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Mike Rawlings will run for re-election as mayor in 2015
Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings confirmed Tuesday, Dec. 2, that he will run for re-election next May, telling Dallas Morning News that he still has some “big bold goals” left to accomplish.

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

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

— Tammye Nash

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

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

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

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

— Arnold Wayne Jones
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Resource Center offers health insurance help

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

Black Tie Dinner hosts Beneficiary Distribution Celebration

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

Movies That Matter screenings in Fort Worth

The quarterly series Movies That Matter: A Human Rights Film Series presented by the Fort Worth Human Relations Commission will present A Day of Film and Reflection on Dec. 6 at Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 3200 Darnell St. The event commemorates International Human Rights Day. The event will feature four films: Solar Mamas, Stealing Africa, Wasteland and Four Horsemen. A reception is scheduled from 3:15-4:15 p.m. Visit bit.ly/1ykF3Tn for showtimes.

Dallas Senior Services Program hosts free brunch and dance

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

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Marriage equality the hard way

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

TAMMYE NASH I Managing Editor
nash@dallasvoice.com

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

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

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

Resource Center Communications and Advocacy Manager Rafael McDonnell and Fairness Fort Worth President David Mack Henderson said that this week. “That means that if you were married in a jurisdiction that does legally recognize same-sex marriage, then your 401(a) retirement plan has to legally recognize your marriage, even if you live in a state like Texas that doesn’t.”

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

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

McDonnell said he and other Dallas activists have been “working with Dallas County over the last several months, talking about how to make their policies and benefits more LGBT-inclusive.”

When he heard about the IRS ruling, McDonnell said he “reached out to” the Commissioners Court who asked the county’s human resources director, Mattye Mauldin-Taylor, if the county’s retirement plan complies with the IRS requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Among those 12 is the Dallas Police and Fire Pension System, a group that recently chose to put off implementing full benefits for its LGBT members, even though the Dallas City Council had already voted in favor of those benefits. According to a DPFP overview publication from 2013, “DPFP is a defined benefit plan qualified under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, and serves almost 9,500 families of police officers and firefighters.”

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

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

Henderson, a tax preparation specialist, ex-
Robert Blake is a divorced dad who’s retired from the Air Force and lives in Cedar Hill.

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

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

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

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

“I paid for dinner,” Blake said.

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

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

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

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

Blake said he called Bellah a number of times to ask about a follow-up date and to ask when he could get his money back. But Bellah always had an excuse why he couldn’t meet Blake.

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

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

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

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

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

But John had. He gave Bellah a check for $275. John asked Bellah about this other friend who warned him.

“That’s when problems started,” he said.

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

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

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

According to Blake, others have been scammed as well.

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

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

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

*Editor’s note: The man identified as John asked that his full name not be used to protect his identity.
Holiday spotlight: Fourth annual LGBTQ Saves winter prom

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bernardo Vallarino, vice president of the group’s board, didn’t have a negative experience at his high school prom. But when asked if he’s attending, he responded with an enthusiastic “yes.” Students and parents learn about the prom through a variety of means: schools with Gay-Straight Alliances, word-of-mouth and outreach by board members and LGBT community liaisons.

Unfortunately not all students can attend. Some students may be out at school or among school employees but in the closet at home. Many others lack the means of transportation to get to the small church in Fort Worth’s Near Southside neighborhood where the dance will be held, Vallarino said. “But we’re working on it.”

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

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

“Teenagers need as much as they need to be loved and accepted,” she said.

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

---

December

Through Dec. 20: Gauge Xavier’s Annual Coat Challenge
Dallas Bears member Gauge Xavier challenges you to donate new or gently used winter clothing to the local charity of your choice, preferably one that does not resale the item. http://on.fb.me/1Begw3s.

Dec. 3–Dec. 24: 16th Annual CoH Christmas Gift Wrap Service
Drop off gifts in the reception area at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, before Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services throughout December and they will be wrapped and ready for you when you leave. Purchase gifts at Sources and use the CoH Gift Wrap Service to receive a $2 Sources gift card.

Dec. 7: Cantata
9 and 11 a.m. at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth.

Dec. 7: Advent: Peace Sunday service at 9 and 11 a.m. at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania, Fort Worth.

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

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

Dec. 6: LGBTQSaves Winter Formal
Fourth annual dance LGBT youth group in Fort Worth, 7–10 p.m., at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania, Fort Worth.

Dec. 7: Hope 4 Peace and Justice Year-End Banquet
H4PJ celebrates the year’s accomplishments, honors long-time board members for their years of service and recognizes the contributions of the Rev. Jim Mitulski, interim pastor of Cathedral of Hope, 6:30 p.m. at Mattito’s Tex-Mex, 3102 Oaklawn Ave.

Dec. 7: Advent: Peace Sunday service at 9 and 11 a.m. at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.
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Longtime Pride parade volunteer and former parade grand marshal remembered as a kind and selfless man

JAMES RUSSELL | Staff Writer
russell@dallasvoice.com

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

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

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

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

“Our parade directors, and executive directors who carry the parade in current years have made sure that his view of the parade was always the best; front and center,” read a post on the Dallas Tavern Guild Facebook page. “We are truly saddened by his passing, and he will be dearly missed by all. Rest in Peace, Mr. Lewis.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lewis joined the Army but didn’t last long.

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

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

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

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

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 20 at the Rose Room in S4. Doors will open at 1 p.m.
Resource Center’s Youth First participated in the World AIDS Day observances held Dec. 1 in Plano. Youth First volunteer Cristina Hayes, program manager Mike Cruz, and one of the Youth First members presented a quilt panel that Youth First attendees made for the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial quilt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Henderson

Rafael McDonnell

Dr. Allen B. Safir

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Tammye Nash
Dec. 10: Dallas County Democratic Party Jingle Bell Bash
DCDP hosts its annual Jingle Bell Bash 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Stoneleigh, 2926 Maple Ave. Toys can also be dropped off for its Toys for Tots drive, running through Dec. 12, at the party and at DCDP offices, 4209 Parry Ave.

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

Dec. 11: Our Lady of Guadalupe/Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe
Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road, honors Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration with a procession of the image of the Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine in Mexico City at 7 p.m. A following Mass includes a retelling of the 1535 revelation at Tepeyac in Mexico and Folkloric dances by Alegre. After the mass, attendees will share the typical tamales and atole (a Mexican drink similar to chocolate milk).

Dec. 12: AIDS Walk South Dallas launch party
Fifth anniversary launch party hosted by Dallas Black Dance Theater, 6:30-9:30 p.m. at 2700 Flora St. AIDSWalkSouthDallas.com.

Dec. 13: Women's Chorus of Dallas presents HoliDAZE
TWCD singing holiday classics with a twist, 7 p.m. at City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. Tickets at 214-520-7828 or TWCD.org.

Dec. 13: LEGACY Christmas Event & Planning Session
Cathedral of Hope’s monthly social group for adults 50 years and older meets for A Christmas Carol potluck dinner at 1:30 p.m. at Bath House Cultural Center, 521 E. Lawther Dr. Contact Roy Joplin via e-mail at rvj5868@att.net with questions.

Dec. 13: Linze’s Toys for Tots Drive
Linze Serell’s eighth annual Toys for Tots drive and Christmas party begins at 8 p.m. at Garlow’s, 308 E. Main Street, Gun Barrel City. Wal-Mart gift card donations will be accepted through Dec. 10. Send to Bill Lindsey/Linze Serell, 802 Bayou Court, Wylie, 75098.

Dec. 14: Advent: Joy, Music
Sunday, 9 and 11 a.m., at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

Dec 14: Worship Service and Holiday Potluck
Following the 10:30 a.m. service, stick around for the 11:45 a.m. Holiday Potluck Dinner at Agape Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec. 14: Community Cantata: “Noel Celebration”
Former WFAA news anchor Gloria Campos narrates the production featuring churches from the region, 3 p.m. at Celebration on the Lake, 9120 S. Hwy. 198, Maybank. Contact Kathy at 817-602-4645 for more information.

Dec. 15: Resource Center Open House
Drop by and meet the staff, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Resource Center, 2701 Reagan St.

Dec 16: DFW Trans-Cendence Holiday Party and Potluck
7 p.m. at Agape MCC, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec. 18-21: Turtle Creek Chorale presents Jangled
Holiday program includes a family version at the Saturday matinee. Thursday–Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday–Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Dec. 18: GALA Holiday party and fundraiser
Carol rug, silent auction and performance by Gary Poc, 6–10 p.m., at 3504 Pinehurst Drive, Plano. $18 in advance, $20 at the door. Free for GALA members. RSVP by Dec. 10 to info@galanorthtexas.org.

Dec. 20: 23rd Annual Lights of Love
7 p.m. at Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth.

Dec. 20: Salvation Sisters
The DFW Sisters stage The Salvation Sisters, a take-off on the Salvation Army Christmas bell ringing, 8:30–11 p.m. in front of Hunky’s, 3930 Cedar Springs Road. Proceeds benefit HIV services.

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

Dec. 22: Ring in the Holidays with Leslie Jordan
Benefit for Legacy Counseling Center at 8 p.m. at Theatre Three, 2800 Routh St. Suite 168. Tickets at LegacyCares.org.

Dec 24: Christmas Eve
Dec. 24: Beth El Binah goes out for Chinese
The LGBT Jewish congregation fulfills the biblical commandment to eat Chinese food on Christmas at 7:30 p.m. at Thairrific, 4000 Cedar Springs Road #E. Everyone welcome.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Communion Service
7 p.m at Agape Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth.

Dec. 24: Cathedral of Hope holds four Christmas Eve Candlelight Holy Communion Services.
Family worship at 5 p.m. in the sanctuary. A Spanish language service at 7 p.m. in the International Peace Chapel. English language services at 9 and 11 p.m. in the sanctuary. All at CoH, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

Dec. 25: Christmas
I love the Jewish holidays — well, all of them except this one and I'll probably offend just about everyone explaining why

DAVID TAFFET I Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

It’s not Krismu, Crissmass or Christmas. So why do we get to choose Hanuka, Hanukka, Chanuka, Chanukka, Chanukkah and any other combination of H or CH, one or two N’s, one or two K’s and a final H or not? I just cannot and will not support a holiday they can’t decide how to spell. There are lots of other reasons I don’t like this least important holiday on the Jewish calendar. First and foremost, because it certainly is the least important holiday on the Jewish calendar. Most other Jewish holidays have roots in the Bible. This one is from the Book of Maccabees, which we threw out of the Bible more than 2,000 years ago.

We threw the book out but celebrate its holiday? Nonsense. A little history to explain what Hannukah celebrates: In 167 B.C.E., a few thousand Jewish fighters, called the Maccabees, beat the crap out of about 40,000 Assyrians and gained independence. They did it by inventing guerrilla warfare. About 250 years later, in order to continue practicing their religion under the Romans who would have been ticked off knowing a small band of Jews could beat the crap out of a large army, Jews made up the “great miracle” story of the oil lasting eight days until they received a new shipment in Jerusalem.

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

So Chanuka celebrates the invention of guerrilla warfare, or it celebrates a bullshit made-up story. Take your pick. Now, other Jewish holidays also may be based on events that never happened. Who knows if Moses lifted his staff and parted the Red Sea? That’s part of the story of Passover. But Passover also celebrates some good concepts — like slavery bad, freedom good. And who knows if Queen Esther told the king she was Jewish? Turns out the king really loved her hot ass so he put to death Haman, who was planning to exterminate the Jews. Thus we have Purim, which teaches that genocide is evil.

And did Moses come down from Mount Sinai — the mountain in Sinai, not the hospital on Long Island — with the 15 Commandments? Whether that actually happened or not, Shavout celebrates the giving of the law. We learn not to murder or covet thy neighbor’s ass or thy neighbor’s wife’s ass — all good things.

But Hanuka is the first holiday that celebrates something we actually know never happened. Oil? Miracle? All made up. We know we made it up. Maybe those 10 plagues that preceded the Exodus never happened either, but at least we don’t know they never happened. Chanukah is also the laziest holiday on the Jewish calendar. One simple prayer that’s ripped off from Shabbat with the change of just one word — that’s how lazy we were with this holiday. Light a few spindly candles. Give your wife a fur coat or a new Cadillac and, azoy, it’s done.

Passover involves cleaning out the kitchen and replacing all the dishes with Passover plates and removing all the food and replacing it with special Passover food. I’m not sure what most Jews will be doing for Passover this year since Manischewitz was purchased by Bain Capital last spring — but that’s another story.) A huge Passover meal is prepared. Families gather and tell the story of the Exodus and sing songs and eat. Yom Kippur involves an evening and then a full day of fasting and prayer followed by a huge feast to break the fast.

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

But Chanukkah? Hanukah has one measly prayer and one monotonous song: “I have a little dreidel. They made it in China out of plastic. And when it’s dry and ready, then dreidel I shall play; Repeat. Repeat. Keep repeating til you can’t stand the damn song anymore. And just how do you play dreidel? A dreidel is a four-sided top with a letter on each face. As you spin the top, place bets on which letter will land face up.

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

And traditionally, Hanuka isn’t the gift-giving holiday. Purim is. Chanukah became the gift-giving holiday sometime after World War II in suburban America, so little Jewish kids wouldn’t feel left out.

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

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

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

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

And for the record, here’s how the holiday should be spelled in English taken from the Hebrew spelling: חנוכה. The first letter is a gutteral KH as in — well, we don’t have that sound in English. But not a CH as in chocolate and not an H as in “holy shit everyone spells this holiday wrong.”

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

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

So the correct spelling of the holiday, the one no one has ever used and no one — except me — suggests we begin to use, is KH not CH, one N, a long OO, one K and a final H: Khanookah. •
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Y'ALL HAVE TO TRY IT!

12.05.14 • dallasvoice • 17
violence and nationwide protests in the wake of a Missouri grand jury’s decision not to indict a white police officer for the shooting death of a black teenager in August reveals the depth of the racial divide in this country and the distrust of our criminal justice system.

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

Ferguson: No easy answers

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

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

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

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

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

Although accustomed to violence and riots, many Americans feel they witnessed a night of mayhem in Ferguson like no other one before it. Only a small percentage of Ferguson’s black population participated in the rioting, but their community as a whole will suffer from the actions of the agitators. Black business owners experienced significant losses, and the community lost service and shopping venues. Now, protests continue in cities nationwide, and arguments on social media sites such as Facebook flourish between advocates of law enforcement officers and activists who view the killing of Brown as an act of police brutality.

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

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

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

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

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

Cohen speculates the nation will likely experience more disastrous instances of civil unrest until there is reform to the criminal justice system and a healing of the racial wounds of the past that created the racial division. “It’s a gulf that breeds suspicion and mistrust, a gulf that undermines the very legitimacy of our system of justice,” he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But no longer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Treasure the things and people that are familiar that you are able to bring along for your journey. Start new traditions and build from there.

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

The stars ended up with my brother after my parents passed.

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That means more to me than I can ever explain.

My tears told the story.

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

I had a great time, but it was all new. I felt loved, but also like a curiosity, especially to the older members of my son-in-law’s family. They just didn’t quite know what to say to me.

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

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

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

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

— Arnold Wayne Jones

Dance and theater

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

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

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

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

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

Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road, Santalant, Dec. 5–28.

Yes, Virginia Woolf, There Is a Santa Claus. Jeff Swearingen does some screwed up children’s theater, from an all-pre-teen-girl adaptation of Glengarry Glen Ross to a kiddle version of Game of Thrones, but what could be more theatrical — and holiday-centric — than combining the structure of Edward Albee’s dark domestic drama of Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf with the heartwarming message of Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus by moving it to the North Pole, where Jolly Ol’ St. Nick ain’t nearly so jolly when dealing with Mrs. Claus. Sick. And certainly hilarious.
Plano Children’s Theatre, 1301 Custer Road, Plano. Dec. 5–13.
FunHouseTheatreAndFilm.com.

Miracle on 34th Street and Frosty and Friends. Dallas Children’s Theater is going the more traditional route for kids with two shows: Frosty and Friends is a quaint puppet show appropriate for theatergoers as small as 4, and Miracle on 34th Street is a stage
version of the film about how a department store Santa transforms a city.

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

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


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


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


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

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

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


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


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

Fundraising performances and music

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


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

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

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

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

Jangled. The Women’s Chorus isn’t the only gay-led choir taking over City Performance Hall. A few days later, the Turtle Creek Chorale takes over the space with its annual show of holiday music, this year called Jangled. There will be four concerts with all the saucy fun you’ve come to expect from the TCC, plus a fifth performance that’s meant for the whole family.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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

STRIBILD can cause serious side effects:

- Build-up of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual (not normal) muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold especially in your arms and legs, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.

- Serious liver problems. The liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and fatty (steatosis). Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice), dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored bowel movements (stools), loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach pain.

- You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking STRIBILD for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.

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

Who should not take STRIBILD?

Do not take STRIBILD if you:

- Take a medicine that contains: alfuzosin, dihydroergotamine, ergotamine, methylergonovine, cisapride, lovastatin, simvastatin, pimozide, sildenafil when used for lung problems (Revatio®), triazolam, oral midazolam, rifampin or the herb St. John’s wort.

- For a list of brand names for these medicines, please see the Brief Summary on the following pages.

- Take any other medicines to treat HIV-1 infection, or the medicine adefovir (Heptiva®).

What are the other possible side effects of STRIBILD?

Serious side effects of STRIBILD may also include:

- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your healthcare provider should do regular blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with STRIBILD. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking STRIBILD.

- Bone problems, including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

- Changes in body fat can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.

- Changes in your immune system. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking STRIBILD.

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

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?

- All your health problems. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.

- All the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Do not start any new medicines while taking STRIBILD without first talking with your healthcare provider.

- If you take hormone-based birth control (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc).

- If you take antacids. Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD.

- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if STRIBILD can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking STRIBILD.

- If you are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk. Also, some medicines in STRIBILD can pass into breast milk, and it is not known if this can harm the baby.

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

Please see Brief Summary of full Prescribing Information with important warnings on the following pages.
STRIBILD is a prescription medicine used as a complete single-tablet regimen to treat HIV-1 in adults who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. STRIBILD does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.

I started my personal revolution

Talk to your healthcare provider about starting treatment.

STRIBILD is a complete HIV-1 treatment in 1 pill, once a day.

Ask if it's right for you.

STRIBILD®
elvitegravir 150mg/ cobicistat 150mg/ emtricitabine 200mg/ tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300mg tablets

GILEAD
Patient Information

STribild® (STRY-bild)
(evlitegravir 150 mg/cobicistat 150 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg) tablets

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

What is STribild?

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

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

STribild can cause serious side effects, including:

1. Build-up of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis). Lactic acidosis can happen in some people who take STribild or similar (nucleoside analogs) medicines. Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Lactic acidosis can be hard to identify early, because the symptoms could seem like symptoms of other health problems. Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms which could be signs of lactic acidosis:
   - feel very weak or tired
   - have unusual (not normal) muscle pain
   - have trouble breathing
   - have stomach pain with nausea or vomiting
   - feel cold, especially in your arms and legs
   - feel dizzy or lightheaded
   - have a fast or irregular heartbeat

2. Severe liver problems. Severe liver problems can happen in people who take STribild. In some cases, these liver problems can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms of liver problems:
   - your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice)
   - dark "tea-colored" urine
   - light-colored bowel movements (stools)
   - loss of appetite for several days or longer
   - nausea
   - stomach pain

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

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

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

Who should not take STribild?

Do not take STribild if you also take a medicine that contains:
- adefovir (Hepsera®)
- alfuzosin hydrochloride (Uroxatral®)
- cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid® Quicksolv®)
- ergot-containing medicines, including: dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), and methylergonovine maleate (Ergotrate®, Methermine®)
- lovastatin (Advicor®, Altovast®, Mevacor®)
- oral midazolam
- pimozide (Orap®)
- rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®), when used for treating lung problems
- simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®)
- triazolam (Halcion®)
- the herb St. John's wort

Do not take STribild if you also take any other HIV-1 medicines, including:
- Other medicines that contain tenofovir (Atripla®, Complera®, Viread®, Truvada®)
- Other medicines that contain emtricitabine, lamivudine, or ritonavir (Atripla®, Combiq®, Complera®, Emtriva®, Epivir® or Epivir-HBV®, Epzicom®, Kaletra®, Norvir®, Trizivir®, Truvada®)

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

What are the possible side effects of STribild?

STribild may cause the following serious side effects:

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

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.
- These are not all the possible side effects of STRIBILD. For more information, ask your healthcare provider.
- Call your healthcare provider for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking STRIBILD?

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

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements:
- STRIBILD may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how STRIBILD works.
- Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you take any of the following medicines:
  - Hormone-based birth control (pills, patches, rings, shots, etc)
  - Antacid medicines that contain aluminum, magnesium hydroxide, or calcium carbonate. Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take STRIBILD
  - Medicines to treat depression, organ transplant rejection, or high blood pressure
  - amiodarone (Cordarone®, Pacerone®)
  - atorvastatin (Lipitor®, Caduet®)
  - bepridil hydrochloride (Vascor®, Bepadin®)
  - bosentan (Tracleer®)
  - bupropion
  - carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Epitol®, Equetro®, Tegretol®)
  - clarithromycin (Biaxin®, Prevpac®)
  - clonazepam (Klonopin®)
  - clonazepate (Gen-Xene®, Tranxene®)
  - colchicine (Colcrys®)
  - medicines that contain dexamethasone
  - diazepam (Valium®)
  - digoxin (Lanoxin®)
  - disopyramide (Norpace®)
  - estazolam
  - ethosuximide (Zarontin®)
  - flecainide (Tambocor®)
  - flurazepam
  - fluticasone (Flovent®, Flovent Diskus®, Flovent® HFA, Veramyst®)
  - itraconazole (Sporanox®)
  - ketoconazole (Nizoral®)
  - lidocaine (Xylocaine®)
  - meftrexetine
  - oxcabazepine (Trileptal®)
  - perphenazine
  - phenobarbital (Luminal®)
  - phenytoin (Dilantin®, Phenytek®)
  - propafenone (Rythmol®)
  - quinidine (Neudexta®)
  - rifabutin (Mycobutin®)
  - rifapentine (Priftin®)
  - risperidone (Risperdal®, Risperdal Consta®)
  - sildenafil (Serevent®) or sildenafil when taken in combination with fluticasone (Advair Diskus®, Advair HFA®)
  - silodosin (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®) or vardenafil (Levitra®, Staxyn®), for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED). If you get dizzy or faint (low blood pressure), have vision changes or have an erection that lasts longer than 4 hours, call your healthcare provider or get medical help right away.
  - tadalafl (Adcirca®), for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension
  - telithromycin (Ketek®)
  - thioridazine
  - voriconazole (Vfend®)
  - warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®)
  - zolpidem (Ambien®, Edluar®, Intermezzo®, Zolpimist®)

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

Keep STRIBILD and all medicines out of reach of children.

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

Issued: October 2013
Admit it: You have Christmas albums from The Carpenters, Nat King Cole, Trans Siberian Orchestra and maybe Garth Brooks, but otherwise your collection of holiday standards isn’t updated nearly as often as it should be. There have been Christmas songs written since “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” as a host of artists hope to prove with a slate of new CDs — some with standards, some with new music but all in the spirit of the season.

For his first holiday album, A Michael Feinstein Christmas (Concord), Great American Songbook specialist Michael Feinstein doesn’t stray too far from his roots. Accompanied by acclaimed jazz pianist Alan Broadbent, Feinstein’s renditions of Christmas classics are sources of endless joy. The arrangements allow both Feinstein and Broadbent to shine like the lights on a Christmas tree. Sure, we know these songs — including “The Christmas Song,” “There’s No Place Like Home For The Holidays,” “Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas,” “I’ll Be Home For Christmas” and “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?” by heart — but Feinstein touches our hearts with these simple and pleasing renditions. Leave it to a nice, gay Jewish boy to refresh these timeworn classics in the way that Feinstein has.

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

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

Get into the spirit of the season with new CDs of holiday music.

WhatevEr, CaroL Xmas, discmasXmas, discmas

Gay and gay-popular artists like Dave Koz, above, Johnny Mathis, opposite top, (or is that horn to horn?) with Kenny G. Let It Snow," with Koz going toe-to-toe with Mathis. Mathis can also be heard on "It's My Love To Keep Me Warm." And it's a battle of the nice Jewish boys on "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow," with Koz going toe-to-toe with Mathis. Mathis is also featured in "I've Got My Love To Keep Me Company," a duet with Stevie Wonder. Wonder's "You Are What You Are," is a nice addition to the holiday songbook. Pentatonix spark "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" into a hand-clapping, foot-stomping gospel experience and take "Silent Night" to church. Gay love their divas and this year the hottest diva around, Idina Menzel, releases her first Christmas album Holiday Wishes (Warner Brothers). She makes sure we hear her on "Do You Hear What I Hear" and out-Mariahs Mariah Carey on her blazing rendition of "All I Want For Christmas Is You." Menzel raises the standard on the holiday standard "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?," adds her own touch with the original "December Prayer" (co-written with Walter Afanasief and Charlie Midnight), and her stylized hat to her Disney clan with a cover of "When You Wish Upon A Star," and adds her name to the list of artists who have interpreted Joni Mitchell's modern Christmas classic "River." Frumpy TV talent show diva Susan Boyle's new album Hope (SYCO/Columbia) isn't exactly a holiday album. However, religious-oriented numbers such as "Abide With Me," "Oh Happy Day," "You Raise Me Up," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken," and "I Can Only Imagine" (originally performed by Christian rockers MercyMe) certainly give the album a specific bent. The real holiday gift here is Boyle's reading of Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here." Not. Kidding.

Hipster gays love their divas, too, and they have four to choose from when it comes to The Living Sisters. Growing from a trio (Inara George, Dakota, "Baby Wants a Basketball For Christmas," "Hanukkah," and "Neon Chinese Christmas Eve" are especially brilliant.

— Gregg Shapiro

IDINA MENZEL

Holiday Wishes

Holiday Wishes
C

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

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

You performed at the Grand Ole Opry after coming out! How was that show? I was nervous walking into it. To my knowledge, no openly gay man has ever walked on the Ryman stage and performed. That is the Mother Church. I have so much respect for it. I've performed at the Grand Ole Opry 25 times in my career, but this one was a big deal to me simply because I am a part of the fabric of country music and I was hoping that I would be accepted. I told my manager last night, "If there's security at the back door, I hope they're just there to shake my hand and say come on in." That's exactly what happened. All of the artists were extremely supportive. We walked onstage to a full house and a big, loving, cheering crowd.

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

Billy Gilman, who came out the same day you did [Nov. 20] — and who we interviewed for this same story — credits you with helping him with the coming out process. Tell me about that. I have known Billy since he was 12. We were on the same record label, Epic/Sony. I had a few hit records when they signed Billy. He has been like a kid brother over the years. We had had a few hits and that was my main fear. If I don't get to continue to do my job that I love, my passion, I don't know what I'd do. Through Chely, I was able to get educated about all of the fans out there and the new landscape of what my life would be like. I became very comfortable with the fact that I wasn't going to let who I authentically am stop me from making the music I love. God gave me great courage and Chely was my godsister through all of it — we did it together. Shortly after she came out, Chely was invited to be the grand marshal at the Chicago Gay Pride Parade. What would it mean to you to be the grand marshal of a Pride parade in any city? I would be incredibly honored. Just to know that my LGBTQ brothers and sisters would welcome me in that. I would be extremely blessed and honored to be a part of something like that. It would be very humbling.

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

Do you see this as starting a potential domino effect or more of an anomaly in country music and Nashville? I think country music’s growing up. Nashville, in general, is growing up a lot now. Country is so big now, they’re on the world stage. If you’re going to be on the world stage, you have to be able to have a different mentality. I credit Nashville a lot now. They’re moving forward at a great pace. I know one of the things I would love to see happen, and Chely would too, is starting a better coalition here in Nashville of affirmative hearts so we can get an LGBT center open, that we can see Pride and GLSEN come to town. All of these kids, in these Southern states that we’re surrounded by in Nashville, when they’re kicked out of their homes and the churches, that they have a place to go, that suicide is not an alternative, that they know that they can come and find love and acceptance. That coalition is important to a lot of us in Nashville behind the scenes as well as the few that have bravely come out. You mentioned people being kicked out of their homes and churches. How much influence did your religious background have in the process? I grew up in a great church, with a lot of affirming people. I never had to worry about being kicked out of anything. I grew up in bluegrass and gospel and country music. I had this amazing grandmother who had her own radio show on WPRN in Alabama. I have these strong women in my family. My grandmother was broadcasting live from the senior citizens’ center at 90 years old, talking about controversial things. She was awesome. You didn't mess with Grandma Myrtle. But I had no one to talk to about my feelings of being gay at 10 years old. I was 20-something when I came out to my mom. I think moms always know. My mother was more concerned about the profession I had chosen to be in. Her main concern was that I live an authentic, good life and that I was healthy. Of course, I went down some roads and that was not the case. She was right to worry about that. But, to answer your question, I grew up with a very loving God in my life and that's something I never had to worry about being kicked out of any church. How much influence did your religious background have on your career? You released your major label debut almost 20 years ago and have been a country music mainstay since that time. Was there ever a point that you considered recording and performing in a genre, such as dance or pop, where there are more openly LGBT artists? I considered doing a pop record. I actually went to my record label and talked about it. But when you’re a country artist through-and-through and it’s in your blood, all you accomplish is a pop-sounding record with a country singing fella. It just didn’t fit for me. I just had to buckle down and fight harder. The harder I fought, the more lies I created and it was uncomfortable to be in my own skin. At that point, I made a lot of mistakes, a lot of bad choices, and I take full responsibility for those choices. Looking at it from today, the addiction and the hard stuff I put myself through, it is now a part of the fabric of my story. God bless the broken road that has led me to sit here talking to you today. If it’s fair to say, sometimes I’m grateful for my mistakes because I don’t think I’d be the man I am today if it wasn’t for them.

If there was a movie version of your life story, who would you like to portray you? There are very few actors who have great singing voices. I think Hugh Jackman or Neil Patrick Harris would do a great job playing me in a movie about my life. We would have to bring them to Nashville and teach them the cowboy ways [laughs]. You are embarking on a 2015 concert tour with Andy Griggs and Jamie O’Neal. What are you most looking forward to about that? [First of all,] I love those two. We’re three very different people. Andy’s very much the bow-hunting, beer-drinkin’, redneck fella. He’s got a great girlfriend, so he’s not the woman-chaser. Jamie, on the other hand, is definitely our diva. She’s not a diva-in-training; she’s a full-blown diva. And I’m the guy who’s probably just about as country as they come. The dynamic is the crazy friendship. Those guys will play a Pride festival with me, they’ll go anywhere I go. And I will go anywhere with them. I feel protected and loved. As same-sex marriage continues to make strides across the country, if you and your boyfriend Matty were to marry, to what song would you like to walk down the aisle? That’s an easy question for me. There’s a Rascal Flatts song that I referred to, “God Bless The Broken Road That Has Led Me Straight To You.” That would be our wedding song. And if I had my wish, I would have my friend LeAnn Rimes come and sing it.
National Coming Out Day seemed to move from October to November this year, as two country music artists waited until Thanksgiving week to share their good news. Following Ty Herndon on Nov. 20 by two hours, was Billy Gilman. Possessing a powerful voice and impressive range, Gilman released his major-label debut CD *One Voice* in 2000, at the age of 11. In addition to the titular hit, the album featured a shockingly spot-on reading of Tammy Wynette’s “‘Til I Can Make It On My Own.” That cover, sung with amazing authority, might qualify as an early clue that Gilman would someday come out as gay. Seriously, listen to the song. Gilman, who’s in the process of mounting a comeback, spoke to us last week.

How does a Rhode Island native, a New Englander, become a Nashville star? Billy Gilman: I grew up singing country music. Country music is so huge in my neck of the woods, believe it or not. People find it hard to believe, but country music is big around here. There’s no memory of not having country music in my life. The Grand Ole Opry and watching the awards shows that would come on and listening to Garth Brooks and Pam Tillis, it was just part of my life and always has been. It’s easier than you think [laughs].

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

Do you have any advice for budding child stars? The one thing I always go back to is that you really have to love it. It has to be what you are; because there are going to be many wonderful opportunities. There are going to be huge ups and corresponding downs to a career. You have to love it to sustain yourself and to put up with what you’re going to have to put up with. If it’s what you are and you live and breathe it, like I have my whole life, you’ll be fine. You’re going to do well because you have what it takes. You can’t just wake up one day and go, “I’m going to be a singer!” It’s tougher...
Nov. 20 was historic in Nashville when you and Ty Herndon both came out as gay. You cited Ty in your coming out message. How did he help you through this? It was amazing! I’ve known Ty for a while. He was on the same record label as I was a few years back. He’s a great singer. This was something that I have been going back and forth with for about a month. I was nervous and reluctant. You never know what’s going to happen. I was set to do it that day and was reading Twitter and read the he had come out. I was like, “Oh, wow! This is very coincidental and very odd.” But things happen for a reason. [Ty] really helped me push the pedal to the metal. He put me into high gear. He gave me enough confidence to do what I needed to do. He’s a very brave person and a courageous artist. He did help immensely in my situation. My hat’s off to him and my thanks to him always for that.

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

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

You mentioned your partner in your coming out video. If the two of you were to marry, to what song would you like to walk down the aisle? One of mine! I hadn’t thought about that. “At Last,” maybe. No, I’m kidding.
opening night party to entertainment by Bianca del Rio and Dixie Longate to an ice sculpture carving competition to performances from DJ Mary Alice and the unexpected indoor pool party (hey, those bikini bodies will be useful after all!), there’s fun for all. WinterRendezvous.com.


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

**Elevation: Utah**, Park City, Utah. Feb. 19–22. The baby of the bunch is Park City, Utah’s Gay Ski Week, celebrating just its fifth year in the same city as the Sundance Film Festival. Music-making will come from seven DJs at seven parties spinning over the course of the weekend in the breathtaking facility. UtahGaySki.com.

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

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

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

Happy trails!
LIFE+STYLE

best bets

Friday 12.05

Tower Antique Show opens

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

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

Monday 12.08

Oral Fixation closes 2014 with story of sexual fluidity

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


Friday 12.05 — Sunday 12.07

DTC opens its annual good-will extravaganza ‘A Christmas Carol’

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


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Christina Hamilton Snow won the “major award” of A Christmas Story leg lamp for sharing our give-away post.
ARTSWEEK: NOW PLAYING

HOLIDAY SHOWS: CONCERTS, BALLET, THEATER

Christmas at the Dallas Symphony. Holiday concerts with Lawrence Loh conducting and the Lay Family Concert Organ played by Mary Preston. Meyerson Symphony Center, 1601 Flora St. Dec. 5–21 (Dec. 5–6, 12–14 at 7:30 p.m., 7, 12, 14, 20–21 at 2:30 p.m.). MyDSO.com.
Ebenezet Scrooge. Presented annually by Pocket Sandwich Theatre for more than 30 years. 5400 E. Mockingbird Lane. Through Dec. 23. PocketSandwichTheatre.com
The Trial of Ebenezet Scrooge. A comic twist on A Christmas Carol. Richardson Theatre Centre, 518 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson. Dec. 5–21. RichardsonTheatreCentre.net.

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

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


FINE ART


FRIDAY 12.05
DANCE
Legends Never Die: Everything Old Is New Again. Rhythmic Souls performs this tribute to the glorious traditions of tap, recreating famous dance numbers from the movies and more. The Kessler, 1230 W. Davis St. 7 p.m. doors, 8 p.m. curtain. $20–$30. TheKessler.org.

DINS

SATURDAY 12.06
SPORTS
FrontRunners. Gay jogging group meets at 8:30 a.m. at the statue in Lee Park for a run along the Katy Trail.

SUNDAY 12.07
WORSHIP
Dignity (LGBT Catholics). Worship the first Sunday of each month, led by ministers Cliff and Jon Garinn. Interfaith Peace Chapel (lower level), 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 6 p.m.

MONDAY 12.08
THEATER
Oral Fixation Show. Final show of the season where people tell stories from their own lives about crises and triumphs. This edition includes gay content from Dallas Voice contributor Jenny Block. Wyly Theatre, 2400 Flora St. 7:30 p.m. OralFixationShow.com.

TUESDAY 12.09
FILM
Die Hard. The modern classic of action (a guest programmer selection). Screens as part of the Tuesday New Classic series at Landmark’s Magnolia in the West Village, sponsored by Dallas Voice. Screens at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 12.10
BROADCAST
Top Chef. This season, in Boston, with Padme, Tom, Gail and Richard Blais. Airs on Bravo at 8 p.m.

AMERICAN HORROR STORY: FREAK SHOW. The creepiest season yet of the anthology series. Airs on FX at 8 p.m.

THURSDAY 12.11
HOLIDAY SHOW: THEATER

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

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

SATURDAY Afterhours
Do you want to give or receive?

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 31st 11p.m
Champagne Toast @ STROKE of Midnight

SUNDAY Afterhours
Browse our website for current deals and events. www.dallasvoice.com

Submit an item for inclusion in the Community Calendar, visit Tinyurl.com/dvsubmit.

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Thursday, Dec. 18th 8pm

New Year’s Eve Party!
Wednesday, Dec. 31st 11pm
Champagne Toast @ STROKE of Midnight

Red Zone 7 – Giving!
Friday, Dec. 19th 10:45pm
Do you want to give or receive?

DJ Ryan Tiffin
Every Saturday Afterhours 2am

Wanna be Naughty & Nice?

For a more complete Community Calendar online, visit Tinyurl.com/dvsubmit.

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This week’s solution

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For more information, visit www.dallasvoice.com/news. 12.05.14
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Michael Phelps’ trans paramour

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

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

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

If you find yourself in NYC at some point over the holidays, I cannot recommend anything more thrilling than seeing the legendary Lypsinka, except for seeing the legendary Lypsinka in three shows. Yes, running in repertoire is Lypsinka! The Box Set (her greatest hits show), The Passion of the Crawford (where she seamlessly portrays Joan Crawford being interviewed), and John Epperson: Show Trash (where Lypppie’s alter ego regales with bon mots from his travels). This is the first time all three shows have run in repertoire, aptly called Lypsinka! The Trilogy. Seeing some of the pieces that really put her on the map was a special treat — This Is My Life with the box of cereal, the drunken “12 Days of Christmas,” the phone calls … it was a joy to behold. The Crawford show is a study in nuances, which is riveting. As always, Lypsinka’s attention to detail is hysterical. If Faye Dunaway closed the coffin on how Crawford would be remembered, Lypsinka nails it good and tight! Special mention must be paid to Scott Witman (half of the team that wrote Hairspray), who plays the interviewer with eerie aplomb. To call Lypsinka unique is an understatement; she stands head and shoulders above all others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have a question for Billy? Send an email to him at Billy@BillyMasters.com.
Making the SCENE the week of Dec. 5-11:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scene Photographer: Kat Heygood

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

Buck Wylde on The Strip.

Girls' night out at Sue Ellen's.

Tim and Jake on The Strip.
Friends’ night out on The Strip.

Bill and Mason at Alexandre’s.

Jingle Balls!

SATURDAY, DEC. 6th
Sodoma’s Red Light Party

SATURDAY, DEC. 13th
Nicky Lauren’s Pre-Christmas Sexy Santa
2 Dancers
DJ Dark Angel

SATURDAY, DEC. 20th
Flash Light Party

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SATURDAY, DEC. 31st
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Actor with Dexter-ity

Solution on page 37

Across
1 Deer, or without a dear
5 Verdon, who played Lola
9 Hollywood Squares choice
14 ___ Alto, California
15 Estimate ending
16 Intense desires
17 Doug Mattis leap
18 Male escort
19 Hamlet’s father, e.g.
20 TV series with “dexter-ity”?
23 Branch of math, briefly
24 Cher’s portrayer in Clueless
28 Comic-strip Viking
31 With 39- and 46-Across,
Broadway show with “dexter-ity”?
34 US citizen
35 Dramatist Williams, for short?
36 P on fraternity row
37 Chiwetel Ejiofor’s Kinky ___
39 See 31-Across
40 Part of a daisy chain?
42 NATO turf
43 River in an Alec Baldwin film
45 Oliver Twist request
46 See 31-Across
49 Nathan and family
50 High-spirited horses
51 Oral votes
53 Dexter star
59 “In Russia, Party will always find
you” comic Smirnoff
62 Bone by the humerus
63 Georgetown athlete
64 Use a gifted tongue
65 Chose not to swallow
66 Roadside stops
67 One who works his shaft
68 Part of a vacuum that sucks
69 Student’s book

Down
1 Sites for three men in a tub
2 Jodie Foster’s ___ Driver
3 Glenn, in Fatal Attraction
4 Vehicle for Patty Sheehan’s sport
5 Old TV comedian George
6 Pitable person
7 Hairy twin
8 Verb, for example
9 She played tomb raider Lara
10 Lou of Glenn Burke’s sport
11 Vintage wheels
12 Wood and more
13 Hrs. in Rehoboth Beach
21 Stud site
22 First light
25 It’s got milk
26 Words from a closet, perhaps
27 Is nuts over
28 Writ of ___ corpus
29 Check information
30 Takei of Star Trek
32 Moral code
33 “Look at Me, I’m Sandra ___”
38 One who’s hobby is just
plane risky?
39 Spank
41 Les Miz, for example
44 Cheesehead’s st.
47 Couch potato’s tool
48 The Lion King voice roles for
Whoopi and others
49 Lake, to fifty million Frenchmen
52 Make heady
54 Kind of money
55 Food on the floor, maybe
56 Tops
57 Mountain cat
58 Bringing up the rear
59 ___ Kippur
60 Paul Newman role in Exodus
61 Toto’s home state
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