, March 29 at Star Gaze, 5419 N. Clark St. Pictured are (L-R) judge Heather Schmucker, finalist Marla, judge Kirk Williamson, finalist Jennifer, judge Lisa Hernandez and host Amy Matheny. Photo by Cynthia Austin; more photos online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and in this week's edition of Nightspots magazine. Next week, see photos of the following event at Jackhammer on Tuesday, April 7.

BILLY from page 20

the Broadway revival of "Hair," and Clementine Ford, Cybill Shepherd's handsome daughter, who just joined the cast of "The Young and the Restless." That soap is turning into a gay-a-palooza!

Let me slip in a quick "*Ask Billy*" question from Jim in Atlantic City: *"A friend of mine says 'Wolverine' was leaked to the web and shows Hugh Jackman nude. Can you find any pics or clips and post 'em?"*

I can. I did. I posted. BillyMasters.com.

When I'm promoting Jackman's bare backside, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Billy officially has Spring Fever and hay fever, and you know what that means—I'm leaving town! Two weeks in Boston for Easter with the family, and two weeks in South Florida. No matter where I am, I'm updating www.BillyMasters.com. If you've got a question, send an e-mail to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Wanda and Fox go through couples counseling! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Hear Margaret Cho's mouthful on porn stud Ricky Sinz's man-meat at BillyMasters.com.

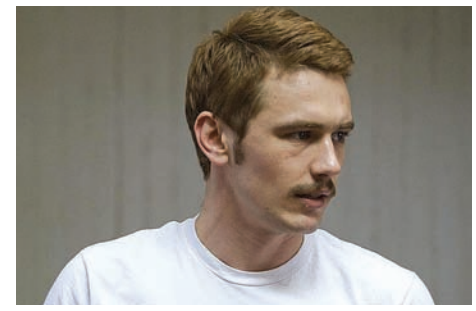
Bebe love







Bebe Zahara Benet (left), winner of the LOGO reality-show competition RuPaul's Drag Race, made a special appearance at Roscoe's on Thursday, April 2 as part of the Winner's Tour. Chicago's own DJ Mark Picchiotti (top right, left) provided the beats. Bebe was also joined by fellow competitor (and local-girl-made-good) Jade (bottom right, right). Photos by DJ Res-5



James Franco in Milk.

Entertainment news

Rap star Kanye West has said that he used to be "used to be scared to talk to a gay person" in an interview with MTV, according to PinkNews.co.uk. West, who has spoken out against homophobia, said, "I used to be scared to talk to a gay person. In hip-hop, there's people—and let's not even say scared like homophobic—but they're scared of the way people gonna look at them."

Lesbian tennis icon Martina Navratilova was the runner-up on the British reality-TV show I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here, losing to soap-opera actor Joe Swash, according to Tennis magazine. At one point, Navratilova had to have cockroaches, stick insects, grasshoppers and snakes crawl over her face for five minutes.

Actor James Franco (Milk, Pineapple Express) has been chosen as the commencement speaker at UCLA—and some students are not happy about it, according to MSNBC.com. More than 200 people have joined the "UCLA Students Against James Franco as Commencement Speaker" group on Facebook. The group has made its own suggestions, including Deepak Chopra, Rush Limbaugh and even Tyra Banks. Franco graduated from UCLA, and even won several creative-writing awards while he attended the school.

A court has ruled that **Madonna cannot adopt a second child**—Chifundo, which translates into English as Mercy—from Malawi, according to BBC News. Madonna's application was rejected because of a requirement that prospective parents be residents in the country for 18-24 months—a rule that was waived in 2006, when Madonna, 50, was allowed to take her adopted son, David Banda, to London before his adoption was finalized last year.

LOGO has given the go-ahead to **a second season of the network's breakout reality hit RuPaul's Drag Race,** which is set to air in early 2010, according to EW.com. The show's first season—won by Bebe Zahara Benet—was the three-year-old network's most successful series launch and drove LOGOonline.com to its highest traffic levels ever.

Grey's Anatomy star T.R. Knight narrowly escaped injury in a three-car accident March 19, according to the Los Angeles Times; another man and a woman involved in the collision were taken to the hospital by ambulance. In related news, former Grey's star Isaiah Washington and his wife, Jenisa, have been served with a notice to pay up or be evicted from their home. They allegedly owe $100,000 in back rent.

Actress (and occasional Windy City Queercast co-host) Alexandra Billings is one of the stars of the Marlo Bernier's transgender tale, Stealth, which spotlights the unfortunate intolerance of society and the reinforcing power of acceptance, according to a press release from Scorpio Rising Films. Billings takes the lead as Veronica Terranova alongside indie actresses Jennifer Fontaine and Elizabeth J. Martin, who play her sisters. Principal photography began April 4.

Congratulations are in order for fashion designer **Marc Jacobs, who recently became engaged to Brazilian boyfriend Lorenzo Martone**, Limelife.com reported. The two were recently in Brazil, where they hinted to reporters that they are interested in adopting a baby girl.

Opening a little earlier this season.



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Lindsay Tarpley. Photo courtesy of Chicago Red Stars

SPORTS/RECREATION

Red Stars kick off new league

BY ROSS FORMAN

The coach is from England. The top player is from Brazil, and some of her teammates are from Scotland, Australia and Sweden.

But now through August, all are calling Chicago home.

The newest professional sports team in town, the Chicago Red Stars, is part of the seven-team Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) league, which also features teams in St. Louis, Boston and Los Angeles, among other cities.

"I think this league is sustainable and something that will [and] can last," said Chicago Red Stars head coach Emma Hayes who, since 2006, has served as first team assistant coach and academy director at the FA's Women's Premier League's top-ranked Arsenal Ladies Football Club in London, England.

"I think the [WPS] league has a good business model, something that is setting us apart from other leagues. Our social media presence has really shown that you can reach out to mass audiences without having to spend millions of traditional advertising dollars."

Hence, the team's is trying to reach young adults living in the city, the ethnic communities, men's soccer fans and also the LGBT community, among other demographics. And the team is looking to average 5,000 or more fans per home game this season.

The Red Stars open their home schedule at Toyota Park in Bridgeview on Sunday, April 19. Game time is set for 5 p.m. against Sky Blue FC, which will play most of its inaugural season at Yurcak Field on the campus of Rutgers University in Piscataway, N.J.

"We can't control the [national] economy, but [we] can control the quality of the product [on the field]. And I think people will discover that it's an affordable game to come out and watch," said Hayes. Tickets to Red Stars action start at $15.

"I think the thing that will keep us going during a difficult time is, people ultimately still want to come see good entertainment," Hayes said. "And this is not [just] an average product; this is the best product in the world. It's been very impressive to me that the league has been able to attract the best players in the world."

Take, for instance, the Red Stars' top player: Cristiane, 23, a forward from Brazil. She was a silver medalist at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics, and the leading goal-scorer at the 2008 Olympics (five goals) and tied with Germany's Birgit Prinz for the most goals at the 2004 Olympics (also five). Cristiane was a member of Brazil's 2003 and 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup teams, and she scored five goals at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup and won the Bronze Ball, awarded to the tournament's third most valuable player.

"Cristiane is one of the best finishers in the world. She's very explosive and technical," Hayes said. "Her ability to get away from defenders is, I believe, better than most players in this league. She's very quick on the ball and also very technical. She has so much disguise and deception to her play, so, if you're not smart with her defensively, she'll go around you with ease. She has such a great eye for the goal. And she also is very, very dangerous in the air.

"She scores goal at the top level on a regular basis. She can do it on the biggest stage in the world."

And there are other Red Stars' forward to note, too. Karen Carney, for instance, is from England; she has great movement off the ball and puts good delivery into the attacking penalty box. The Red Stars' offensive attack also features Lindsay Tarpley and Ella Masar from the University of Illinois.

"We have quite a lot of talent up front," Hayes said. "There definitely is a strong attacking presence to this team. We've got a number of players who really suit our style of play. We've got a lot of flair and creativity in the wide areas, and we have a pretty strong core down the middle."

Carli Lloyd leads the team's midfield attack. "Lloyd is a very important, central play; she's a world-class player. I haven't seen very many players strike a ball better than Carli," Hayes said.

Frida Ostberg of Sweden is a key, defensive-minded midfielder. The midfield also will showcase the play of England's Karen Carney, who Hayes predicted will be one of the league's best players.

The Red Stars' backfield is solid and speedy, Hayes said, and includes Chioma Igwe, Ifeoma Dieke, Nikki Krzysik and Heather Garriock, among others.

In goal, the Red Stars feature Caroline Jonsson, a superstar from Sweden.

"If there's a better goalkeeper in the league, I'll be surprised," Hayes said. "Caroline Jonsson is Sweden's top keeper and truly has a dominating presence in goal. I feel very confident in the quality of our goalkeeper. She is an exceptional leader. She has great shot-stopping abilities."

The Red Stars will play nine of their 10 home games on the weekends, and the playoffs kick off in mid-August.

"I'm very excited about our team. I think we have a lot of fluid, fluent attackers who are very technical. We're a very technical, very quick team—and I think that's something the fans will love about us," said Hayes, who is determined to keep the team focused and driven, with an emphasis on "focused."

"I will make sure we keep our feet on the ground and play one game at a time," Hayes added. "Sometimes they may look ahead to a future game, but I have to impress upon them that the most important game is the next game. I know they're excited about the league and the rivalries, but we have to stay grounded, stay focused."

The Los Angeles Sol are, according to several soccer insiders, the team to beat in the WPS in 2009 … if only because the Sol roster features Brazil's superstar forward Marta Vieira da Silva.

The FC Gold Pride (San Francisco) and the Boston Breakers also are considered among the league's top teams.

"I think every team has strengths and weaknesses. I don't think there's an outright favorite," Hayes said. "You're not going to find soccer talent at this level anywhere else. And it's in your backyard. We guarantee it's going to be exciting and entertaining. I think people will be impressed by the quality."

Coming up: Features on the Chicago Force and the Chicago Sky

Wrigley run to benefit children

Two children's advocacy groups—Voices for Illinois Children and Prevent Child Abuse America—will benefit from the 12th annual Wrigley Start Early Run & Walk on Saturday, April 18.

The run will be held at Fullerton and Cannon. A 5K run will be held at 8 a.m. followed by a 10K run at 8:15 a.m. and 5K pledge walk at 8:30 a.m. A kids' dash will start at approximately 10 a.m.

Adult registration costs are $20-$35. There is no on-site registration for the event's chip-timed runs and walks. Visit www.startearlyrun.com.

CHICAGO RED STARS 2009 ROSTER & SCHEDULE

www.chicagoredstars.com

2009 ROSTER

NUMBER	NAME	POSITION	HOMETOWN
1	Caroline Jönsson	GK	Lund, Sweden
2	Marian Dalmy	D	Lakewood, CO
3	Ella Masar	F	Urbana, IL
4	Ifeoma Dieke	D	Glasgow, Scotland
5	Lindsay Tarpley	M	Kalamazoo, MI
6	Brittany Klein	M	Arcadia, CA
7	Heather Garriock	M	Sidney, Australia
8	Megan Rapinoe	M	Redding, CA
9	Danesha Adams	F	Shaker Heights, OH
10	Carli Lloyd	M	Delran, NJ
11	Cristiane	F	São Paolo, Brazil
12	Chioma Igwe	F	Belmont, CA
13	Natalie Spilger	D	El Cajon, CA
14	Karen Carney	F	Birmingham, England
15	Bonnie Young	D	Spring, TX
16	Sarah Wagenfuhr	D	Colorado Springs, CO
17	Michelle Wenino	D	Aurora, CO
18	Frida Östberg	M	Örnsköldsvik, Sweden
19	Mary Therese McDonnell	D	Orland Park, IL
20	Jamiel Johnson	GK	Dayton, OH
23	Nikki Krzysik	D	Clifton, NJ
25	Lydia Williams	GK	Katanning, Australia

2009 SCHEDULE

Sat., 4/4	@ St. Louis Athletica	Ralph Korte Stadium, Edwardsville, IL	7 p.m.
Sat., 4/11	@ Washington Freedom	Maryland Soccerplex, Germantown, MD	5 p.m.
Sun., 4/19	v. Sky Blue FC	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	5 p.m.
Sat., 4/25	v. Boston Breakers	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7:30 p.m.
Sun., 5/10	v. Sky Blue FC	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	5 p.m.
Sat., 5/16	v. FC Gold Pride	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7:30 p.m.
Sat., 5/23	v. St. Louis Athletica	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7:30 p.m.
Wed., 6/3	@ LA Sol	Home Depot Center, Carson, CA	9:30 p.m.
Sun., 6/7	@ FC Gold Pride	BuckShaw Stadium, Santa Clara, CA	7 p.m.
Sat., 6/13	@ Washington Freedom	RFK Stadium, Washington D.C.	4 p.m.
Wed., 6/17	@ Sky Blue FC	Yurcak Stadium, Piscataway, NJ	6 p.m.
Sat., 6/20	v. Boston Breakers	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7:30 p.m.
Sat., 6/27	@ LA Sol	Home Depot Center, Carson, CA	2 p.m.
Wed., 7/1	v. Washington Freedom	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7:30 p.m.
Sun., 7/12	v. FC Gold Pride	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7 p.m.
Wed., 7/15	@ Boston Breakers	Harvard Stadium, Cambridge MA	6 p.m.
Sun., 7/19	@ Sky Blue FC	Yurcak Stadium, Piscataway, NJ	TBD
Sun., 7/26	v. Washington Freedom	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	7 p.m.
Sun., 8/2	v. LA Sol	Toyota Park, Bridgeview, IL	5 p.m.
Wed., 8/5	@ St. Louis Athletica	Ralph Korte Stadium, Edwardsville, IL	TBD

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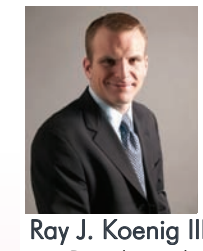
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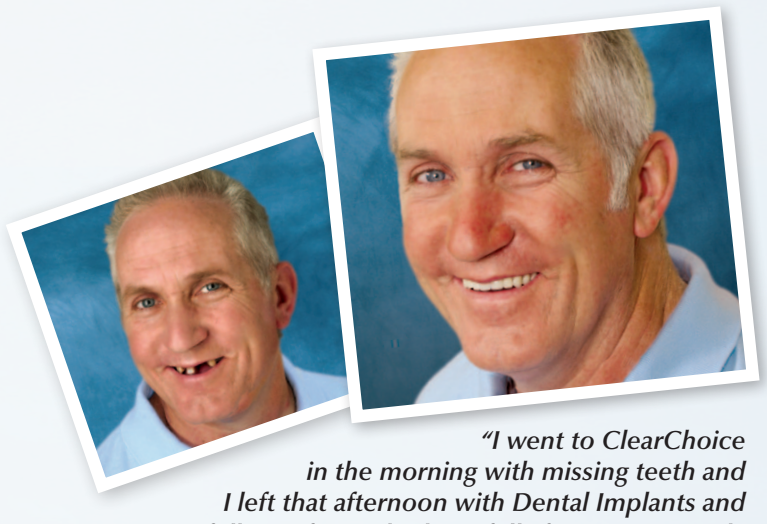
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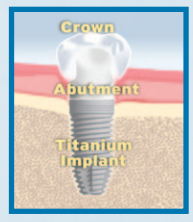
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