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headlines

* TEXAS NEWS
  8  Candy & Carolyn: 32 years & counting
  12 Lambda Legal’s Avery Belyeu
  14 A new perspective on the homeless

* LIFE+STYLE
  20 A Valentine’s Day gift guide
  24 Prepping for a new relationship
  26 An interview with Keke Palmer

* ON THE COVER
  For more information see Page 4.

departments

6  The Gay Agenda  31  Best Bets
8  News  35  Ask Howard
19  Voices  36  Scene
20  Life+Style  40  MarketPlace

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This week’s cover

This week, Dallas Voice continues our series honoring DFW’s transgender and drag communities in the lead up to our Stonewall 50th anniversary issue in June.

It was transgender women and men and drag queens that sparked the Stonewall Riots in June 1969 and in doing so birthed the LGBT civil rights movement. And they are the ones who have often stood at the forefront of our fight for equality and of the fight against HIV/AIDS.

This week’s Valentine’s Day cover features Krystal Summers, a transgender woman originally from south Mississippi that has called Dallas home for 20 years. She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2003 and The Aveda Institute in 2014.

Krystal is an entertainer, actor, classically-trained pianist and activist. She has been a cast member at the Rose Room, inside Station 4, for 18 years and performs regularly on the weekends, along with hosting the RuPaul’s Drag Race watch parties at JR.’s Bar and Grill.

By day, Krystal works as a hair stylist at Vertigo 12 Hair Lounge and Collaborative in downtown Dallas. Her new website, KrystalSummersOfficial.com will be up and running next month and will feature a blog and merchandise shop.

Krystal is an active social media user, and you can catch her on Instagram @krystalsummers. When she’s not working, she enjoys fashion, travel, roller coasters and spending time with her 16-year-old Chihuahua, Gus.

Special credit goes to Brett Wyatt for styling Krystal’s hair for the Dallas Voice cover photo shoot.

Dallas Voice offers a special Thank-You to our friend, chocolatier Sarahbeth “Yeli” Marshall, owner and chief chocolate officer for Yelibelly Chocolates. The award-winning artisan chocolate company headquartered in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Sarahbeth and Yelibelly Chocolates donated the candy and some of the props for our Valentine’s Day cover featuring Krystal Summers.

Yelibelly Chocolates, started in 2009, specializes in flavor-infused truffles hand-crafted in small batches using natural ingredients, chocolate-covered cookies and liquid nitrogen ice cream.

Get in touch with Yelibelly and order up some chocolates for your Valentine today. Yelibelly Chocolates storefront is located at 15080 Beltway Drive in Addison. You can contact them by phone at 817-789-5563 or by email at chocolate@yelibelly.com. Or go online to YeliBelly.com to find out more about the company and place your order today. It’s time to get chocolate-wasted!

Photo by Kelly Alexander. Makeup by Vivienne Vermouth.
LGBT Caucus holds first press conference

The newly-formed Texas LGBT Caucus in Texas House of Representatives held its first press conference on Tuesday, Feb. 5. Chair Mary Gonzales, D-El Paso, announced that in addition to the five LGBT representatives, the new caucus has 16 additional members.

Gonzales explained the reason for the caucus, saying, “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” She said that last session, LGBT lawmakers and their allies fought off 20 anti-LGBT bills. This session, only two have been filed.

Glen Maxey, who became the first openly-gay member of the Texas House when he was elected in 1991, also attended the press conference.

Vice Chair Jessica Gonzalez, D-Dallas, said there has been a spike in hate crimes and a skyrocketing rate of murders of transgender women that needs to be addressed. She also said conditions in prisons and services available upon release need attention.

Rep. Julie Johnson, D-Farmers Branch, chose to highlight the issue of housing non-discrimination. “Far too many people apply for an apartment, put their spouse on the application and are denied,” she said.

She mentioned a bill she’s supporting, filed by Rep. Diego Bernal, D-San Antonio, that would prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. “Every person deserves a safe place to sleep,” Johnson said.

Rep. Celia Israel, D-Austin, mentioned her lifelong friendship with Maxey. “He gave birth to a bunch of us,” she said.

Because of terrible traffic problems in Austin, Israel has spent much of her time in the Legislature working on transportation issues. She said she’d like to be known as a “transportation chick” but also as a role model.

“Hopefully we’re beyond the hatred and discrimination of last session,” Israel said. As a member of the LGBT Caucus, Israel said, she wants to highlight suicide prevention efforts. As part of that campaign, she filed a bill to make the practice of conversion therapy on minors illegal.

Equality Texas interim Executive Director Samantha Smoot spoke about its new poll that showed for the first time majority support for equality across the state in every group, even among Evangelicals.

She said the importance of the caucus to young people is the message it sends: “You’re represented. You matter.”

— David Taffet

Take Back Oak Lawn files park naming application

Take Back Oak Lawn has filed an application with the Dallas Parks and Recreation Department to make the name of Oak Lawn Park permanent. The name “Oak Lawn Park” was deemed temporary by city officials after the statute of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was removed, changing the name of the park from Lee Park back to its original name, Oak Lawn Park, until a permanent name could be decided.

Lee Daugherty filed the application on Wednesday, Feb. 6 to counter attempts to change the name to Stanley Marcus Park or Turtle Creek Park. Because so much of Oak Lawn has been renamed and rebranded in what many see as an effort in order to distance the area from the LGBT community that spent decades making into a livable neighborhood, many consider the proposed name change from Oak Lawn Park to have homophobic overtones.

Daugherty said a park rep checked the paperwork and said they’d be in touch.

— David Taffet

‘Hamilton’ hasn’t even opened in North Texas yet, and it’s already coming back

Hamilton, the hip-hop musical that is the biggest thing to emerge from Broadway since air conditioning, hasn’t even opened yet in North Texas — it will soon, coming to Fair Park Musical Hall in April — but already it’s coming back.


— Arnold Wayne Jones
Have an event coming up? Email your information to Managing Editor Tammye Nash at nash@dallasvoice.com or Senior Staff Writer David Taffet at taffet@dallasvoice.com by Wednesday at 5 p.m. for that week’s issue.

FEBRUARY

• Feb. 9: Love Equality
The Equality Texas Dallas Steering committee presents Love Equality, a night of dancing with drinks and light food, benefiting Equality Texas, will be held from 8-11 p.m. at 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd. Ste. 107. Advance tickets are $50 until Dec. 31, and $75 from Jan. 1-Feb. 1, online at Secure.EveryAction.com/ HZCrJuU7wUaaHFlftkj1Sg2. Tickets at the door $100.

• Feb. 9: Prime Timers
Brunch at 11 a.m. at Le Peep, 4835 N. O’Connor Road, Irving.

• Feb. 9: Red Tie Reception
Coalition for Aging LGBT presents Red Tie Reception: A Lover’s Celebration with dance, drag show and raffle prizes from 4-7 p.m. at Hurst Convention Center, 1601 Campus Drive, Hurst. Free tickets at CFA.lgbt.

• Feb. 9: LGBT Speed Dating
Real Live Connection presents LGBT speed dating fundraiser happy hour from 5-8 p.m. at Alexandre’s, 3911 Cedar Springs Road.

• Feb. 9: PA Valentines’ Day
Gift giveaways and meet dozens of pets from noon-4 p.m. at SPCA Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center, 2400 Lone Star Drive.

• Feb. 10: Underwear Auction
Team Metro underwear auction to raise money for the Greg Dollenger Memorial AIDS Fund from 5-9 p.m. at Dallas Eagle, 5740 Maple Ave.

• Feb. 10: Prime Timers
Visit then games at a private home from 2:30-5 p.m. RSVP by text or call 214-218-0912.

• Feb. 11: Stonewall Democrats
Tarrant County
Monthly meeting and membership drive at 7 p.m. at Tommy’s Hamburgers, 2455 Forest Park Blvd., Fort Worth.

• Feb. 12: Grief support group
LGBT grief support group for people who have lost a same-sex partner from 7-8:30 p.m. at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

• Feb. 12: Tyler PFLAG
Parents, family and friends of LGBT people meet at 6:30 p.m. in the Genecov Room, Tyler Chamber of Commerce, 315 N. Broadway, Tyler.

• Feb. 12: Prime Timers
Dinner at 7 p.m. at Saltgrass Steakhouse, 13561 N. Central Expressway.

• Feb. 13: Pride Night – Falsettos
Pride Night at the national tour of Falsettos in collaboration with the Turtle Creek Chorale at 7:30 p.m. at Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. Discounted tickets $30-60 at ATTPAC.org.

• Feb. 14: Underwear Auction
Team Metro underwear auction to raise money for the Greg Dollenger Memorial AIDS Fund from 5-9 p.m. at Dallas Eagle, 5740 Maple Ave.

• Feb. 14: Miss Ceba
Jenna Skyy hosts the Miss Ceba Sweetheart Pageant at 10:30 p.m. in the Rose Room, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Applications and questions at CEBADallas.org.

• Feb. 14: Business Connections Mixer
GLBT Chamber of Commerce mixer. Bring a date or a friend from 5:30-7 p.m. at WXYZ Lounge, Aolft Dallas Downtown, 1033 Young St. GLBTChamber.com.

• Feb. 15: Prime Timers
Happy hour at 5:30 p.m. at Woody’s, 4011 Cedar Springs Road.

• Feb. 16: SAGE Table
SAGE, the national senior LGBT organization, holds a breakfast potluck in Carrollton from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at Cosmopolitan UCC, 1200 Metrocrest Drive, Carrollton.

• Feb. 16: And the winner is … Gaybingo
Gaybingo from 5-9 p.m. at the Rose Room, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Tickets at rcdallas.org.

• Feb. 16: DanceTCU concert
DanceTCU welcomes performers from Avant Chamber Ballet, Booker T Washington, Jennifer Mabus Dance and Houston METdance Company to benefit AIDS Outreach Center at 7:30 p.m. at the Erma Lowe Hall Studio Theatre on the TCU Campus. $20 at the door.

• Feb. 16: Journey into Parenthood
Join North Dallas Doula Associates for a class to assist LGBT singles and couples in navigating medical and legal steps to becoming parents from 1-3 p.m. at North Dallas Doula Associates, 107 Murray St. $20 single, $30 couple. Tinyurl.com/JourneyIntoParenthoodFeb.

• Feb. 17: Teddy Bear Auction
Dallas Bears hosts auction in memory of Spanke Studer that benefits AIDS Services of Dallas. Preview and cocktails at 6 p.m. Auction at 7 p.m. at Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road.

• Feb. 20: Prime Timers
Lunch at 12:30 p.m. at El Fenix, 5622 Lemmon Ave.

• Feb. 20: Texas LGBT Chamber lobby day
The LGBT chambers of commerce of Texas lobby at the state capitol.

• Weekly: Lambda Weekly at 1 p.m. on Sunday on 89.3 KNON-FM with David Taffet, Lorrene Landis and the late Patti Fink. This week’s guest is counselor Candy Marcum; Core Group Meeting every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.; Fuse game night every Monday evening except the last of the month at 8 p.m. at the Fuse space in the 3918 Harry Hines Blvd.; FuseConnect every Wednesday at 7 p.m. For more information call e-mail Jalenzski at 214-760-9718 ext. 3 or Jalenzski@myresourcecenter.org; LGBT square dancing group Pegasus Squares meets the second and fourth Sunday from 2-4 p.m. at Grace United Methodist Church, 4105 Junius St. For more info, email pegasusquares@gmail.com; Dallas Frontrunners meet for a walk or run on the Katy Trail at Oak Lawn Park, Turtle Creek and Hall Street, every Wednesday at 7:15 p.m. and every Saturday at 9 a.m.; Gray Pride support group from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. followed by mixer every Monday at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road; Lambda AA meets at 7 a.m., noon, 6 p.m. 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and has a men’s meeting at 10 a.m. on Saturdays and meets at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Sunday at 1575 W. Mockingbird Lane #625. Call 214-267-0222 for details; LGBT Sex Addicts Anonymous meets at 6 p.m. every Friday at 1919 Independence St., Room 19, Plano. 972-316-9188 for details; Leadership Lambda Toastmasters gay-identified Toastmasters group meets from 6:30-8 p.m. every Monday at the First Unitarian Church, 4015 Normandy Road (does not meet on Mondays that are holidays); United Black Elument hosts discussion on HIV/AIDS in the black community (UBE Connected) at 7 p.m. every fourth Tuesday of the month at 3918 Harry Hines Blvd.; DTV in Spayse, news and entertainment discussion live streaming every Friday, 4-5 p.m., on the Spayse Station YouTube channel.
Meet Annabelle, a 3-year-old, brown-and-tan hound mix weighing 60 pounds. She’s a sweet gal who loves to cuddle, and while she’s a little shy around new people, once you talk to her she’ll wag her tail in delight! She is very well-mannered and adaptable; her foster parents said she got their routine down in one day. She’s house-trained, quiet in a crate and a gentle, respectful girl. She didn’t have the best life before coming to the SPCA of Texas, so she’s hoping for a patient family who will love her and spoil her like she deserves. If you’re looking for a loving, affectionate girl to join your family, she’s the one for you. Annabelle has been spayed and microchipped and has received all age-appropriate vaccinations. Come meet her today! #168351

Annabelle is waiting for you at the SPCA of Texas’ Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas, 2400 Lone Star Drive (near I-30 and Hampton Road). Hours are noon-6 p.m. Sun-Wed and noon-7 p.m. Thurs-Sat. Regular adoption fees are $100 for puppies and kittens aged 0-6 months, $50 for adult dogs and cats aged 6 months or older, $25 for senior dogs or cats aged 7 years and older and $25 for VIP dogs and cats (available for adoption for 30 days or more.) Fee includes spay/neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a heartworm test for dogs six months and older and a FIV/FeLV test for cats 4 months and older, initial flea/tick preventative and heartworm preventative, a microchip, 30 days of PetHealth Insurance provided by PetPlan, a free 14-day wellness exam with VCA Animal Hospitals, a free year-long subscription to ActivePets, a rabies tag and a free leash. Call 214-742-SPCA (7722) or visit today.
Candy Marcus and Carolyn Hall waited a year after the marriage equality ruling to officially tie the knot.

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Candy Marcus and Carolyn Hall’s first date was at Razzle Dazzle Dallas in 1986, when the AIDS crisis was beginning to hit Dallas in a big way.

“It was a time of war, but we knew how to throw a great party and fundraiser,” Marcum said.

The couple already knew each other from their work as activists when they went on that first date. They had met in 1983, when Marcum and her friend and co-worker Howie Daire held a meeting for prospective board members for Oak Lawn Counseling Center, the agency they had created that eventually evolved into Oak Lawn Community Services.

“Carolyn walked in [to the meeting], and I thought: Who is that?” Marcum recalled. But both were in relationships at the time, so they remained just colleagues for awhile.

As Daire’s health declined due to AIDS, Marcum wanted to help him with expenses, so Hall suggested they get together to plan a fundraiser for him. “I went over several times and we never did plan that party,” Hall said.

By 1984 Marcum was single, and by 1986, so was Hall. That’s when they planned that first date for Razzle Dazzle, which was being held on Cedar Springs Road that year. The street was closed off and organizations from throughout the community had information tables and booths.

The two women went to the party separately, met inside and have been together ever since.

“We hit it right off,” Marcum said. “It’s magic. When you find the right one, you hang on.”

On their June 15 anniversary, just before the Supreme Court handed down its Obergefell marriage equality decision, Hall and Marcum had a conversation about getting married. Although they could have been married in other states that already recognized marriage equality, Marcum insisted she lived in Texas and wanted to be married in Texas.

Two weeks later, marriage became legal across the county. And Hall asked Marcum, “Don’t you think we should get married?”

Marcum, who admits now that she always had a little bit of trouble remembering the date of her anniversary anyway, suggested they wait until their next anniversary to marry. Now, she acknowledges, that was just a way to hide her fear of marriage.

But the following June, the two went to Houston, where Marcum’s 100-year-old mother lived. They invited just a few family and friends and tied the knot.

But Marcum still has to remember two dates. They met on June 15 and were married on June 17. Easy to do, Marcum explained. There are 30 days in June. Just divide it by two and the 15th is when they met. Then add two and the 17th is when they were married. Or she could just remember her anniversary.

Valentine’s Day traditions

Marcum, a counselor who specializes in LGBT families, said in the beginning of their relationship, Valentine’s Day was a big deal to her and Hall. Her mother’s birthday was on Feb. 14, as was Hall’s best friend’s. So they’d all go out together.

Hall said they continue the tradition today. This year, although Marcum’s mother is gone, they and another couple and Hall’s friend whose birthday is on Valentine’s Day have reservations at Savory in Klyde Warren Park.

Marcum said Valentine’s Day the last holiday of “the holiday season,” which begins with Thanksgiving, continues through Christmas and New Year’s before finishing up with Valentine’s Day. And while many people enjoy the holidays, many others spend the holidays being miserable. So she urges people who don’t have a Valentine’s date, not to pressure themselves.

Valentine’s Day traditions

“Valentine’s Day is not one where you should feel pressure,” she reiterated. “Eat a salad and go to bed. No one will know if you’re out or not.”

But if you’re feeling pressure to not be alone, Valentine’s can be about any relationship — family and friends as well as romantic partners. Marcum suggests those without romantic partners this Valentine’s Day should “invite some over or go out with friends.”

Give out a few small boxes of chocolate, she added, or put up a few decorations, if you like. But, Marcum stressed, “It doesn’t have to be romantic.”

And then on Friday — Valentine’s Day is on a Thursday this year — wake up and realize you made it through it.
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The Carrollton City Council this week passed an employment nondiscrimination ordinance that bans discrimination based on, among other things, sexual orientation and gender identity. The vote came during the council meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

The ordinance, approved on a 5-2 vote that basically revised the city’s existing nondiscrimination ordinance, protects city employees, contractors and political appointees. It also bans discrimination based on pregnancy and political beliefs.

A number of people attended in support of the ordinance, including Resource Center staff members Rafael McDonnell, communications and advocacy manager, and Leslie McMurray, insurance assistance coordinator. But a significant contingent of individuals opposing the ordinance also attended.

During the public comment period, one dissenter complained the new law would allow men to use women’s bathrooms. According to LGBT rights advocate Cannon Brown, who attended the meeting, opponents also claimed the new ordinance would protect individuals involved in necrophilia and pedophilia.

McMurray, in her comments to the council, pointed out that equality for more groups doesn’t take away equality from others.

Place 2 Councilman Mike Hennefer voted against the ordinance, saying that it wasn’t needed because the city already does not discriminate against anyone.

Place 5 Councilman Glen Blanscet, a Baptist minister, also voted against revising the ordinance to include specific protections for LGBT people. During the debate, Blanscet said that the city was being “asked to create a new protected class” not recognized in state and federal law, and that by doing so, the city could face “other ramifications I’m not sure we’re fully aware of.”

Blanscet warned that creating these new protected classes could “impact other people’s rights.” He compared it to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in the 1960s, saying that the Civil Rights Act impacted other people’s rights, but was justified in doing so, whereas the proposed revisions to Carrollton’s ordinance could impact other people’s rights in ways that were not justified.

“This particular language [recommended by a committee that had studied the issues] has an impact [on other people’s] freedom of religion and freedom of speech.” Blanscet claimed, adding that “protected classes” based on sexual orientation and gender identity were not well defined. “What is that?” he questioned. “What does that mean?”

Place 1 Councilman Steve Babick, however, argued that it was specifically because these certain classes are not protected by state and federal law that the city of Carrollton needed to include those specific protections in its ordinance.

“This is a marked moment for us,” Babick said, adding that the council “absolutely ought to” revise the ordinance to include specific protections. The council, he said, should pass the revised ordinance “to send the signal loud and clear as an employer … that we do not discriminate.”

Babick said, “A lot of people on both sides of the community, so to speak, want to make this a division point [in the city]. But let’s remember what this is all about. It’s anti-discrimination, which by its nature is not a division point; it’s an inclusion point.”

Tammye Nash contributed to this report.
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VALENTINE'S DAY OFFER

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LONE STAR PARK AT GRAND PRAIRIE

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Avery Belyeu is proud to be part of the Lambda Legal team

TAMMIE NASH | Managing Editor
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When Avery Belyeu joined the staff of Lambda Legal last November as south central regional director, headquartered here in Dallas, she brought with her a wealth of experience as an LGBT advocate and in suicide prevention. But she also brought the unique perspective on the battle for equality that being a master’s student at Brite Divinity School has given her.

Belyeu, who is transgender, said she began her advocacy work as an intern at Equality North Carolina when she was in graduate school there. She was part of the team that helped get inclusive anti-bullying legislation passed in that state.

From there, she moved to New York City to join the Trevor Project, an organization committed to providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ people under the age of 25. She was the fourth staff person hired by the Trevor Project.

“It was a busy time,” Belyeu recalled. “The Trevor Project was growing fast, and it gave me an opportunity to really learn about working in the nonprofit field.”

She held several positions with the organization, ending as education director, before leaving The Trevor Project to go to work for the Massachusetts-based Education Development Center. There, she focused on suicide prevention strategy.

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Avery Belyeu

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Working for the EDC gave Belyeu “a federal perspective that I’d not really had before,” she said. She worked with federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Health and Human Services, as well as with others in the private and public sectors to help develop a national strategy on suicide prevention.

Belyeu worked for EDC for more than four years, staying with the organization even after she moved to Fort Worth, where she and her husband still live, to begin attending Brite Divinity School.

“I’m a Southerner,” Belyeu said, explaining why she decided to move back south after her years in New York and New England.

“I was dealing with some of that queer flight guilt,” she added, noting how many LGBT people leave their rural roots to find a more accepting home in the bigger cities, and how many LGBT people from the South head north for the same reason.

But, Belyeu continued, “our movement needs experienced LGBT leaders everywhere, and I felt like I had that experience to offer.”

She said she chose to go to divinity school because so many of the attacks on the LGBT community have been based on religious rhetoric, and she wanted to be able to fight that rhetoric on its home turf.

“I didn’t expect to have this great opportunity with Lambda Legal to come along,” Belyeu said. “It is a really great fit for me. I couldn’t pass it up.”

She said she is thrilled to have the chance to work with Lambda Legal, because the agency is “a crucial part of our movement right now, and it is a smart part of our movement. We have some of the smartest people in the LGBT community working with Lambda Legal.

“Lambda Legal is strategic and it is thorough, and that’s what our movement needs,” she added.

Lambda Legal focuses on providing legal representation to LGBT people in cases that can set legal precedents to advance the cause of equality. The organization also operates a national legal help desk to help LGBT people needing legal advice and representation with a network of cooperating attorneys.

Texas has the third-largest number of calls to the help desk of any state, Belyeu noted.

As the Trump administration continues to attack transgender people in the U.S. military, Lambda Legal continues to participate in legal efforts to block Trump’s ban on trans people in the military through the lawsuit Karnoski v. Trump. Transgender issues are also at the forefront of several other Lambda Legal cases, Belyeu said.

The organization is also participating in cases involving HIV-positive military servicemembers, adoption and foster parent rights — including a case out of Fort Worth, Marouf v. Azar, in which a Catholic adoption agency receiving government funds refused to allow a lesbian couple to adopt or be foster parents — and more.

Belyeu said she believes her education at Brite Divinity will help as Lambda Legal ramps up its efforts to stop so-called “religious exemption laws,” which are popping up in state legislatures around the country, including Texas. These laws, she explained, allow individuals, businesses or organizations to sidestep nondiscrimination laws based on religious beliefs.

Belyeu said one of her goals is to include progressive faith leaders in the debate so the religious-based rhetoric is not one-sided. Belyeu said this is “an exciting time” to be part of the battle for LGBT equality, and especially to be part of Lambda Legal.

“We have an amazing team of people, nationally and here in the South Central Region, and we have an amazing group of supporters here,” she said. “Everyone here is energetic and excited about the work we are doing, and I am proud to be part of that.”
My preconceived notions about doing the youth homeless count were completely wrong

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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When Promise House asked me to tag along on a Youth Homeless Count, well, I can’t refuse Promise House — even if it would be in February ... at 1 a.m. ... in downtown Dallas.

Who would we run into?
Would it be safe?
What did I get myself into this time?
Wow. Were my preconceptions wrong.

The weather was perfect. Downtown Dallas at 1 a.m. on a Saturday morning felt perfectly safe. And I met some of the sweetest people.

A small group of us met at Promise House in Oak Cliff at about 12:30 a.m. We loaded the van with a plastic tub of prepackaged goods: shampoo, socks, soap — things that someone living on the street could use.

Then, with fearless leader Demetria Brown, Promise House’s street outreach coordinator, at the helm, we headed out.

Keri Stitt, Promise House’s chief partner relations officer, explained she didn’t really like to call what we were doing a count. Rather, she said, it was a survey.

“It’s the information we collect,” she said, “and how we can intervene.”

Brown said that while we want to find out how many young people are on the street, that wasn’t enough. “We need to figure out how to help them get off the street,” she said.

Stitt said she enjoyed working with homeless youth because they still had hope.

Our first stop downtown was the Erik Jonsson Library. When we saw people hanging out around the library, we parked, each of us grabbed a couple of personal care packages, and we headed over to the main entrance on Young Street where three young men were closely gathered. One was sleeping on a ledge, and another was reluctant to answer any questions. But the third agreed to participate.

He told Brown his age and the ages of the other two young men. They were all between 19 and 22 years old. He answered other questions — about how he ended up on the street, his sexual orientation, where he spends most nights, what he might need and any hopes he had for the future.

Brown recorded the answers on a phone app, and it took about five minutes to complete the survey. We gave each of the young men a personal care package. The one who completed the survey also got a $10 Target gift card.

We moved on.

“Scuse me,” Brown said cheerfully to a couple already asleep, bundled in sleeping bags on the sidewalk in front of the library.

They responded, maybe a little scared. Brown quickly identified herself and told them what we were doing. I worried that her waking them might upset them. But they responded positively. Everyone responded to her that way I learned quickly.

The woman said she was 30 — too old for the count — so we thanked them, gave each a personal care package, said good night and moved on. We repeated that with several more people.

How did she get that response, I asked her.

“All the information I collect is from the heart,” Brown explained. “I always greet you with a smile.”

We circled the library on foot. Then we walked several blocks to check the streets surrounding the Stew Pot, the day shelter run by First Presbyterian Church.

We met a few other people camping outside the Stew Pot. All were too old for the survey, but we handed out packages to anyone that wanted one.

Before moving to another section of downtown, we took one more look at the main library entrance. Our group of three young men had grown to four, and the sleeping companion was up and agreed to do a survey.

Stitt interviewed him while Brown surveyed the new member of the group.

I chatted with the 19-year-old who was reluctant to answer questions. He said he had no way to carry the personal care items around, because he didn’t have a backpack. I asked Brown if Promise House had any. She said she thought she could find one and would bring it to him the next night.

I asked him if they spent most nights here, and he said they did.

Stitt learned that the young man she was interviewing had some mental health concerns that he would like help with. She offered to connect him to services.

In the van after leaving these four young men, Stitt said she could make an appointment at Metrocare and drive him to at least a first appointment. Of course, treatment doesn’t happen in one visit, but it would be easier if someone was there, walking him through those first steps.

Our next stop was the Greyhound bus station and the downtown McDonald’s. We parked on the street between the two. Quite a few people were gathered around the DART stop across the street from where we parked, even though DART had stopped running for the night a couple of hours earlier.

One man approached us. He looked young, but said he was in his late 20s. Brown explained what we were doing and asked if he knew of any young people on the street downtown. He suggested we look around West End Station. We told him another team was surveying the Stew Pot area. We told him we just came from there. He was disappointed he couldn’t help, but we thanked him and I gave him...
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Dear Candy,

I’m known as a trailblazer to the rest of my family, which is traditionally blue-collar, for being well-educated and working in a successful industry. My elders are proud of me, especially my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. While my cousins, mostly my age, are proud, it hurts my heart to see them throw away opportunities on drugs, birthing out of wedlock and dropping out of school without a plan. How do I set an example without policing them?

— Just Wanting to Help

Dear Just Wanting to Help,

While admirable and loving to want more opportunities for your cousins, it is not your role to parent them. As you said, they are mostly your age. People make choices and then have to live with them. It is the living with these consequences that form character. We don’t know how the story will play out for your cousins. I would suggest you love them through their decisions and support them when you see positives coming from what they learn along the way. Focus on yourself and the decisions you are making. Let’s see what your journey will bring to you and what character is built along the way.

Good Luck, Candy

Dear Candy,

I’ve faced a lot of adversity this past year for taking out a lot of loans, graduating and working a full-time job in an effort to begin my career and adulthood as soon as possible. I’ve lost several close friends due to a lack of connection, even people I used to live with, and I get the feeling that some believe me to be arrogant for thinking long-term more than “in the now.” But what keeps me humble are the challenges I have to face every day, along with the memories of how far I’ve come.

How do I stress to others that with more blessings come more responsibility?

— Taking Responsibility

Dear Taking Responsibility,

Let’s talk about life balance. To live a happy, healthy life, you want to be able to take care of yourself financially, spiritually, physically and socially. Look at yourself in terms of a pie. There are pieces in your pie that need to be attended to. You need the responsible piece, the fun piece, the connecting with others piece and the sacred piece. Sometimes a slice or two of your pie may change in proportion to the other slices, but the goal is to meet all your needs simultaneously. Take a look at the percentages of these pieces of your pie. See what you can do to increase the play/fun part. You are too heavy in the responsibility portion.

Good Luck, Candy
a personal care package.
He said “Bless you” several times, so excited about the package containing simple items — items I don’t even think about but that meant so much to him. He thanked me over and over when all I did was hand him a package.
Why wasn’t there anything more we could do for him?
We walked over to the Greyhound bus station, which is hopping at 2 a.m. Inside, most seats were taken. Outside, some people were milling around while several people were laying on blankets on the sidewalk. Those are the ones Brown approached first.
One young man who was 19 and lying on blankets turned out to not be homeless. He was traveling back home to Midland where he had a job lined up in the oil field.
Another young man had been speaking Spanish fluently to a couple of other guys hanging around the bus station entrance. When we realized English was his first language, Stitt approached him. He was 23 and said he had learned Spanish hanging out of the street. He just picked it up from other people, he explained.
The young man had been homeless since his mother died when he was in 10th grade, and he was kicked out of his house. When Stitt asked him about any goals he might have, he said he’d love to get his GED. When she said she could arrange for him to get into a class, his eyes lit up with hope.
He told her he needed an ID, which he lost. She said she could help him with that, as well.
Stitt took a page from my notepad to write down her name and phone number. The young man said that although he had lost his phone, he could get in touch with her using someone else’s.
Stitt asked him how old his Spanish-speaking friend was. He was also under 24, so the bilingual young man translated the survey questions into Spanish and the responses into English.
We gave each of them DART passes and personal care packages, and Stitt got the young man to promise he’d call her before we moved on.
We walked around the bus station and then around McDonalds. Cars wrapped around the building waiting to order in the drive-thru, and people were out on the street walking, but we didn’t pass anyone we thought was homeless.

We walked around several more blocks, avoiding streets with patrol cars. Brown said the homeless stayed away from those streets that were usually patrolled. Instead, we chose darker streets where it was easier to sleep, away from the glare of lights, away from the gaze of police.
Finally, we returned to the van, wandered around a few more parts of downtown before driving back to Oak Cliff. In the car we talked about those who had needs Stitt and Brown could address, excited that a few small things they could do might make a difference in their lives.
Later in the week, Brown told me she tried to deliver the backpack to the young man at the library. She said the night she went back downtown, no one was there, but she’d try again later in the week.
That backpack might seem like a little thing, but it could make a big difference in that young man’s life. Brown explained that some people will do the survey and others need to build some trust before they’ll open up.
If she can get that one young man a backpack, maybe he’ll begin to trust her enough to open up about other needs he may have. And eventually she might be able to help get him off the street.
“We take a lot for granted,” Brown said. “Doing this job is very humbling.”
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Getting Better, Together.
Despite the fearmongering of opponents, Carrollton’s City Council passed an ordinance covering LGBT employees

On Tuesday evening, Feb. 5, the Carrollton City Council voted, 5-2, in favor of an ordinance that would add a number of protections to city policies and statutes to protect employees or contractors. Some of those opposed to the ordinance claimed the protections were really something else in disguise; the most far-fetched and ridiculous claim was that this was a “Ban the Bible” ordinance.

But in truth, the ordinance wasn’t “disguised” as anything. It’s intent was right out there in the open.

Read it: “No person shall be favored or discriminated against with respect to any city appointment, employment contract or privilege on account of age, race, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or political beliefs.”

Period!

Some of those opposing this ordinance want to wield fear as a weapon, as they have done for decades. From the 1950s when they riled up fear of sharing drinking fountains, to using fear to argue against equality for women or gay teachers.

Most recently, they claimed that the sanctity of marriage was in jeopardy if I were permitted to marry my wife, Katie. (And by the way, as of June 26, 2015, there is no distinction between “traditional” and same-sex marriage. It’s all just called marriage.) I have news for those folks: If your marriage was on a solid foundation before Katie and I were married, chances are it still is. But if your marriage was in trouble before it, it had nothing to do with the fact that Katie and I now share the same rights and protections as any other married couple.

Equal protection is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. And equality is not pie; there is enough of it to go around.

Me being able to see the doctor doesn’t mean you can’t. Me enjoying employment protections doesn’t take anything away from your employment. If I am able to feel safe in the city of Carrollton, it doesn’t make you unsafe.

That’s the magic of equality.

Spreading lies and fear is irresponsible. What’s even worse is using the Bible to hurt people, to deny them their rights. Why not use it to make them feel welcome, instead?

We heard this same language and saw these same fear-mongering tactics nearly three years ago when the city of Mesquite approved a similar ordinance. In spite of the worries, Mesquite has not fallen off of the edge of the earth, and no one’s religious rights have been trampered.

The ridiculous notion that Carrollton’s new ordinance interferes with anyone’s biblical beliefs is nonsense. Where in the Bible does it say I should be denied employment because I’m transgender? Nowhere. The Bible does, however, say “Love your neighbor,” and does it not?

For those genuinely afraid of losing what they consider a precious civil right, please know that I understand that fear. The reality of inequality slaps me in the face every day of my life.

I can be fired for who I am. I can be denied housing, and doctors can refuse me treatment. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit Feb. 4 to overturn Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, the non-discrimination provision that protects me, so that health care professionals can refuse me treatment if their religion tells them being transgender is wrong.

Be honest: You would be outraged as well if YOU were faced with that reality.

Carrollton is taking nothing from anyone. Seriously, read the ordinance. They only seek, as many cities around Texas have done, to level the playing field a little, because treating your neighbors with kindness and respect is a Texas value.

The community was watching, and so were businesses that may want to relocate to Carrollton now. In the face of protests from religious zealots and fearmongers pedaling their hateful, shameful scare tactics, the city of Carrollton made the right decision and they are to be congratulated and commended.

To Councilman Mike Henneser who voted against the ordinance because he felt this ordinance wasn’t needed since “Carrollton doesn’t discriminate,” I say: Good! Then having these protections won’t hurt a thing and will send a clear message to all that Carrollton walks the walk on equality with regard to city employees and contractors.”

Councilman Glen Blanscet, who also voted against adding equality protections, seemed most concerned about the gender identity provisions and sexual orientation protections. Enough so, that pregnant women would also lose protection were the ordinance defeated.

Mr. Blanscet is the former executive pastor at First Baptist Church in Carrollton, so it’s little surprise that he would claim to be worried about “unintended consequences.”

To Mr. Blanscet, I say: Let me calm your fears. You need look no further than Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Plano, Farmers Branch, Mesquite and Irving — just to name a few — to realize that even though all these cities have added protections like the ones just approved in Carrollton, none have been plagued by lawsuits or have fallen into the sea.

To the five council members who withstood the venom hurled in their directions by uneducated, willfully-ignorant merchants of hate, I’m sorry you had to endure that, and I’m grateful you stood strong and did the right thing.

And yes, history will show you have done the right thing. I’m grateful for your courage, and I encourage you to expand these protections to all who live and work in Carrollton.

My name is Leslie McMurray, and I’m your neighbor.

Leslie McMurray, a transgender woman, is a former radio DJ who lives and works in Dallas. Read more of her blogs at lesliemichelle44.wordpress.com.
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Additional services available at additional cost.
New relationships are the universe’s way of giving us yet another chance to get it right in the love department. And since none of us are getting younger, it’s wise not to squander those chances by making the same mistakes over and over. With Valentine’s coming up — and the associated shot at new romance — consider cleansing a few areas of your life, tangible and otherwise. Here are a few places to start.

Gifts. You don’t have to burn all the cards and gifts your ex ever gave you — that relationship is still part of your story, and you’ll regret expunging those things in the long run (I’ve been there myself) — but it’s important to close that chapter and put the literal lid on those memories. Store them in a weatherproof bin in the basement or attic (or the back of a closet) as a future reminder of what once was instead of a constant reminder of what went wrong.

Bed sheets. This may seem like an insignificant place to concentrate your cleansing energy, but you and your ex spent a lot of time on your bed sheets. They hold memories (among other things, like your ex’s DNA), and your new partner deserves to make new memories on sanitary cotton that’s not a graveyard of ghosts of relationships past.

Yourself. One of my best strategies to shake off a particularly bad breakup is to get a new ‘do. A fresh hairstyle (or even just a shapeup) has the uncanny ability to change your physical appearance and mental and emotional outlook by providing a sense of satisfaction and confidence. But don’t stop there. Schedule a few self-care appointments, like a massage, fitness class and a gripe-and-get-over-it brunch with your besties before moving on.

Your car. Maybe you don’t have anything in your car that reminds you of your ex, but it’s still an area that you’ll want to cleanse before picking up a romantic prospect for a date. Nobody with any self respect wants to date a slob, and a dirty vehicle is the first warning that you might have cat skeletons buried under stacks of newspapers at home.

Underwear drawer. My boyfriend and I enjoy buying each other sexy underwear for special occasions, but if we ever break up, those skivvies are going straight into the Dumpster. They’re an intimate part of our relationship, and I wouldn’t carry them over into a new one. I’d think about him every time I put them on, which is hardly fair for the new guy I’m trying to entice. It’s sad to see them go, I know — they represent many satisfying experiences — but
you’re here to make new ones, however that may work out in the future.

Closets. Did your partner leave clothing in your closet? Return them. Are there items they bought you in there? Put ‘em in that bin in the attic. You’re not alone here. According to a Nectar Sleep survey, 59 percent of respondents said they do a “fall refresh” to their wardrobes when starting a committed relationship to get rid of previous partners’ favorite sweaters and t-shirts.

Medicine cabinet. Toss the toothbrushes, colognes and any other grooming products your ex might have left behind. Keep the expensive skin creams, though — Dumpster divers don’t need $90 worth of retinol, son.

Nightstand. There are several life rules I stand by, and one of them is that drawer dildos don’t enter my ass; I don’t know where it’s been, but I know it’s been somewhere, and that’s enough hope for me. If you’re starting a new relationship, clean out your sex drawer so you: a. don’t look like a fucc boi with your 27 condoms and half-empty bottles of Gun Oil; and b. don’t get called out for being a dirtball while your dick is in your hand.

Media accounts. If your breakup wasn’t amicable and you two are prone to agitating each other on social media, take the high road and block your ex for the time being. New dates deserve a fighting chance to connect with you, and that can’t happen if your diverting energy to a toxic situation. Maybe you can ease into being friends after time has passed, maybe not, but a clean break is best if you intend to truly move on. — Mikey Rox

—— Terri Schlichenmeyer

BOOK REVIEW: ‘THE TRAUMA CLEANER’


The woman didn't seem very old, but it was really hard to tell. She wouldn't let anyone past her screen door — as if the stench wasn't enough to keep most people away.

Hoarder situations like that — suicides, undiscovered deaths, accidents — are business-as-usual for Sandra Pankhurst, 60-something owner of Specialized Trauma Cleaning (STC) in Australia. But as Sarah Krasnostein learned when she befriended her, Pankhurst extends to those clients compassion, and nothing less.

There was ample reason for that. Although many of the questions Krasnostein asked Pankhurst were waved away with claims of disremembering, it’s true that Pankhurst was born a boy, raised as a boy, became a man, married a woman, and fathered two sons. But “Peter,” as Krasnostein pseudonymously calls Pankhurst then, was hiding a part of himself, so, soon after his youngest son’s birth, he left his family to live as a woman.

Though “her reality is as conflicted as it is real,” Pankhurst shared tales of being a sex-worker and a madam. Dates and locales may’ve been incorrect and names forgotten, but it’s also true that Pankhurst eventually fully transitioned and continued to work in the sex industry until she was raped and almost lost her life. She fell in love, fell out of love, fell in love again, married an older man and divorced.

It was because of her ex that Pankhurst founded STC. “As a boss,” says Krasnostein, “Sandra is, variously, mother hen… bad cop… and hanging judge.” Her business cleans up sites affected by hoarding and death, and she’s matter-of-fact about bugs, vermin and smells as her staff hauls away pathogen-soaked furniture while ensuring that next-of-kin are treated with kindness.

As enjoyable as this unique tale is, there are a few things you’ll need to know before you sweep through The Trauma Cleaner. First of all, in her get-to-know-you time, Krasnostein became close friends with her subject and uses familiarity to gush about her. She’s also exceedingly, perhaps needlessly, explicit in details of a sexual nature while largely ignoring big opportunities for enlightenment on the business side of the book.

And yet, the goodness — and there’s an industrial-sized dustpan full of it — comes between the lines. This is a biography of cringing, compassion and somebody’s-got-to-do-it resourcefulness, plus irritations, but with a breezy heft of fabrication built in. It’s so singular that it’s almost irresistible; indeed, if you can get past the gushing and the gruesome, The Trauma Cleaner is a book you shouldn’t wait to get your hands on. — Terri Schlichenmeyer
Kee Palmer is not a girl, not yet—oh wait, she is a woman. It happened so fast, but here we are: With her squeaky-clean Nickelodeon and Disney Channel days behind her, Palmer disappears into her latest rough-and-buff turn as the eponymous lesbian street hustler anchoring the Lee Daniels-produced drama *Pimp* (now available to stream on Amazon Prime). Hair pulled back into a mohawk-shaped waterfall of braids and buzzed on both sides whilst presenting a chiseled physique and altogether hard aesthetic, there’s nary a trace of Palmer, Child Star.

Palmer’s work after her breakout role as 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson in the 2006 drama *Akeelah and the Bee* has epitomized the makings of a precocious multi-hyphenate: beyond her film career, which also includes 2012’s *Joyful Noise*, the 25-year-old starred on TV’s *Scream Queens*, a Ryan Murphy production, and can currently be seen on the Epix spy drama *Berlin Station*; the televised *Grease: Live* and Broadway’s *Rodgers+Hammerstein’s Cinderella* as Cinderella herself (she was the first actor of color to play the princess in this production); she has one proper studio album, her 2007 debut *So Cool*, and another on the way; and in 2017, she wrote a book, *I Don’t Belong to You: Quiet the Noise and Find Your Voice*, documenting her journey thus far.

In 2015, Palmer came out as sexually fluid in the video for her song “I Don’t Belong to You.” In the clip, she’s seen in bed with a man but ends up at the house of a woman, played by fellow singer Cassie. Here, Palmer reflects on the LGBTQ community’s reaction to her coming out and discusses embracing her masc energy, what James Dean taught her about sexuality, normalizing queer black characters and an irksome double standard in the bisexual community.

— Chris Azzopardi
Was playing someone who's a lesbian a draw?  I can't say her sexuality itself was a draw, but what you’re saying [was], I like the character as a whole. I liked everything about her. I think what attracted me to her the most was her strength. This kind of character being a lead character and being female is not what we see often, so that's what attracted me the most. Just that she was tough, and she was cool, and I didn’t really think too much about who she slept with, although I was delighted by the love story between her and her girlfriend. But I just saw it simply as a love story as opposed to a gay love story and a dynamic between women that we haven’t seen in that kind of way. It wasn’t oversexualized, and I really loved the way that her sexuality was displayed in the film. It wasn’t exploited.

And by depicting her sexuality in a matter-of-fact way, it helps to normalize it. Somebody might say she’s a quote-unquote “stud” or she’s not a femme — there’s a lot of language that’s used in the community. Having said that, Wednesday has both. That’s what I love about Wednesday, and I really tried to make that apparent. Wednesday is masculine and feminine. She has elements of both, and she and her girlfriend share those positions with each other, so I feel like it’s the same way in all relationships whether you’re same-sex or not. And again, that's what I loved about the film: We weren’t just doing something that's stereotypical; we weren’t just giving you this hard-up, one-note [character] and she’s just flat — no, she’s a human.

Was her gender fluidity written in the script? I think her being tough was a part of the script, but the nuances brought to it, that was definitely me. Just because myself, I have elements of high masculinity just as much as I have elements of high femininity, and in Wednesday, I really got to explore those elements in myself a lot more. I enjoyed that because I think women are strong, and though Wednesday is a lesbian, I don’t think masculinity defines your sexuality. I think that’s you as person.

Can you give me an example of how you feel you’ve embraced your masculinity? I can’t say I can think of one where it’s glaringly obvious, but I think in general I don’t ever choose what people would expect me to say or how people would expect me to respond to anything as a woman or as a black person or as anybody in general. As a person I don’t feel like it fit into many boxes of identity.

You played TLC’s Chilli in the Lifetime biopic CrazySexyCool: The TLC Story. She doesn’t strike me as someone who is straight-up feminine. Yeah, not at all. And that’s the thing, it doesn’t have to be as obvious as, oh, this person’s wearing their pants low and they got a big top on. Masculinity can be as small as you sitting with your legs open.

It can be an attitude. It can be an attitude. Masculinity is different. It can be just how you approach a situation, or energy you’re putting off in this particular moment. I think I’ve had that many times; especially when I’m creating boundary lines, I’ve definitely had it. When I’m trying to pursue something platonic with another male, sometimes I will be masculine to let them know, “Hey, you my homeboy; what’s good?”

How do you hope this movie speaks to queer black women? Man, I just think it allows opportunity to get more knowledge in accepting one another. I don’t think the black community has been as hard on lesbian women as much as they’ve been on homosexual men. But one of my cousins is just like Wednesday, and so I think for us it really just more so maybe can take the light off the fact that this is a gay person, and more so this is a person and really wrap ourselves into this specific person’s world, not a gay person but this person that’s not just defined solely by these aspects of her life. Really just give this character a human opportunity to stand on her own. Because like I said, a lot of times with these characters, they’re just supporting roles, they’re not the lead, they’re not someone you would feel for; they’re most likely someone you get to judge and they’re kind of a spectacle. So that's what I love about this movie: We’re
normalizing something that has been around and has been normal for years, but now we’re just giving it the opportunity to breathe and the light to shine.

When you first came to terms with your own sexuality, did you have role models? Anyone in the business from the LGBTQ community you looked to for inspiration? Maybe when I was like 18, 19, I was kind of like, “What does this mean?” But I think growing up in L.A., you kind of feel OK to be yourself. I think the kind of energy of the culture of L.A., or Hollywood, is that it’s OK to be yourself and that it’s OK to experience things and find who you are.

So, I didn’t feel like I needed someone to look to in order to be comfortable with that, but at the same time I think it was more so being comfortable with myself as opposed to me looking outwardly for comfort. It was just kind of me saying, “OK, it’s not a big deal; this is who I am and I can be who I wanna be and date who I wanna date,” and it was just being more relaxed about all of that.

But like I said before, I don’t think there is much fear maybe for a woman when it comes to being bisexual or being fluid or being queer or whatever anybody calls it. I think in that regard, maybe I had an easier time. And then my family is not typical in terms of that: My mom has always said when I was young, before I even thought of any of that stuff, that if her kids were [LGBTQ] she would just want the person to be cute! [Laughs] But that’s not everybody’s story.

But you were also a young star who was on shows for kids on Nickelodeon where I imagine the expectations were high to be... Perfect. Yeah, I felt it more there in that regard than in terms of my sexuality.

Did being a child star ever stifle your sexuality? Hmmm... I don’t think that it stilled my sexuality. I think other things stifled my sexuality, like my idea of who I had to be or what type of young woman I was, how people viewed me. Honestly, I never felt stifled by... I think I felt maybe confused by it at a certain time, but just as confused as I would’ve been in general with understanding my feelings with dating and all that kind of stuff.

But I allowed my journey to be my own and, like I said, I grew up in a community of people where many of my friends were also gay or they were fluid and we didn’t really put different things on ourselves in terms of our sexual identity. We was just kind of like, “You know, I’m going on a date with so-and-so, I’m doing this.” It wasn’t seen as anything more than just us being ourselves. And maybe that’s the millennial way. Maybe I got born in the perfect generation.

Yeah, I got on the wrong boat. I got on the one before you. [Laughs] I’m telling you: These millennials are accepting. I read something as a teen that was telling me how James Dean was sexually fluid and that was the first time I had ever seen or heard that term. I thought it was really cool that it was a male who was open and being honest about something like that in that era. I remember when I saw that I really loved it because I think often I feel like it’s much harder for males to have that idea than it is for women.

People assume when a man dates another man he can’t date another woman, and I’ve had many friends and many relationships with people who I felt like that was a really big crutch for them in being OK with their own identity because the reality was they weren’t in the closet, they weren’t hiding. They did like men, but they did like women. And the unfortunate thing about it was that a lot of women couldn’t accept that (he was with men), so when I saw that I remember seeing that thing with James Dean and I really loved it because I’m like, “What’s the problem if a guy likes both?”

There’s a double standard there. I hate it.

What kind of attention did “I Don’t Belong to You” get you from queer women? Were more slipping into your DMs? Yeah, sure! I think a lot of people were kind of like, “Oh, I knew it,” or something like this. And that’s always funny. I think if anything would be quote-unquote “obvious” it would just be my openness as a human being. I truly believe sexuality is a spectrum. I believe you’re meant to find love wherever it finds you, so if it happens to find you [with] the same sex, what a travesty it would be that you denied it because you’ve been walking around your life the whole 10 years being a heterosexual.

I worked with a director once, and in just regular conversation it happened to slip out that she was married to a woman. What I loved about her is that she said, “But I dated men for many years; I just happened to find true love with this woman.” And I loved that because that’s what life is. We put so many labels on stuff to be gay, straight, dah dah dah dah,
When in reality, in the ancient times, it was seen as very special when you could find love with the same sex. And in the Native American community it was called “two spirit,” and I think in our Western culture we work so hard to define everybody and everything that we lose the soul.

I think that's what I also loved about *Pimp*. It isn't about the label. She found love in this little girl, and they found protection in each other as children, so I mean, that's where they found love. It's not about what their label is, it's about the fact that they found love. And I feel like people should stop trying to make everybody fit into a box and just let people live their life. Define themselves the way they choose.

You have new music and visuals on the way this year. And it's been exciting to see more out LGBTQ artists like Troye Sivan and Hayley Kiyoko express their queerness without reservation...

Oh yeah, I love Hayley!

Will your sexual fluidity influence the narrative and visuals of your upcoming project? I haven't thought about it just yet. With the visuals that I have, a lot of them are just kind of dancing or little bitty things here and there. But if I feel like there is the opportunity to say something, then I always will. Just like when I did “I Don't Belong to You,” it was a statement piece. If I'm trying to specifically say something, then yes, because again I feel like my sexuality is who I find love with, so my music will mirror that.

I don't even really have a question, but I just need to acknowledge that, with *Joyful Noise*, you worked with Dolly Parton and Queen Latifah in the same movie. Man, I was so happy that I got to do that, OK?! Because it was just so cool. I love Queen Latifah — that was my third acting project with her. And working with Dolly Parton was just so, so special and awesome because she's such a sweet, sweet woman and she would bring us fudge bars on set.

Homemade fudge bars? Homemade fudge bars. And I would be so scared on set when I had to do my kissing scene and she would just be there to comfort me. I've always been a quote-unquote “tomboy” and also into girly stuff, but I've always felt more comfortable in more comfortable clothes — in sportswear, I always felt more comfortable, chill like that — and I remember asking her, “How are you beautiful like this every day? How can you do this?” She said, “I just made a choice when I was younger, and I wanted to be that way, so I get up every day and I make sure that it's the way that I presented.”

I remember just thinking that was so amazing, and that was kind of my first lesson in “we are what we repeatedly do.” That was something she wanted to be a part of who she was — we know Dolly Parton as being fabulous 24/7, and it's not an easy thing to do, so I really just loved that about her. I loved learning about her during that production. I would love to be like that.

*But then you think of all the time and energy it takes.... Oh, child!*

Do you see yourself as a role model for queer black girls? That's such a hard one. I can't tell someone what to see me as, but there are certain things that I feel could be communicated better in the world and so I use my platform for that.

When I did my song “I Don't Belong to You” I talked about that a lot. I talked also about gender fluidity, that you as a woman aren't defined by A, B, C and D, that you as a man aren't defined by A, B, C and D. I speak a lot on being a black female, being a female, being a millennial; if any of those things attract somebody to say, “I like what she says, she’s a role model to me,” then of course that's cool. But I don't try to think too much about being a role model as much as I think about being myself and speaking on the issues that are important to me.
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**Friday 02.15 — Saturday 02.16**

**Bruce Wood Dance hosts Dances from the Heart fundraiser and performance**

Bruce Wood dance continues to produce some of the best live entertainment in North Texas, even half a decade since its founder passed away. It’s biggest annual fundraiser, this year titled Dances from the Heart (arriving adjacent to Valentine’s Day!), features live piano music from Joseph Threlken, food, drinks and the performance of some classic dances from Wood’s repertoire, curated by artistic director Joy Bollinger.


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**Tuesday 02.12 — Sunday 02.17**

**Queer musical ‘Falsettos’ opens at Winspear**

William Finn’s groundbreaking musical *Falsettos* — really two one-act musicals, called *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland* — was a joyous yet sad depiction of queer life just at the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic. Revolutionary when it won Tonys for its book and score in 1992, it feels just as relevant today in its depiction of love, loss and family. The Lincoln Center’s acclaimed 2016 revival arrives in Dallas with a brand-new national tour this week.

**DEETS:** Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. ATTPAC.org.

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**Tuesday 02.05 — Wednesday 02.06**

**‘Jersey Boys’ returns to North Texas, this time in Fort Worth**

Doo-wop music reached a pinnacle, and evolved into something more, with the arrival of the Four Seasons, led by the angelic high tenor of Frankie Valli. *Jersey Boys*, which won the Tony Award for best musical, is a catchy, engaging jukebox musical.

**DEETS:** Bass Performance Hall, 525 Commerce St., Fort Worth. BassHall.com.

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ARTSWEEK

THEATER


DANCE

Beijing Dance Theater. Dallas debut. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. 8 p.m. ATTPAC.org.

CIRCUS


FINE ART

An Enduring Legacy: The Eugene and Margaret McDermott Collection of Impressionist and Modern Art. The recent death of Dallas arts patron Margaret McDermott, at age 106, led to a bequest of 32 works from her private collection, housed in her own home until recently, and now on display with three previously-donated works to the DMA. Dallas Museum of Art 1717 Harwood St. Through Feb. 17. DMA.org.


FRIDAY 02.08

BROADCAST

RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars. The fourth installment of returning queens competing for the crown. VH1 at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY 02.09

DANCE

Paul Taylor Dance Company. The modern dance troupe returns (for the ninth time) to the Eisemann Center for Performing Arts, 2351 Performance Drive, Richardson. 7:30 p.m. EisemannCenter.com.

TUESDAY 02.12

THEATER


FILM

To Have and Have Not. First pairing of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in a film noir potboiler. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie New Classic Series, which now includes a matinee. Landmark’s Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Screens at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

this week’s solution

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BETA PASO NOSE
ERIN ELAL IRIS
LISTEN UP FIVES
OLDS SPA
COSMOS SHACKLE
HULA PEON LOD
ATENISS SPEAKING
IRE COST INGE
REPRINT AENAS
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SHIV BORE IONA
HALE OLAY ZITS
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Ask Howard

How to do the wrong thing right

Oh, Cupid, pierce my heart! Here we are once again, holding our collective breaths for some grotesquely-grinning, winged and diapered teratophile, sporting a well-stocked quiver on his feathered back, poised to fire a potion-tipped arrow into our February fornications. Of all the ridiculous holidays clogging our calendar, there’s actually a quite simple explanation behind why an invention so crenulously rapid as Valentine’s Day forever hovers amongst all A-list favorites in the public’s affection: Sanctified sexual predation. More bluntly, Valentine’s is the solitary holiday that promises any swingin’ dick who so desires can score himself a little tasty piece of sumpin-sumpin’. Hence, if you’re of the persuasion that a Valentine’s void of sodomy is about as libido-arousing as a porno with condoms, then come sit by me: In 2018, for the first time in VOD subscription history, the search for “Paternal Gay Incest” videos (“real” dads seducing their “real” over-18 sons) overtook “Brutal Gay Twink Bondage” and “Extreme Gay Slave Torture” — combined — as the No. 1 most popular internet porn-engine categories. (Pornography, by the by, exclusively keeps the internet afloat; far back in second place is “Ancestry/Genealogical” searches. In other words, the World Wide Web would die without providing a sexual-fantasy outlet for men involving anyone other than the one to whom they’ve promised their lifelong fidelity.) So let’s get faithlessly right to it.

Dear Howard: How do you go about successfully seducing a straight dude’s pants off? I’ve been cohabiting in the same bed together with my partner for almost four decades. I was just 15 when we met; he was an old fossil of 25. To say we’ve enjoyed growing, well, “asexually eccentric” over these past 40 years would be like saying, “Michael Jackson gradually enjoyed some comforting milk before bedtime every dawn to help him sleep.” Our sex life is a cuckoo’s nest of wacky quirks: In my mid-50s now, I’ve officially joined Grant in grizzled daddymoon, and we’ve conspiratorially made it our Valentine’s missions to see which of us can get our building’s newest hetero hottie into bed first. He’s a stud I’ve personally nicknamed Steve (because he’s a dead ringer for my first celebrity boy crush, Steve Austin of The Six Million Dollar Man, but whom Grant refers to as Heath … as in Heath Barkley from The Big Valley). The only times our paths ever cross with Steve/Heath is in the laundry room, where he always has a new giggling bimbo skank welded to his side. They wink at us while purringly petting the faced-up bulge straining Steve/Heath’s leather biker pants.

Grant’s so in lust with him that he’s laughably taken to streaming Lee Major’s sexiest scenes from The Six Million Dollar Man and The Big Valley on side-by-side laptops. Grant says watching the same heartthrob at two sexily separate ages is even more hypnotizing and lurid than any so-called “real” dad/son porn. Grant surfs through every “straight” BDSM hookup site he can find, hoping to stumble across Steve/Heath’s ad, which he’s convinced is lurking out there, somewhere, considering the sheer volume of pussycats he runs through weekly: “Wait, wait, I think I found it!” Saliva dripping off his tongue, he said. “Listen to this: User Name, DockMyCock. XXXL MassiveHung Sk8r looking for cuckold couples to…” Interrupting him, I dismissively shook my head. “Cuckold? That dumb thing’s never heard such a word in his life. Move on. Next!”

Grant waved his Fuji bottle of Stoli at me. “No, listen! XXXL Sk8r looking for cuckold couples to party & chill with while watching MILF porn. Donations to my houseboat fund buys admission to whatever floats your boat. The more generous the donations, the more I return favors in kind.” Grant swilled triumphantly of his plastic Fuji flower-bottled vodka. “See, I told you it’s our Heath Barkley! Oh, Heath can be had.” I corrected him: “Ding-dong, it’s MILF porn he’s into—Moms I’d Love to Fuck, not Daddies. And nowhere does he say cuckold gay couples. Just give it up — the ad’s not his.”

Grant refused to concede defeat. “But what about Heath being a professional Sk8r ice skaters only come in two flavors: closet queen or screaming.” I rolled my eyes. “You, idiot. Steve’s hardly referring to the kind of ice produced by water at 32 degrees Fahrenheit.” Grant blinked his eyes, uncomprehending as Audra Barkley (aka Linda Evans), posing on a staircase, whose only apparent function was to spout a line of defiant morality into thin air while showcasing the latest 1960s hairstyles to her fellow Earth inhabitants of the 1860s: “What a pair of horny old fools are we?” said Grant.

“We can rebuild him, though,” I assured my life’s partner, softly finger-raking a fresh dab of wax through his flip, as I remembered Steve/Heath’s odd soliloquy in the laundry room last Sunday while Grant was downloading naked celebrities. “You mean, we have the technology?” Grant smirked, as I told him how Steve/Heath had set an empty guitar case on the floor by the door and slurred, “My five-year plan is easy — I just wanna save me up enough to buy a houseboat, where I get to do nothing except fish all day long, fuck ’tween meals and fart where I sleep. Houseboats come in three styles — standard, custom and luxury. I’d like to afford me a Sunstar, a Thoroughbred or a Bravada. Any help you could provide would be most appreciated.”

So, Howard, this brings us to our question: Is there a secret key or formula that’ll guarantee instant access into any given Heath/Steve’s hetero pants? How does a middle-aged, over-educated, non-wealthy nancy-boy lure a young, hung, full of cum 20-something straight moron … short of purchasing him a Bravada houseboat? — Sex on a Stick

Dear Sticky Dick: Surprisingly enough, the odds are stacked in your favor. Keep in mind — the same number of men are truly straight as are truly gay — about 10 percent, and if you’re older, all the better; it’s programmed into human DNA to choose sexual experimentation with older men versus younger … provided the younger is convinced that intimacy between two males isn’t really gay. (Try out the famous “Julius Caesar speech” on him, should Steve/Heath prove initially hesitant.) Innocently arouse his curiosity to the point he wants to picture you naked; if there’s a smirk or a giggle, he’s yours. Any man who doesn’t feel gay will go all the way. Additionally, if only interested in an NSA fuck buddy, have him make the first move on you. This way, you neither risk rejection nor detection, and your extramarital peccadillos shall eternally remain a secret — the young stud won’t go blabbering slanders about you.

Now, to all you Valentine voyeurs, the inherent paradox in penning an etiquette column for those needing guidance on how better to get away with something they ought not be doing in the first place, is that there’s no advice I can dispense that any randomly-selected John Waters movie couldn’t answer for you far more adroitly. I play everything for the lowest common denominator: laughs. My columns don’t clarify, or solve anything, say nothing of dispense any relevant advice. There is nowhere to go with this stuff that’s not farcical — there is no up. A few minutes’ distraction from reality is as good as it gets, kids. The only direction I can lead is across, which is why on this February day, of all comforting places, we arrive in ye ol’ barber’s shoppe, upon where we discover ourselves shamelessly avaricious, quite involuntarily, on Presidents Trump, Obama and Carter getting Valentine’s haircuts for date night.

Barber 1: Mr. President, would you like me to splash on a bit of after-shave?
DT: Hell, no, Melania would think I had spent the afternoon in a whorehouse.
Barber 2: How about you, Mr. President?
BO: Sure. Michele doesn’t know what the inside of a whorehouse smells like.
Barber 3: You, preacher? JC: No marked-lady sauce for me — I’ve only ever been unfaithful in my thoughts, never my heart.

Teenage floor sweeper: Too dang bad Bill ain’t here. He’d pass around some of his Monica Polaroids and teach all three of you popes how it’s really done.

For exactly as with houseboats and American presidents, Valentine’s adulatory only comes in three styles: Standard, custom and luxury. Sea to shining sea, in this land so gratefully fair, what one can romantically get away with is directly proportionate to what one can faithlessly suffer losing. Boredom in bed isn’t the fault of the mattress. — Howard Lewis Russell

Have a question about etiquette, sex or anything else? Send it to AskHoward@dallasvoice.com and he may answer.

02.08.19  dallasvoice  35
Making the SCENE the Week of Feb. 8–14:

- 515 Bar: King & Queen of the Rodeo from 9 p.m.-midnight on Saturday.
- Cedar Springs Tap House: Geeks Who Drink Trivia Night at 7 p.m. on Tuesday.
- Dallas Eagle: Discipline Corps night on Friday. Ms. GPOL Dirty 30 Bake Off from 5-9 p.m. On Saturday. Bears Night and NLA Night on Saturday. GDMAF/Team Metro Lifewalk Underwear Auction from 6-9 p.m. on Sunday.
- Deja Vu: Queens Court featuring TS Madison, Miss Sophia and Funky Dineva. Doors open at 8 p.m. and show at 10 p.m. on Monday.
- Hard Rock Cafe: Drag Brunch presents Drag Hearts Ball. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday. Reservations required.
- JR.’s Bar & Grill: Cassie’s Freak Show at 11 p.m. on Monday.
- Liquid Zoo: Wing Wednesdays
- Marty’s Live: Trashed Out Tuesdays with Jenni P and guests at 10 p.m.
- Round-Up Saloon: Sassy O’Hara emcees the 30th Annual $2 Two-Step Rent-a-Cowboy at 8 p.m. on Wednesday.
- Sue Ellen’s: DJ Sno White on Saturday. The Empire Cats and Hip Hop Hurray on Sunday.
- The Rose Room: Plastique Tiara and Savannah Stevens on Friday and Saturday. Savannah also performs on Sunday. Caven Employee Benevolence Association presents Miss DEBA Sweetheart Pageant hosted by Jenna Skyy at 10:30 p.m. on Thursday.
- TMC: The Mining Company: Fuego Wednesdays Latin Dance Contest at 11:30 p.m.
- Urban Cowboy: Queens Empower hosted by Domita Sanchez at 10 p.m. on Wednesday. Fierce Drag Show and Free HIV Testing.
- Woody’s Sports & Video Bar: Showtunes at 9 p.m. on Tuesday. Karaoke at 10 p.m. on Wednesday. Jada Pinkett Fox’s Variety Show at 11 p.m. on Thursday.

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Solution on Page 32

Across
1 Chloe director Egoyan
5 Bash for just men
9 Nevada neighbor
13 Sappho’s B
14 Texas town, with “El”
15 Distinctive Streisand feature
16 DWTS cohost Andrews
17 Airline to Ben Gurion
18 2001 biopic about Murdoch
19 Start of a quote by
47-Across
22 Ford contemporary
23 Where they rub you the right way
24 The whole shebang
27 Show some restraint?
31 Dance with grass over the bush
32 Menial worker
33 City in central Israel
34 End of the quote
38 Hot temper
39 The bottom line
40 Bus Stop playwright
41 New edition of Maurice, e.g.
43 Trojan, but not a condom
45 Dusk, to Dickinson
46 Shake it

47 Bisexual character on Riverdale
53 It might poke you in prison
54 Brought forth fruit
55 Island of Barrie’s land
56 In the pink
57 Big name in oil
58 Acne, in slang
59 Queen’s “subjects”
60 Targets of a masher?
61 Boy with a bow

Down
1 His brother laid him in his grave
2 Polo of The Fosters
3 Porter’s regretful miss
4 WNBA defense, ironically
5 Goes on a shopping spree, e.g.
6 Anklebone
7 Lickety-split
8 Patty Sheehan stepped in it
9 Early commercial computer
10 Zipped
11 Hoffman play about AIDS
12 Cocks and bulls
20 “Xanadu” band, for short
21 Classic toothpaste brand
24 Position in Bernstein’s orchestra
25 Very queer
26 What hibernating bears do
27 Back-to-school mo.
28 De-Lovely star Kevin
29 Vowel sound in “gay”
30 Rims
32 Furtive “Over here!”
35 More like slick winter roads
36 Cher’s ex as a kid?
37 Bigger than queen
42 TV Superman George
43 Where bowlers roll their balls
44 Fair-hiring letters
46 Genesis patriarch
47 Conceptual artist Gaye
48 To the ___ (how to play a pirate)
49 Cross-dresser in a Kinks song
50 Dusk in Dijon
51 “I’m ___ your tricks!”
52 Kind of marketing
53 Singing syllable

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