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GEM



FREE

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July 30, 2010

Thomas Araguz and Nikki Araguz at their wedding in April of 2008. Mrs. Araguz now faces life without him and has to fight in court to receive benefits normally given a widow. Why? Because her in-laws want the married invalidated because she is transgendered.. The case has potential to effect changes in the law.



Court Denies Firefighter's Widow benefits due to Transgendered Status in Case Brought by former Inlaws

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

Mrs. Nikki Araguz is the widow of a Wharton Co. fire fighter killed in the line of duty. In a compound tragedy, Mrs. Araguz's in-laws are attempting to void her marriage, claiming that she is a transsexual woman and as such her marriage is unlawful and only they should inherit Mr. Araguz's estate or benefit from his insurance and pension.

Mrs. Nikki Araguz legally married Captain Thomas Araguz, and her marriage has been recognized under the laws of the state of Texas. A Judge has already ruled a halt that denies her inheritance.

Longoria claims that since Mrs. Araguz was legally a male before transitioning to female (and despite legally changing her gender prior to her marriage to Capt. Araguz) that Longoria, not Mrs. Araguz, should receive all benefits and joint property. This includes any income earned by Mrs. Araguz during the marriage. Mrs. Araguz was the principle wage earner of the couple.

Capt. Araguz's two children from a previous marriage will receive one half of Capt. Araguz's \$600,000 firemen's fallen hero benefit regard-

Statewide Equality Group To Celebrate or Mourn Proposition 8 Ruling

In November 2008, Proposition 8 was passed in California, overturning the right of same-sex couples to marry. This month, Judge Vaughn Walker, Chief Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, is set to rule in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* on the constitutionality of equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. Judge Walker's ruling could lay the groundwork for the national legalization of same-sex marriage.

Across the state of Texas, activists are preparing to respond to Judge Walker's ruling, whichever way it goes. Equality Across America's (EAA) Texas Statewide Regional Network connects groups in several major Texas cities, including Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and Austin. Since the ruling could come at any time, EAA has issued a "standing call to action" so that



We say goodbye to Lois the Corpse Flower
--see Page 2



Our new writer, Alice Melott with her buddy, Dud. *See Through the Looking*

of a Wharton Co. fire fighter killed in the line of duty. In a compound tragedy, Mrs. Araguz's in-laws are attempting to void her marriage, claiming that she is a transsexual woman and as such her marriage is unlawful and only they should inherit Mr. Araguz's estate or benefit from his insurance and pension.

Mrs. Nikki Araguz legally married Captain Thomas Araguz, and her marriage has been recognized under the laws of the state of Texas. A Judge has already ruled a halt that denies her inheritance and insurance, until the case is decided.

These parties are claiming that Nikki is not legally a woman under Texas law. Nikki's opponents are attempting to use an obscure Texas case, *Littleton v. Prange* (1999), to declare that her marriage should be invalid. The *Littleton* case says that a person's gender is determined by chromosomes, not physical attributes. The *Littleton* case was decided to deny a transgender woman her right to bring a wrongful death suit on behalf of her husband - even though *Littleton* had legally changed her gender and had been legally married in Texas.

Sadly, discrimination against people because of either their gender identity or expression is common. There are few laws in the state of Texas to address this need.

Jeers and public threats greeted Mrs. Araguz outside the Wharton County Courthouse on July 23rd. She, was in court for the first hearing in a suit brought by Araguz's mother, Simona Rodriguez Longoria.

The suit claims that Longoria should inherit Capt. Araguz's widow's benefits and all marital assets.

Araguz was legally a male before transitioning to female (and despite legally changing her gender prior to her marriage to Capt. Araguz) that Longoria, not Mrs. Araguz, should receive all benefits and joint property. This includes any income earned by Mrs. Araguz during the marriage. Mrs. Araguz was the principle wage earner of the couple.

Capt. Araguz's two children from a previous marriage will receive one half of Capt. Araguz's \$600,000 firemen's fallen hero benefit regardless of the outcome of this case. They are also entitled to free tuition at Texas State Schools. Certain statements made in deposition of a child custody case are now in question. Thomas and Nikki had hoped to retain custody of his children.

Longoria expanded her claims to the property of Mrs. Araguz, asking the court to seize funds paid by a life insurance policy to which Mrs. Araguz was the named beneficiary. Judge Clapp granted her request, adding those funds to the widow's benefits and all marital assets currently being held in escrow. Longoria said in court last Friday that her goal was to "freeze Nikki out." All of Mrs. Araguz's assets are currently frozen and unavailable to her.

In a victory for Mrs. Araguz, the Judge also prevented Longoria from spending any of those funds or disposing of Capt. and Mrs. Araguz's marital assets.

Araguz is being represented by attorney Phyllis Frye who says, "The six lawyers in my firm are very busy working Mrs. Araguz's case so that this widow can have the dignity she deserves as a married woman who lost her husband in the line of duty."

See *Widow Denied* on Page 6

Across the state of Texas, activists are preparing to respond to Judge Walker's ruling, whichever way it goes. Equality Across America's (EAA) Texas Statewide Regional Network connects groups in several major Texas cities, including Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and Austin. Since the ruling could come at any time, EAA has issued a "standing call to action" so that the community knows in advance where actions will take place on the day the decision is announced.

EAA Houston member Dan Sharber encourages members of Houston's LGBT community and straight allies to attend, "The fight for LGBT rights has been a long and difficult struggle but California's Proposition 8 is the first time in our nation's history that a right was taken away from a select portion of our citizenry." LaKeia Spady, another EAA Houston member adds, "Whether we are celebrating a victory or mourning another loss, our voices need to be heard."

In Houston, the rally will take place at 6pm on the day of the decision at City Hall, 901 Bagby. Rallies are also planned at Austin City Hall (5:30pm), San Antonio City Hall (6:30pm) and in Dallas, at Cedar Springs Rd. and Oak Lawn (6pm).

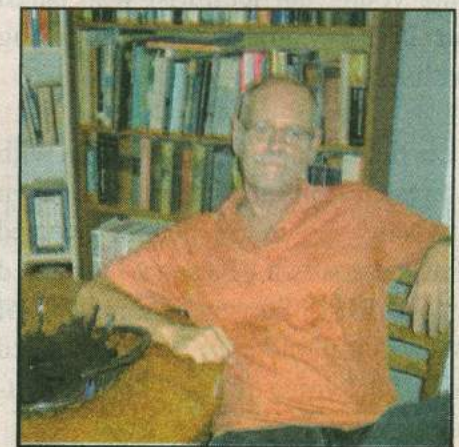
-- See *Prop. 8* on Page 5



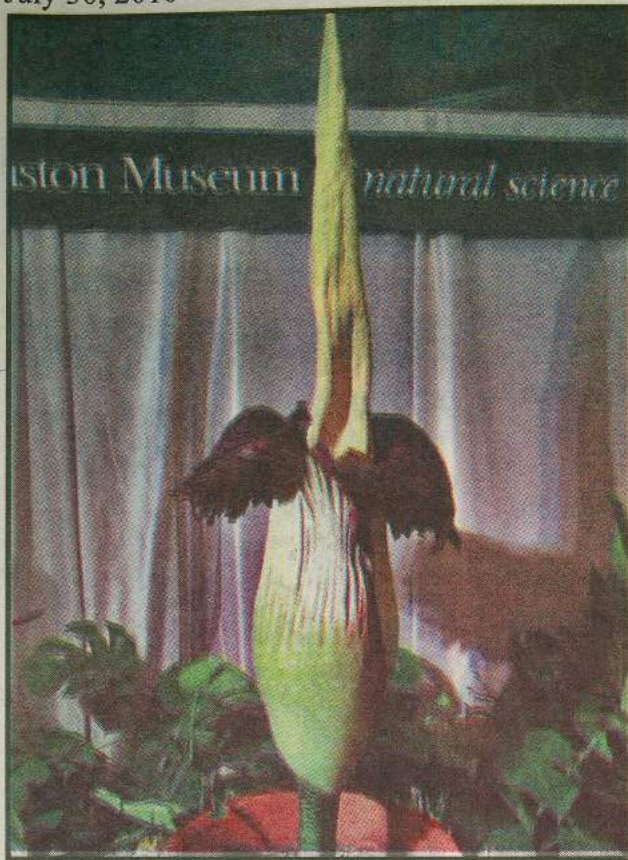
Our new writer, Alice Melott with her buddy, Dud. **See *Through the Looking Glass* on Page 11**



James Black weaves a dark tale of life among the vampires in *St. Nicholas* at The Alley ~ Page 12



The Art of Rob Baker featured in our new column on local artists by Eugene De Los Reyes - Page 15



Photos of Lois by Virgil C. Robinson

Lois, a 'Corpse Flower' kept Houstonians and people around the world mesmerized when she bloomed at the Houston Museum of Natural Science earlier this month.

Lois, Cash Crop for Houston Museum of Natural Science

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

The corpse flower known as Lois has reached full bloom and is now fading into dormancy. If you have been under a rock or on another planet in the last three weeks you may not know about Lois (named after the Mother of the Nation who secured the plant

Lois was not the only corpse flower in the world that was blooming (a very good thing as you will see), with there being one called "Perry" in Minnesota and another one in Japan. There are lots of YouTube vid-

Amorphophallus titanum

The scientific name for a corpse flower is *Amorphophallus titanum*. *Amorphophallus* means "mis-shapen penis" in reference to the prominent spadix of the flower (Titanium means 'giant') which contains both the male and female parts of the plant. The rare bloom of this plant held the attention of museum attendees and internet followers. The plant has approx. a 40 year life span and may bloom two or three times in its life,

The flower's huge size and deep purple color, convinced the first explorers who encountered it in Sumatra to believe it was a man-eating plant!

Since then, this extremely rare plant has gained celebrity status by having one of the largest, rarest, and smelliest flowers in the world. These flowers can reach heights of 7-10ft and a diameter of 5-6 ft.

Now we are facing what is being called "Life after Lois". HMNS is leaving her on display as she sadly droops and wilts but will soon be put in a quieter environment where she will be cared for until such time she may bloom again. This is after she is unearthed, weighed and dusted with powdered sulfur to prevent damage. Then she will be put in fresh soil and kept dry until next spring, at which time experts hope she will produce a leaf.

It could take years for Lois to recuperate enough to bloom again, experts said. This bloom was a bit of a disappointment for some as the flower did not open fully, but was well within the range of styles of blooms this kind of plant is known to have. There was concern that being on display caused the plant some stress. Our photo taken in the wee hours of July 25) shows Lois after the peak of

Interesting Facts about an Intersexed Plant

The sight, growth and odor of this rare botanical wonder are unbelievable. A mature underground corm (tuber) produces a huge aroid bloom (inflorescence) which is usually taller than a man. When it first emerges the spadix is completely enveloped in the spathe and bracts, but as it develops the growth rate of the spadix accelerates rapidly. It is ranked as the largest unbranched inflorescence in the world, which is produced by the largest tuber. A single huge leaf will emerge sometime after the flower resembling a sapling tree. A mature leaf is patterned with irregular pale green blotches and at the apex divides into an umbrella of leaflets up to 49 feet in circumference.

The *Amorphophallus titanum* is difficult to cultivate - not because, as was also once rumored, it eats its grower - but because it is prone to rotting, does not reliably increase in size and fails to produce seeds or offsets as easily as other species of *Amorphophallus*. The plants rarely set seeds because the female flowers open first and by the time the male florets are producing pollen they are no longer receptive. Each plant contains both flowers and florets. Even in the wild it is difficult because there must be an another



Howdy

It's time of Groceries source the land and bey

Over at tal down from A a release and 2 h es. Ag ass kic hits from Alumni What a iTunes

While iTunes dance that real list we covers origina & Justi BOP, a track M is actu mixes the orig gram

Houston Museum of Natural Science

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

The corpse flower known as Lois has reached full bloom and is now fading into dormancy. If you have been under a rock or on another planet in the last three weeks you may not know about Lois (named after the Mother of the person who secured the plant for the Houston Museum of Natural Science, HMNS)

Lois was on exhibit at the Butterfly Center at HMNS and stayed open on a 24/7 basis for a number of days during the bloom. A webcam allowed followers to watch her every move with the extra entertainment value of watching the people who went to see her. Twitter also allowed followers to comment on Lois and the activities at the Museum. Zac Stayton, the very cute young horticulturist who cared for Lois became a celebrity along with her.

Lois became an internet sensation with a presence on facebook and her own "tweets". So many people tweeted that there was a "Tweetup" arranged at HMNS, Steven Thomson. of www.culturemap.org was revealed to be the "voice of Lois" on the Twitter account, CorpzFlwrLois.

comments in the voice of Lois have delighted followers and helped propel record attendance at the Houston Museum of Natural Science as thousands of fans have flocked to see her.

Lois was not the only corpse flower in the world that was blooming (a very good thing as you will see), with there being one called "Perry" in Minnesota and another one in Japan. There are lots of YouTube videos of the others, including the time-lapse video of their bloom. What takes days to weeks in real life is sped up to a few minutes by photographic technology.

Over 250,000 people came to see Lois, at \$8 a pop. That along with the souvenir buttons that said things like "Bring on the Funk", "Team Lois, Team Zac, "I Came, I Saw, I Sniffed" made Lois a cash crop for the HMNS.. It was a real boost to the budget.

The smell is why the flower is known as a corpse flower due to the pungent stench it emits in bloom. That smell is described as being like that of a rotting carcass. The plant does this to attract flies or beetles which will act as its pollinators. At least that is what happens in nature but due to her greenhouse captivity (and the rarity of the plant), Lois had to be cross-pollinated with use of pollen from another *Amorphophallus* titanum and assisted by humans.

It could take years for Lois to recuperate enough to bloom again, experts said. This bloom was a bit of a disappointment for some as the flower did not open fully, but was well within the range of styles of blooms this kind of plant is known to have. There was concern that being on display caused the plant some stress. Our photo taken in the wee hours of July 25) shows Lois after the peak of bloom. The horticulturists hope the next time her tuber is bigger and that she'll be able to produce fruit.

The museum has another corpse flower in the greenhouse that hopefully will flower in the future."

"The Corpse Flower is unique because it's totally unpredictable," said Dr. Nancy Greig, director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center. "No one really knows what triggers a given plant to flower, and a plant may only flower once in its lifetime. We've had ours for six years and this is the first time it has bloomed—we're very lucky," said Greig. "It may be the largest, smelliest flower in the world, but its beauty is unparalleled."

OK, I admit that I am a bit of a nerd and am fascinated by plants and nature, so of course I had to find out more. If science bores you, stop reading now, but if you want to understand just how special Lois is read on.

grower - but because it is prone to rotting, does not reliably increase in size and fails to produce seeds or offsets as easily as other species of *Amorphophallus*. The plants rarely set seeds because the female flowers open first and by the time the male florets are producing pollen they are no longer receptive. Each plant contains both flowers and florets. Even in the wild it is difficult because there must be an another similarly timed pollen producing inflorescence. In addition, flowering can take at any time of the year so chances are stacked against pollination. There was once a rumor that this monstrous inflorescence is pollinated by elephants. Instead pollination is believed to be performed by large carrion beetles lured by the powerful odor of decaying flesh. This overpowering stench is released in waves when the flowers are ready for pollination. Its Indonesian name *bunga bangkai* means corpse flower.

Do you have a comment on a news item or story in the GEM or elsewhere? What do you like, not like, want more of? Have a story idea or someone you think we should interview? Contact us at: montrosegem@yahoo.com

**Montrose GEM masthead
designed by Angela Hon**

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BEELINES

by Deborah Moncrief Bell



Troubling news last week regarding the plight of Nikki Araguz who lost her firefighter husband when he perished while on duty (see page 1). What a horrid thing to go through following the loss of a significant other.

The findings in a 1999 case, Littleton v. Prague are being used as a basis to deny Mrs. Araguz the benefits due to her status as a transgendered woman. Because she has been deemed 'born male' the legal system is trying to invalidate her marriage.

The law that generally determines gender in Texas is a 1991 court case, Littleton v. Prange, which held that three factors - a person's gonads, genitalia and chromosomes - determine gender at birth.

Now any of us that have bothered to take notice is that gender is more multi-faceted than that. There are not only physical but psychological and spiritual aspects as well. Besides why should gender matter? Two people decide to commit to one another, agreeing to share and share alike, and in this case, to take vows.

According to Transgender activists, the Littleton case was wrongfully decided at the time, and if taken literally stands for the proposition that a transgender person cannot marry anyone, of either gender, under Texas law. They say that this is clearly, wrong. Denying anyone the right to marry whom they love is a violation of the most basic freedoms under our laws. To deny the validity of an existing, legal marriage,

This case once again brings to light the issues concerning marriage, partnerships, and relationships, particularly those that involve the same-sex. Whether of the same-sex or other, who we love is who we love

In a report from the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

Recently in California, Sonoma County officials have agreed to settle out of court—a total of \$653,000—to compensate to Clay Greene for damages suffered due to the County's discriminatory and unlawful conduct. County officials had separated Greene from his partner, Harold Scull. They had lived together for 20 years and had executed both mutual powers of attorney for medical and financial decisions and wills naming each other as beneficiaries. In April 2008, County employees separated them after Scull fell outside their shared home. In the next three months, County officials ignored the couple's legal documentation, unlawfully auctioned their possessions, terminated their lease, and forced Greene into an assisted living facility against his will. The County did not consult Greene in Scull's medical care and prevented the two from seeing one another. In August, 2008, before the partners could be reunited, Scull passed away after completing a photo album of the couple's life for Greene.

In addition to paying out a substantial sum, as a result of this lawsuit, the County has changed or modified a number of important policies in its Office of Public Guardian.

NCLR Executive Director, Kate Kendell expressed it well in the following statement:

No amount of money can ever ease the trauma, pain, humiliation, and fear Clay suffered in the months after Harold's fall. And nothing can ever make it possible for Clay to be at Harold's side when he died three months after they were separated.

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141	9/24	9/20
142	10/8	10/4
143	10/22	10/18
144	11/ 5	11/1
146*	12/3	11/30
147*	12/17	12/13
148	12/31	12/27

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Besides why should gender matter? Two people decide to commit to one another, agreeing to share and share alike, and in this case, to take vows.

According to Transgender activists, the Littleton case was wrongfully decided at the time, and if taken literally stands for the proposition that a transgender person cannot marry anyone, of either gender, under Texas law. They say that this is clearly, wrong. Denying anyone the right to marry whom they love is a violation of the most basic freedoms under our laws. To deny the validity of an existing, legal marriage, after one of the spouses has died, as justification for the redistribution of inheritance and insurance, is abhorrent to the values of common decency, fair play, and justice that most Texans hold dear.

Several matters are at contention in the Araguz case. Mrs. Araguz says her husband knew that she is transgendered while opponents claim that he was notified by his attorney and that he left the marriage when he found out. But according to records, Nikki and Thomas were married and shared a life that including raising his two children by a former marriage. It was through court depositions taken in an effort to retain custody of those children that it was revealed that Araguz has once been named Justin Graham Purdue. While the birth certificate may have designated that child as male, the person who now goes by the name Nikki never felt that she was boy.

She has stated that "I had been completely honest with him about my entire history: legally, financially, physically, mentally, and medically," Nikki Araguz said after the hearing. "And I have evidence to prove such facts."

Adding that, "My husband and I loved each other very much," she said "When all of the evidence is presented, the whole world will know that I am Mrs. Capt. Thomas Araguz III, and I'm now a widow."

In addition to paying out a substantial sum, as a result of this lawsuit, the County has changed or modified a number of important policies in its Office of Public Guardian.

NCLR Executive Director, Kate Kendell expressed it well in the following statement:

No amount of money can ever ease the trauma, pain, humiliation, and fear Clay suffered in the months after Harold's fall. And nothing can ever make it possible for Clay to be at Harold's side when he died three months after they were separated.

But this victory is tempered by the harsh, sad facts of this case. Nothing can salve the heartache of being cruelly deprived of the opportunity to be with a dying partner. Nothing can make up for the unbearable reality that Harold died alone, without Clay by his side, after spending the final months of his life making a photo album for Clay of their life together.

This case highlights the urgency needed for true and full LGBT equality across the country, rather than a patchwork of hit and miss state rights or protections. This settlement cannot undo what Clay and Harold endured, but it ensures that what happened to them will never happen in Sonoma County again. Someday, we can only hope we can say the same for the rest of the country.

As an advocate for transgender rights and for full equality of all GLBT, including the right to marry, I share the hope that Mrs. Araguz may be left to mourn her loss in private without distraction or worry for her financial stability. Furthermore, as participants in the Transgender Nondiscrimination Summit state: The courts should consider the Littleton case superseded by the recent changes to the Texas Family Code that recognize a court ordered gender change as definitive proof of identity.

That's the buzz from me this week.

Community Online

www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org

www.montrosecounselingcenter.org

www.legacycommunityhealth.org

Houston GLBT Political Caucus
www.thecaucus.org

Fort Bend LGBT Political Caucus:
FBLGBT_Political_caucus@yahoo.com

Out In Houston
www.outinhouston.com

www.PFLAGHouston.org
HelpLine
713-46PFLAG 713-467-3524
HelpLine@pflaghouston.org

www.assisters.org

Houston Political Organizing Network - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LoneStarActivists/> (LSA)

FEMINIST ONLINE NETWORK
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FEMNET>

Northwest Corner
www.nwcorner.org

www.socialnotesHouston.org

COMMUNITY NEWS & RESOURCES

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If you or someone you know has excess of these or any other antiretroviral, please contact

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COMMUNITY CENTER NEWS

Gay Games VIII

Give a cheer on July 31 for our local GLBT athletes participating in Gay Games VIII in Cologne, Germany. The games continue through August 7. Houston-area jocks will travel to Germany to compete in swimming, track and field, tennis, ice hockey, billiards, roller racing, and other sports. Team Houston, the GLBT sports group that meets at the Center, has helped organize the local contingent. More info the Gay Games: www.games-colonge.de/en. More info on Team Houston: <http://sports.dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/GayGamesTeamHouston>.

Looking ahead:

Monday, August 2. The Center Coming Out Group meets at the Center. 7 p.m.

Thursday, August 5. The Center HIV Support Group meets at the Center. 6 p.m.

Saturday, August 7. The Center



ENDORSEMENTS 'ROUND THE CORNER

The Houston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Political Caucus - Political Action Committee (HGLBTPC-PAC) will be endorsing candidates for the November 2 election on August 4.

At the meeting, the members of the Caucus will choose which candidates are best able to serve the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community in a variety of offices, including governor, state legislator and judge. Be there for these important decisions.

Havens Center, 1827 W. Alabama
August 4, 7 p.m. (Come at 6:30 p.m. for a reception)

Transgender Foundation of America:

Helpline: 713-520-8586
Fax: 713-583-5400

TFA seeks to improve the quality of life for transgender people.

work - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LoneStarActivists/> (LSA)

FEMINIST ONLINE NETWORK
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FEMNET>

Northwest Corner
www.nwcorner.org

www.socialnotesHouston.org

www.queermusicheritage.com

www.centerforAIDS.org

AIDS Foundation Hosuton
www.AFHouston.org

Imperial Court of Houston
www.spacecityempire.org

Empire of the Royal Sovereign
Imperial Court of the Single Star
www.ersicss.org

TG Center
www.tgctr.org

UH LGBT Resource Center
www.uh.edu/lgbtrc

Give a Damn Campaign
www.giveadamn.org

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If you want to know where you can drop the medicine off:

http://www.aidforaids.org/index.php/site/programs_services/category/recycling/

The Houston GLBT Community-Center has volunteered to serve as a drop-off point on the first and third Mondays between 6 and 9pm. The center is located at 3400 Motnrose (at Hawthorne) on the second floor.



Looking ahead:

Monday, August 2. The Center Coming Out Group meets at the Center. 7 p.m.

Thursday, August 5. The Center HIV Support Group meets at the Center. 6 p.m.

Saturday, August 7. The Center holds First Saturday Queer Bingo at One's A Meal (812 Westheimer). 4:30 p.m.

Meet at the Center
Your group or activity needs space to meet. The Center has meeting space. Let's get together. Contact the Center by calling 713.524.3818 or send an email to president@houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org

The Center is located at 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. The phone number is 713.524.3818. The website is www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org. call: 713.524.3818

Check us out on Facebook

The Houston GLBT Community Center is a member of CenterLink, the national organization of GLBT community centers.

Havens Center, 1027 W. Alabama
August 4, 7 p.m. (Come at 6:30 p.m. for a reception)

Transgender Foundation of America:

Helpline: 713-520-8586
Fax: 713-583-5400

TFA seeks to improve the quality of life for transgender people. TFA is a 501[c]3 nonprofit.

TFA TG Center: <http://tgctr.org>
TFA Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/TFA-Houston/106760432685591>

TFA Twitter: <http://twitter.com/tgcenter>

TFA Yelp: <http://www.yelp.com/biz/transgender-center-houston>

TransHouston.com is the Houston Area TG Community online.

ON THE RADIO

MONDAYS, 9 - 11PM
"QUEER VOICES"

SUNDAY MORNINGS
12AM - 3AM
"AFTER HOURS"

ON KPFT 90.1FM
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Believing in a Gay Spirit

Rev. Burton Bagby-Grose

One of the most frequent questions I encounter from gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and straight folks on a weekly basis is:

“Where can I find a welcoming and affirming church?”

My definition of welcoming and affirming churches and denominations is this:

Welcoming and affirming Christian denominations welcome AND affirm GLBT members as well as support full inclusion of GLBT people into all aspects of congregational and denominational life. They do not consider homosexuality or transgenderism to be sins.

Some denominations (the Episcopal Church USA, and the United Church of Christ) are primarily composed of non-GLBT members and have established specific programs to welcome GLBT people. Others largely consist of GLBT people.

Furthermore, many denominations that are not officially welcoming and affirming have member and congregation-organized organizations that

nity Church.

Former Resurrection staffer Reverend Jason Wood recently formed Montrose Church – Living Mosaic last spring with a primary outreach to GLBT Houstonians.

In Houston, there are numerous welcoming and affirming Christian congregations, including:

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church – www.beringumc.org

Bethel United Church of Christ – www.bethelhouston.org

Cathedral of Hope Houston – www.facebook.com/CathedralOfHope-Houston

Community Gospel Church – www.communitygospel.org

Community of the Servant-Savior Presbyterian Church – <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Houston-TX/A-Community-of-the-Servant-Savior-Presbyterian-Church/100465913790>

Covenant Church, an ecumenical

Empowerment Gained from Summit

by Lou Weaver

On July 20th, 2010 Rice University opened their doors as the host for the 2nd Annual Texas Transgender Non-Discrimination Summit. Over the course of two days, attendees from 18 different Texas schools and universities, as well as community leaders came together to “discuss what works and does not work in regards to codifying inclusion of gender identity and gender expression in to institutional policy. The summit serves to find means to end this through discussion of divergent and respective strategies in regard to the inevitable barriers that always arise”.

Josephine Tittsworth, then a student at the Graduate College of Social Work within the University of Houston system got the ball rolling in the spring of 2009. She has continued to lead the way in the pursuit to end discrimination of gender identity and gender expression at institutions of higher learning since graduation. Ms. Tittsworth formed a partnership with Houston’s GLBT Community Center and co-chaired the planning committee for the TexasTransgender Non-Discrimination Summit, consisting of 10 people from local schools, universities and community groups.

This year’s summit included keynote speaker Randall Terrell, Policy Director of Equality Texas. presentation of case



Josephine Tittsworth has lead the way to empower the trans-identified in academic settings ~ photos by Angela Hon

That statement sheds light on the importance of including allies and advocates in the quest for inclusion. By and large, the transgender population is accustomed to hiding and shying away from sharing themselves with the general population. This no longer has to be the way. It is possible to live as an out and proud trans-identified person. One of the important things of the summit is showing the power of the community when we come together as a whole.

Josephine stated “My motivation for the summit is that no longer will another transgender in Texas ever have to feel they are alone in their efforts to change policy. That is the real purpose for the summit. The loneliest number is the number “one”; no longer will that be the case if I can help it; we are united now.”

Next year’s summit will be held at Texas A&M in College Station. For more information join the email list serve_txtgsummit@yahoogroups.com.

Some denominations (the Episcopal Church USA, and the United Church of Christ) are primarily composed of non-GLBT members and have established specific programs to welcome GLBT people. Others largely consist of GLBT people.

Furthermore, many denominations that are not officially welcoming and affirming have member and congregation-organized organizations that are not officially sanctioned by the denomination.

By far the most progressive mainline Christian denomination in America is the United Church of Christ. In 1972 the UCC ordained the first openly gay person as a minister in a mainline denomination.

At their annual meeting in 2004 the Alliance of Baptists (www.allianceofbaptists.org) passed a statement supporting equality in marriage for both opposite-sex and same-sex couples throughout the U.S. and opposed the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment which would have restricted marriage to opposite-sex couples.

The Metropolitan Community Church was founded in 1968 in Los Angeles by the Reverend Troy Perry as a specific outreach to GLBT families and communities and remains largely GLBT today. One of the largest MCC congregations is Houston's Resurrection Metropolitan Commu-

Community Gospel Church – www.communitygospel.org

Community of the Servant-Savior Presbyterian Church – <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Houston-TX/A-Community-of-the-Servant-Savior-Presbyterian-Church/100465913790>

Covenant Church, an ecumenical liberal Baptist congregation – www.covenanthouston.org

First Congregational United Church of Christ – www.fcc-houston.org

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church – www.gracelutheran-houston.org

Montrose Church – Living Mosaic <http://www.facebook.com/MontroseChurchLivingMosaic>

Plymouth United Church of Christ (Spring) – www.plymouthunited.org

Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church – www.resurrectionmcc.org

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church – www.saintandrewsepiscopal.org

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church – www.ststephenshouston.org

-- See *Gay Spirit* on Page 6

identity and gender expression at institutions of higher learning since graduation. Ms. Tittsworth formed a partnership with Houston's GLBT Community Center and co-chaired the planning committee for the Texas Transgender Non-Discrimination Summit, consisting of 10 people from local schools, universities and community groups.

This year's summit included keynote speaker Randall Terrell, Policy Director of Equality Texas, presentation of case law by ACLU of Texas and several small group breakout sessions, including safe zones, current legislation, domestic partner benefits and transgender inclusion. The summit was designed to present as much information as possible in a way to empower the attendees to help facilitate change at their respective institutions and organizations. Although the summit was aimed at higher level learning institutions, much of the information, such as discussion points and transgender education could be applied to end discrimination within any school or business.

LaKeia Spady, a student at Houston Community College, was on hand to share her experiences on how her school was able to make changes in their policy and gather new information in the constant battle to educate others. Afterwards, LaKeia said "The summit was a really great opportunity to gain a better understanding of what other institutions are doing and where my institution stands on equality compared to others. I also learned that there's great value in building coalitions with non-glbtc on campus. Yay allies!"

transgender in Texas ever have to feel they are alone in their efforts to change policy. That is the real purpose for the summit. The loneliest number is the number "one"; no longer will that be the case if I can help it; we are united now."

Next year's summit will be held at Texas A&M in College Station. For more information join the email list serve_txtgsummit@yahoo.com.



Prop. 8 continued from Page 1

Last but certainly not least, there will be a rally in Denton at the Courthouse Square on the Saturday following the decision. That rally will commence at 5pm.

The verdict in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* is uncertain, but whatever Judge Walker's ruling, it is expected that the case will be appealed to the District Court and all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Find more information on EAA and the Day of Decision actions at <http://eaatexas.org>

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Gay Spirit continued from Page

Trinity Episcopal Church –
www.trinitychurchhouston.net

I have to add that although Grace United Church of Christ (<http://graceucchoouston.com/gucc>) is not officially welcoming and affirming, I have preached there as an openly gay minister. I think that qualifies them to be listed, albeit unofficially.

Please write to me if I have missed your congregation and I'll write about it in a future column. We would love to hear your stories as well so please consider sending those along.

The following are welcoming and affirming advocacy groups for particular denominations. It should be noted that not all churches within these denominations are necessarily members of the GLBT group for their denomination.

* Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists – www.awab.org

* Integrity is a para-church ministry, but operates under the official roof of the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada – <http://www.integrityusa.org>

* More Light Presbyterians — Presbyterian Church (USA) – <http://www.mlp.org>

for LGBT Interests – Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA, and Mennonite Church Canada – <http://www.bmclgbt.org>

* Welcoming Community Network – Community of Christ – <http://welcomingcommunitynetwork.org>

There are also ecumenical or para-church programs that are explicitly outreaches to GLBT people, but do not identify with any particular faith tradition and/or denomination. Such organizations include the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Institute for Welcoming Resources and the Human Rights Campaign Religion and Faith Program.

There are many other welcoming faith communities in Houston including Buddhist, Jewish, and Unitarian Universalist*. We will talk about those in future columns.

Burton Bagby-Grose is an ordained minister living in Houston with his husband Ron and their daughter, Rosalee, Contact him at Burton.Bagby-Grose@att.net

*Editor note: I can personally recommend First UU at 5200 Fannin.

Widow Denied from Page 1

This is your chance to shape history and push forward equality for not only transgender Texans, but also for

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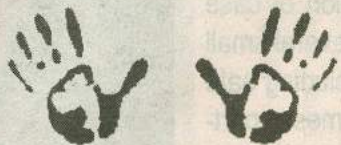
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* Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists – www.awab.org

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* More Light Presbyterians — Presbyterian Church (USA) – <http://www.mlp.org>

* Open and Affirming Ministries of the Gay, Lesbian & Affirming Disciples (GLAD) –

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – <http://www.gladalliance.org>

* UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns – United Church of Christ – <http://www.ucccoalition.org>

* Reconciling in Christ Program of Lutherans Concerned/North America – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – <http://www.lcna.org>

* Reconciling Ministries Network – United Methodist Church – www.rmnetwork.org

* Room for All – Reformed Church in America – <http://roomforall.com>

* Supportive Congregation Network of the Brethren/Mennonite Council

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Widow Denied from Page 1

This is your chance to shape history and push forward equality for not only transgender Texans, but also for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Americans everywhere. Nikki Araguz needs your help. This is a rare opportunity for each of us to influence the arc of history by donating to the TG Center Nikki Araguz Fund. Every \$1000 donation received puts us one step closer to justice for Nikki. Individual contributions at any level are appreciated, even those as little as five dollars. We also encourage you to use your influence to persuade capable people, organizations, and foundations to contribute at higher levels.

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Houston, TX 77006

Make checks payable to Transgender Foundation of America. Please make sure to note that the payment is for the TG Center Nikki Araguz Fund. Credit card contributions can be made using the following link:
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www.tglegal.com
www.liberatinglaw.com
www.tgctr.org

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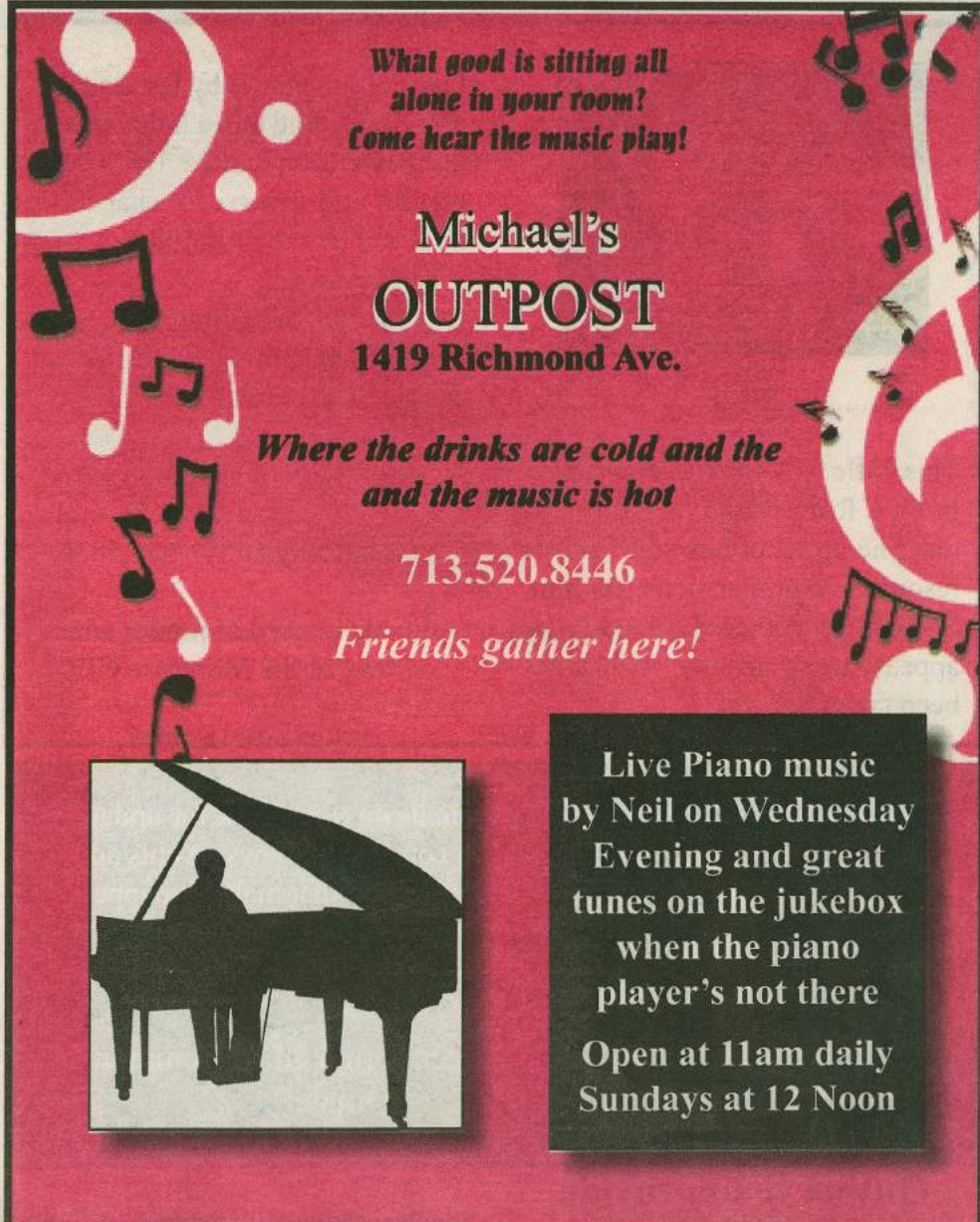


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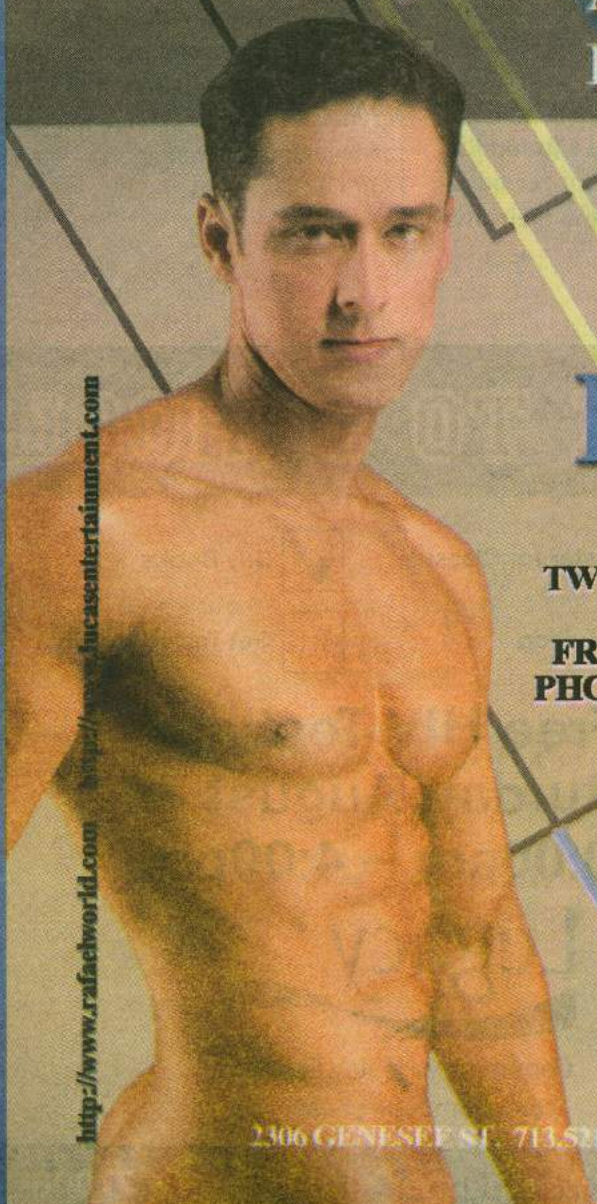
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OutServe to provide voice to LGBT troops from Washington Blade

A new organization opposed to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) officially launched on Monday July 26, 2010 that aims to give new voice to LGBT service members currently serving

now has about 450 members, including around two dozen service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Smith said efforts started with collecting stories from LGBT active duty service members and the group's activities evolved. Starting in March, OutServe embarked on a tour of schools throughout the country to speak out

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Smith said the organizations plans to make sure LGBT service members have a voice.

One of the things that we see a lot coming from the Pentagon is they're saying 'gay advocates' are saying this, or certain things are happening, and like to use the word 'advocates,'" Smith said. "As we created a group that

Smith said OutServe had been communicating with the Pentagon working group in limited fashion by giving them information "that is beneficial to help them with repeal."

Such information, Smith said, includes anecdotes on LGBT troops serving with other service members and feedback on the Pentagon's "Don't Ask,

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OutServe to provide voice to LGBT troops

from Washington Blade

A new organization opposed to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) officially launched on Monday July 26, 2010 that aims to give new voice to LGBT service members currently serving in the U.S. military.

The group, **OutServe**, formerly known as Citizens for Repeal, is crediting itself with being the first-ever organization for active duty gay, lesbian and bisexual troops that is speaking openly with Pentagon officials as well as public audiences.

OutServe's co-director, a military officer who's referring to himself publicly by the alias of J.D. Smith to avoid being outed under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," said his group is focused on giving support to active duty gay and lesbian service members through social networking.

For example, we had someone moved from Virginia to Colorado recently," Smith said. "Through the network, we were able to get them in touch with new people and new friends in Colorado."

Smith said plans for the future include helping LGBT troops find

The group started in October 2009 as an underground network with a Facebook page. According to a statement from the organization, **OutServe**

now has about 450 members, including around two dozen service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Smith said efforts started with collecting stories from LGBT active duty service members and the group's activities evolved. Starting in March, OutServe embarked on a tour of schools throughout the country to speak out against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

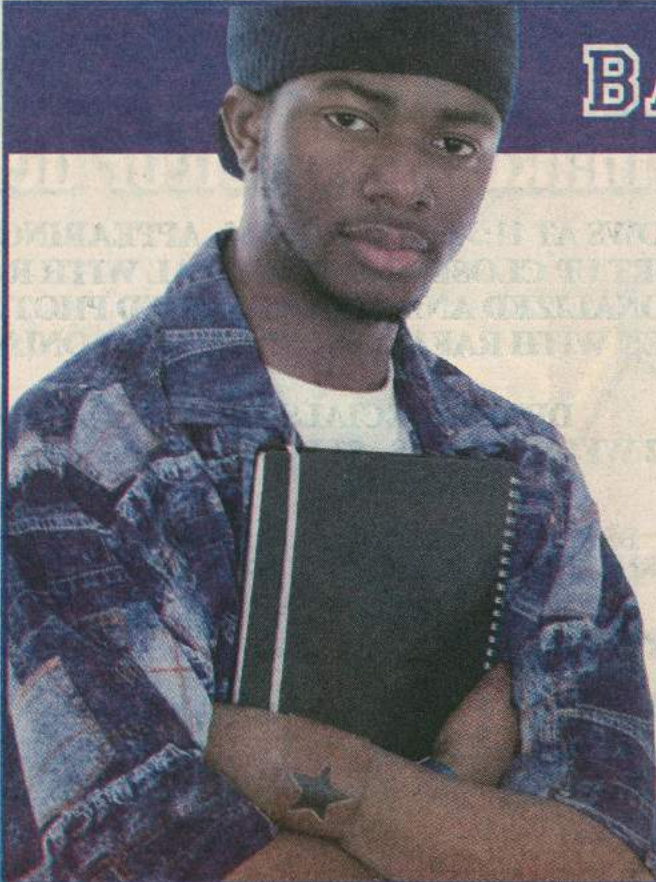
As the Pentagon working group develops its plan for implementing repeal of

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Smith said the organizations plans to make sure LGBT service members have a voice.

One of the things that we see a lot coming from the Pentagon is they're saying 'gay advocates' are saying this, or certain things are happening, and like to use the word 'advocates,'" Smith said. "As we created a group that is just active duty, it's no longer advocates are saying this it's now their own people."

Smith said OutServe had been communicating with the Pentagon working group in limited fashion by giving them information "that is beneficial to help them with repeal."

Such information, Smith said, includes anecdotes on LGBT troops serving with other service members and feedback on the Pentagon's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" survey.



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So of the two races mentioned thus far, where are we? No doubt we support them, but which is a priority, or are there others? There are.

In this election, there are at least three other races that we in Philadelphia should take a close look at, and maybe make a higher priority.

First, U.S. Rep. Pat Murphy (D-8th Dist.), who is spearheading the effort to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," is in a tough reelection race. If he loses, it would be a national loss as well as a local embarrassment. He needs our financial help and our feet on the ground.

Democrat Fern Kaufman is an open lesbian running in Pennsylvania's 26th legislative district for state representative. She ran two years ago and, as a novice, lost by the slimmest of margins. Her district now has more Democrats than Republicans. If she wins, she would be the first openly LGBT person in the state legislature. How strong is her chance? The Democratic legislative political caucus has targeted her for assistance — a major move. And we should be supporting her. She.



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LGBT politics and money

by Mark Segal

It's October in July. If you turn on your TV, you'll note we are already seeing the political ads that usually don't hit until October. Usually the traditional start of the campaign season is September, but not this year. And here's the reason and how it affects our community: money.

Money is the mother's milk to a political campaign. It brings with it an experienced campaign staff and enables meetings, parties, lawn signs, polling, mailings, poll watchers and a media campaign.

As I watched TV-news shows last week, there

were at least five different ads for Republican senatorial nominee Pat Toomey, who's running against Democrat Joe Sestak. That is unheard of. It makes two points. First, it gives him the opportunity to paint Sestak in the minds of the voters. In this case, the tagline in almost all of the commercials is "Sestak, too liberal for Pennsylvania." As this column said months ago, that line will, over the course of the campaign, morph into something akin to "Sestak, too radical for Pennsylvania."

The other major statement that this makes is Toomey has money. Lots of it. In the two high-profile statewide races, both Toomey and Tom Corbett, the Republican running for governor against Democrat Dan Onorato, have about \$3 for each one of their Democratic counterparts.

This is not good news in a year that is trending against the party in power, namely the Democrats.

our feet on the ground.

Democrat Fern Kaufman is an open lesbian running in Pennsylvania's 26th legislative district for state representative. She ran two years ago and, as a novice, lost by the slimmest of margins. Her district now has more Democrats than Republicans. If she wins, she would be the first openly LGBT person in the state legislature. How strong is her chance? The Democratic legislative political caucus has targeted her for assistance — a major move. And we should be supporting her. She, as we've said before, has all the qualifications an LGBT candidate needs to be a credible, and winning, candidate.

And finally, state Sen. Stewart Greenleaf (R-12th Dist.). He's chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and votes against this community at every possible chance. He has a strong opponent in Ruth Damsker and, if funded, her campaign could change the course of LGBT politics in Pennsylvania. Defeating a sitting chairperson would make every Republican in the state take his/her head out of the ground.

There is no doubt that most of us will be voting for these candidates, so that leaves two questions. First, how to mobilize our community to get out the vote, and second, where do we prioritize our funds?

Mark Segal the publisher of Philadelphia Gay News (PGN). He can be reached at mark@epgn.com.

The Healing Power of Music

by Jere Douglas

In the disastrous year of 2008, I suffered a devastating episode/stroke that left me senseless and helpless and very afraid. As the year passed by and recovery began for me, we moved into a new home and I began to look at my life, where I've been and where I was at that time. Taking a live evaluation, thinking my life was over, I finally went back to the thing I love most in life, playing the clarinet.

Well, a disparity of thought at the time as I was just beginning to talk again in a perceptual way and was not totally functioning at the time, but I picked up the horn anyway and began a journey that I continue to this day. The first notes were insanely bad, squeaks, squawks and something horrendous. However, as I continued each day to do a little more, I began to get enthused, I had a focus point in my life again and something to train the brain to center and find that place of solace and solitude in the vibration of the reed against my lips and the wonderful feeling of accomplishment with each passing day.

I did not have a physical therapist and being the individualist I am, pushed

Each day became a chore dealing with these issues, fears, anger at myself and other aspects seemed to be moving slowly, but with persistence I knew I could and would be a lot better. Suddenly, a flash of light went off in my pea brain and it occurred to me that the scales were becoming more commonplace to me and the etudes that I could hardly see were coming into focus, and thus began the major journey of recovery.

Disability? I think we are only disabled as we wish to be. While some people are not able to overcome their disability, I was blessed with the healing power of music and the mentors that shared this great gift with me.. Sining in choirs is excellent speech therapy.

As a stroke Victor, The Journey Continues!



Through the Looking Glass

by Alice Melott

An open letter to all my self-proclaimed "conservative" friends

Specifically anybody who by today's standards considers themselves any combination of ultra-conservative, Tea Party, far right-wing, neocon, fundamentalist, religious right, and also my friend. I'm writing to you.

I'm confused. Are you what you say or what you do?

You aren't a racist. I know that because you have friends and colleagues of other races and I've seen you be loving and charming and delightful to them.

You don't support profit for profit's sake and you're not an anti-environmentalist. I know that because you're appalled by the BP oil leak nightmare in the Gulf and what it is doing to the places where you and your family love to vacation and have made so many memories.

You don't blame the poor and disenfranchised for their lot in life. I know that because you volunteer your time to causes that help others.

keep quoting racist, profiteering, selfish, solipsistic, isolationist, war-mongering bigots?

Why is it so important to you to keep that Fox-News-Glenn-Beck-Rush-Limbaugh-Sarah-Palin hate machine going when all your really personal choices - who you love and what you do - bear no resemblance to them?

Unless I'm wrong.

Do you use the N word in your head? Do you still own oil stock and do a secret happy dance when you get your quarterly dividend check? Do you believe people less fortunate than you are spiritually inferior and deserve whatever happens to them? Do you advocate closing our borders to everybody except your housekeeper, Canadians, and caucasian Europeans? Do you believe in your heart of hearts that people who don't belong to your place of worship are going to Hell or, at least, not to Heaven? Do you think we should eschew freedom of religion for sects outside the Judaeo-Christian umbrella? Is it okay with you that we continue killing Islamic civilians because they are,

more, I began to get enthused, I had a focus point in my life again and something to train the brain to center and find that place of solace and solitude in the vibration of the reed against my lips and the wonderful feeling of accomplishment with each passing day.

I did not have a physical therapist and being the individualist I am, pushed myself to do better and to figure out how to come back to a performance standard I dearly treasure.

Frustrations come and go, but I keep at it. Scales, Scales in Thirds (Thank You Dr. Gholson), Fingers and finger movement (Thank You Leon Russianoff), Musical Integrity (Thank You Alan Balter) and a wonderful discipline with attention to every detail of the practice and working through problems with the fingers and the vision (Thank You Mr. Marcellus). At the time, my eyes would not focus on the notes themselves and were still floating around the page and my thought process's were here and there. As time progressed, I became adamant with myself and pushed to achieve that focus of sound, timbre and smoothness of the tongue movement and the shape of the wind column, working very meticulously on even the slightest perception of imperfection in my playing.



Jere Douglas is the Principle Clarinetist, Collage Chamber Ensemble and a member, The Houston Cecilia's Chamber Choir, Tenor

The Houston Cecilia, a selective volunteer chamber choir, was founded in the summer of 2010 by St. Philip Director of Music Justin Smith. This year marks thier inaugural season. In addition to this concert, they will also sing Magnificats by Bach and Arvo Part in December and present a staged version of The Mikado in April 2011. The Houston Cecilia is always accepting inquiries for auditions: you can contact its director, Justin Smith, at St. Philip Presbyterian Church.

Coming up next year, the Houston Cecilia's will be doing Mikado and the music of Benjamin Brittan and others.

ronmentalist. I know that because you're appalled by the BP oil leak nightmare in the Gulf and what it is doing to the places where you and your family love to vacation and have made so many memories.

You don't blame the poor and disenfranchised for their lot in life. I know that because you volunteer your time to causes that help others.

You support our democratic form of government and the spending required to provide us with essential services. I know that because your kids go to school here, you drive on the roads and fly in planes and eat the food that's trucked in, you've been to the ER at least once and the library dozens of times. You probably vote and you might even walk in the park every now and then. I'm pretty sure you use electricity and water. You may even have accepted help from the government after a disaster.

You don't believe in locking down our borders to our neighbors. I know that because you continue to employ undocumented Mexicans to clean your home and maintain your landscape, and you have several Canadian friends you enjoy visiting freely.

You aren't a war-monger. I know that because you study and quote the teachings of Jesus Christ.

You aren't a bigot. I know that because you love me. So why do you

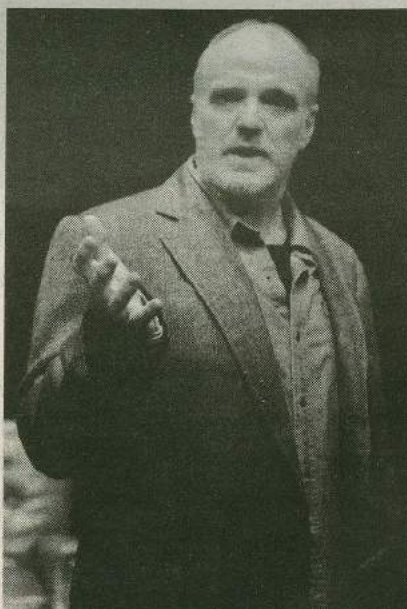
everybody except your housekeeper, Canadians, and caucasian Europeans? Do you believe in your heart of hearts that people who don't belong to your place of worship are going to Hell or, at least, not to Heaven? Do you think we should eschew freedom of religion for sects outside the Judaeo-Christian umbrella? Is it okay with you that we continue killing Islamic civilians because they are, after all, Muslims? When the curtain is drawn in the booth and there's no one watching, would you vote to allow me the right to marry the person I love? Tell the truth: Have you ever said, "She's gay, but..."?

I only bring these things up because I've heard you quote public people who frequently say them. If they accurately reflect your views, then by all means, speak up! I would hate for you to be judged unfairly.

So tell me, please.

Who are you really?

Alice Melott is a Galveston essayist (<http://amelott.wordpress.com>), real estate broker (<http://alicemelottproperties.com>), and storm chronicler (<http://click2houston.com/galvestonafterike>), among other things. Join her online at <http://facebook.com/alicethewriter> and <http://facebook.com/alicetherealtor>.



James Black as 'A Man' in the Alley Theatre's production of *St. Nicholas*. weaves a dark tale of life as a servant the vampires. ~ Photo by Jann Whaley

St. Nicholas

reviewed by Deborah Moncrief Bell

The moon is near fullness and clouds race across its face as I enter The Alley Theatre to see a performance called *St. Nicholas*. It seemed the perfect setting for a tale about vampires which I knew the play was about.

Lights go up on actor James Black in his role as 'a man'. He is sitting in what looks to be a study, only minimally so. A large chair, a small table with a lamp make up the stark set. He entered carrying a bottle of Scotch which he promptly brings to serve up to himself.

This man was a theater critic he tells us. A not very nice one at that. He is rather a bully, getting off on his power to make or break careers. He thinks a little too highly of himself. His life has become a bore with no romance left in his mar-

Two on The Aisle

by Bill O'Roarke

FOO 13!

FOO! 13 (Theatre Southwest through July 31) refers to the thirteenth annual **Festival Of Originals** – five twenty minute or so (actually most a little longer) original plays. All of these plays won Theater Southwest's play contest to be produced as a part of this evening. There were, I am told, some 400 plus plays in the contest this year.

I went, even though I do not like to hold unpaid acting up to too harsh a light, because you get precious few chances in Houston to see any original playwrighting on stage. Our theaters, like most regional theaters, cannot or do not want to take the chance on premiering a play. It can be an extremely expensive thing to do.

Unfortunately, of the five playwrights represented this year, only one is a local Houstonian and one splits his time between here and L.A. I had hoped for more locals, but them's the breaks.

You have to pity the people who read all of those plays. To think that many, many of them were worse than the first two presented here is not a pleasant thought.

The first one, *Books on Tape* by William Missouri Downs (of Richards Park, WY) sets up a novel premise. A man who makes his living as the voice for recorded books is worried that he is not original enough. Yet this sad sack goes, nearly every afternoon, to look at his tapes on sale in a book-

Yes, letting your influences be a bit obvious is a step that fledgling playwrights go through. It's seems to be a necessary thing not to be skipped on the road of development. So, no, do not think any less of these playwrights for doing so.

There's another developmental stage, too. You'll see a short show which is an extended monologue. Someone onstage is doing most of the talking and they are telling the audience the story rather than showing it happening. The next play, *A Gentler Place* by Jeff Carter (of San Francisco) is like that. However, this is a very well done one. The supporting characters – played by Kathy Basch and John H. Smith – are more well rounded than one often sees. And it's fairly easy to follow the monologue, at least as done by Russell Prince. There are emotional payoffs and everything. Lisa Schofield has cast this part perhaps a bit younger than I think it should have been, but A. That happens sometimes in community theater and B. It works. It might have even come out a bit more stereotypical my way.

The last play, *Every Parent's Friend* by Ed Vela (our Houston man out there in L.A. searching for TV writing work) is an extended **Saturday Night Live** skit. But, again, it works. It's quite enjoyable and if this were a musical, you'd leave the theater whistling. Fun, fun, fun! Leave the Tbird right there, thank you, Daddy!

Again, a large cast, White, McQuarrie, Dunlap, Brock, Brooke, and Samuelson, this time directed by Trevor Cone assisted by Grace Cone.

So what did we get for our ticket money? Well, we got two new playwrights to watch out for more of (Higbee and Carter) and a fun time from another

Lights go up on actor James Black in his role as 'a man'. He is sitting in what looks to be a study, only minimally so. A large chair, a small table with a lamp make up the stark set. He entered carrying a bottle of Scotch which he promptly brings to serve up to himself.

This man was a theater critic he tells us. A not very nice one at that. He is rather a bully, getting off on his power to make or break careers. He thinks a little too highly of himself. His life has become a bore with no romance left in his marriage or even much companionship. He is not exactly estranged, but a removed from his children, not knowing how to be close to them.

One night he sees a young actress in a performance of *Salome* and is entranced by her. It is in his misguided pursuit of her that he comes to meet a vampire.

Black, in his 22nd year with The Alley is brilliant in this solo role which he also directed. While I expected the mystery and darkness of the piece I was surprised by the depth of humor. The bits about journalists and critics certainly hit my funny bone

What a delicious role this is as Black relates the mysterious narrative. I have to agree with the New York Times which said, "Like the best of fairy tales, spooky campfire recitations and the self-aggrandizing myths spun in barrooms, this shaggy vampire story touches on primal concerns beneath its lurid surface." You are right there with this man as tells his tale of how he came to be a servant to the vampires.

continued on page 14

Page 12

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The first one, *Books on Tape* by William Missouri Downs (of Richards Park, WY) sets up a novel premise. A man who makes his living as the voice for recorded books is worried that he is not original enough. Yet this sad sack goes, nearly every afternoon, to look at his tapes on sale in a bookstore. There he runs into a woman who escapes her own originality as much as possible by listening to those books. Their interests at first appear to be in common, which sticks both of them with a very bad 'blindish' date and Suedeane Holmes and Scott Holmes (directed by Kathy Drum) with some very nearly unplayable dialogue.

The second play *Little Tricks* by Carl L. Williams (one of the Houstonians!) aspires to be rather like *Gaslight* and very nearly makes it. This makes for some actual plot – you know, things happening in right there in front of you. But is the world ready for another *Gaslight*, no matter how well Kelly Walker, Jay Menchaca and John Stevens, directed by Malinda L. Beckham, do it? They didn't quite convince us.

The last play in the first act, *How Can I Tell If It's Love?* has plot, snappy dialogue and style. It's what if we looked at today's thoughts about hetero love as if we were doing *Reefer Madness*? The large cast – Stodghill, Tucker, Biltoft, McCormick and Spaeth, directed by James Reed, carries good material by Rand Higbee (of Red Wing, MN) off very well, indeed. Enough so that we willing stayed for the second act.

TV writing work) is an extended **Saturday Night Live** skit. But, again, it works. It's quite enjoyable and if this were a musical, you'd leave the theater whistling. Fun, fun, fun! Leave the Tbird right there, thank you, Daddy!

Again, a large cast, White, McQuarrie, Dunlap, Brock, Brooke, and Samuelson, this time directed by Trevor Cone assisted by Grace Cone.

So what did we get for our ticket money? Well, we got two new playwrights to watch out for more of (Higbee and Carter) and a fun time from another who has been produced around town before, Vela. And that's a lot of value for your quarter, in my book.

Theater Information

FOO! 13 Theatre Southwest, 8944-A Clarkcrest, 77063, 713-661-9505, theatresouthwest.org .

Openings

Moon Over Buffalo, Texas Rep, July 29 – August 22 – good Ken Ludwig farce!

Bill O'Rourke has been actively involved in live theater for the last 45 years. Currently, he is the Artistic Director of a children's theater which tours schools, libraries and private parties all over Harris County - Thunderbird Theater, www.TbirdTh.com . He and his partner, Loyal Kletzien, will be celebrating their 12th anniversary in September.

The Alley Theatre

HYPE - Houston Young Playwrights Exchange
works by Houston Teens
August 13 through August 15

New Season announced at www.alleytheatre.org

Cooking Capers with Dr. Dave



Hi ladies and gentlemen,

I hope everyone had a safe, fun fourth of July! It's hot down on the island but we still have waters free of the oil spill. So it is a good time to enjoy some Flounder.

Ah life is good. And for those of your who enjoy cheese, my Blue Cheese Soup with Bacon is a good way to extend those fourth of July festivities. Enjoy!

Blue Cheese and Bacon Potage

6 Tbs. sweet butter
2 Cups chopped yellow onions
1 Leek, white part only, well cleaned and finely sliced
3 Celery ribs, chopped
3 Carrots, peeled and chopped
1 Medium-size potato, peeled and diced

to the pot, pour in the rest of the liquid, and simmer over medium heat. Taste for seasoning. Ladle into bowls, garnish with bacon crumbs, and serve immediately.

Now if there is one thing Lesbians and Gay boys don't relish, it's the idea of getting crabs, but down here on the Gulf Coast, that concept has a whole new meaning, like when they're stuffed in freshly caught Gulf Coast flounder! Enjoy it, no scratching comes with it.

Gulf Coast Crab-Stuffed Flounder

1/4 Cup butter
2 Tbs. chopped green pepper
1/4 Cup chopped onion
1 Cup Gulf fresh crabmeat (I buy mine already cooked and cleaned on the Harbor side of the island,) but canned works fine too
1 tsp. chopped parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 Tbs lemon juice
Tabasco sauce to taste
6 one-pound flounders, backbones removed

In a saucepan heat the butter, add the green pepper and onion and

Six strategies for staying safe (and private) on Facebook

by Alice Melott

I keep hearing people recount horror stories that a friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend's dentist read in Paranoid Online Weekly (mailed to you for privacy purposes) saying that being on Facebook is tantamount to handing your keys, Social Security number, credit cards, safe deposit key, bank PIN, stock certificates, bearer bonds, G spot, blood type, and personal diary over to all the thieves of the world, then thanking them for the opportunity.

If you have ever left a key under your mat, this one's for you.

1. Your Profile (Wall) is your living room. You don't let people you don't know in unless they come highly recommended by someone you trust. And don't get hung up on just not answering the door when they knock. It's like the Fuller Brush Man listening to your conversations with his ear and a tin can to the door. Once somebody requests you (knocks on your door), they can see your News Feeds until you Accept or Ignore them, so don't hide behind the curtains. Answer the door and tell them

sive. People will be begging to be your Friend!)

4. Friends of friends (little f) are the people your friends bring to your house, but you may never see again. You might want them to see your mutual Friend's birthday pictures, but mostly this is too big a web for safety. Think carefully about this because if you choose it, you will be "sleeping with" everybody your Friends choose, and truth be told, they might not all share your high standards.

5. There is no reason to ever use the Everyone setting. Never. Period.

6. If you want to do business on Facebook, put up a Page (formerly Fan page). That's where you can make your business contact information available to Everyone without worries. If you do that, you can stop accepting Friend requests from business associates you don't really know. And as an added bonus, all your Friends won't have to listen to all your business talk, which clutters up their News Feed!

If you approach this whole FB thing from the home versus office perspective and apply the same safety and privacy boundaries to your cyber community that you do to your bricks 'n mortar real life, you can cancel that subscription to Paranoid

way to extend those four July festivities. Enjoy!

Blue Cheese and Bacon Potage

6 Tbs. sweet butter
2 Cups chopped yellow onions
1 Leek, white part only, well cleaned and finely sliced
3 Celery ribs, chopped
3 Carrots, peeled and chopped
1 Medium-size potato, peeled and diced
1 Cup dry white wine (a Pinot Grigio works well)
3 Cups chicken stock
3/4 pound imported Roquefort or other blue cheese
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
6 bacon strips, sauteed crisp and grumbled for a garnish

Melt the butter in a heavy dutch oven. Add the onions, leeks, celery and carrots and cook covered over low heat until the vegetables are tender and lightly colored, about 25 minutes. Add the potato, wine, and stock and bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, partially covered, until very tender, about another 20 minutes. Remove the soup from the heat and crumble in the cheese; stir until the cheese has melted into the soup, then pour the soup through a strainer, reserving the liquid. Transfer the solids to the bowl of a food processor. Add 1 cup of cooking stock and process until smooth. Return the soup

mine already cooked and cleaned on the Harbor side of the island,) but canned works fine too
1 tsp. chopped parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 Tbs lemon juice
Tabasco sauce to taste
6 one-pound flounders, backbones removed

In a saucepan heat the butter, add the green pepper and onion and cook until the onion is transparent. Add the crabmeat, parsley, salt, pepper, the 1 Tablespoon of lemon juice and Tabasco sauce and mix well. Stuff the flounders loosely with the mixture and close with skewers and string. Arrange fish on a buttered baking dish and season with pepper and salt. Broil slowly on both sides in a preheated broiler, basting frequently with lemon juice and additional butter until the fish is a golden brown. Hmmmmmmmmm good!



know in unless they come highly recommended by someone you trust. And don't get hung up on just not answering the door when they knock. It's like the Fuller Brush Man listening to your conversations with his ear and a tin can to the door. Once somebody requests you (knocks on your door), they can see your News Feeds until you Accept or Ignore them, so don't hide behind the curtains. Answer the door and tell them to go away. (No, they won't be notified. Just roll with the metaphors.)

2. Your News Feed (Home) is the CNN ticker tape crawl. It's where you get news highlights, but Facebook is better than real life because you only get the news about people you Like. Furthermore, if somebody's posts routinely annoy you, but you can't defriend them for karmic reasons, you can Hide them and they'll never know! (Shhh, don't tell them that.)

3. Friends (big F) are people whose homes you have or might someday be invited to visit. You know where they live in the event a spoon goes missing after a dinner party. At a minimum, you should be able to pick them out of a line-up. Apply this litmus test to your Friend list and boot anybody who doesn't meet the minimum criteria. (Don't be worried about your numbers going down. Remember what your mother warned about not being easy. You'll be popular, discerning, and exclu-

business associates you don't really know. And as an added bonus, all your Friends won't have to listen to all your business talk, which clutters up their News Feed!

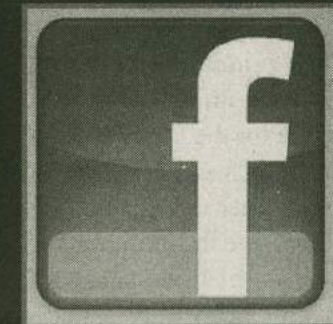
If you approach this whole FB thing from the home versus office perspective and apply the same safety and privacy boundaries to your cyber community that you do to your bricks 'n mortar real life, you can cancel that subscription to Paranoid Online Weekly and subscribe to my blog instead. ;c)

So how many friends you got now?

See Alice's new column *Through the Looking Glass* on page 11

*We invite you to become
our Friend on Facebook*

*Follow the happenings of
the
Houston GLBT Commu-
nity Online!*





Nose in a Book

Review by Jone Devlin

New Blood – Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation by Chris Bobel

For any one out there who has gone down the traditional path of menstruation, the drill is all too familiar. The little pamphlets and “girls only open forum” discussions as a pre-teen; technical talks about hormones and how ovulation plays into reproduction (read: teen pregnancy) as you get into the middle and high school years; and of course the non-stop marketing from manufacturers of pads and tampons.

In her new book, activist Chris Bobel explores the facts and myths about menstruation and the way it has been and continues to be used in the context of feminism, corporatism, and society’s attitudes and ideas about gender.

Bobel researched this work extensively through both interviews and by going back into history to discuss menstruation’s place in the (past and current) feminist and lesbian movements. Menstruation, according to Bobel, has been tied into many issues, from environmentalism to gender identity, yet it was rarely if ever celebrated on its own.

Of course, many women’s groups feel they have bigger concerns than men-

ues to aggressively push relief from “the curse” on women and young girls.

Bobel’s arguments are compelling, as she discusses everything from the additional regulations put on the FemCare industry in the wake of the Rely scandal (very few), to communes of naturalists who actually offer elaborate celebrations for the first periods of their daughters (with decidedly mixed results), to how the ability (or lack thereof) to have a period has been used as a club by which to further marginalize transgendered individuals.

The author also looks with an honest eye at the fact that menstruation activists are predominantly white, middle class women.

Well written, interesting, and meticulously researched, Bobel is easily able to take what many would consider a fringe topic and make it mainstream. She also is able to smoothly transition the thoughts, ideas, and issues of menstruation through each generation while at the same time pointing out many of the contradictions inherent therein.

The pictures in the book are also compelling, from Bella Abzug wearing a hat made out of discarded plastic tampon dispensers to shock art and comics from back in the early days of the women’s

St. Nicholas continued from Pg.12

You must understand that these are not the vampires of old European tales or of the variety seen in countless variations on film. Those movies only used plots to get you to buy more popcorn.

No, these are **real** vampires, ones with real power. They can make a man work for them to procure their nourishment, make him a servant that does their bidding and to not even care about returning to his former life..

Black totally makes you believe he is that man and that what he experienced was real, or was it? He takes you into his confidence and you can believe or not.

One can only speculate on why this play is entitled *St. Nicholas*, Because it is a myth much like the tale of Santa Claus? Old European tales created that character as well.

Tony Award-winning Irish playwright Conor McPherson’s script is deep on many levels. He painted a vivid story with his words and *Black* brings it to life.

It almost makes me sad to men-

HEALTHY LIVING GLBT Health News of Note

Want to improve your health and well being this summer? Well then, how about some “Eco-therapy”, the exposure to mother nature shown to improve health and well being. Studies already show that living in the country is better for your physical and mental health than urban living. But as not everyone can live in the woods, to get your own Eco-therapy boost all you may need is a room with a view. Post surgical patients who had hospital rooms overlooking trees and woods did. They had shorter hospital stays and required less medication and patient care as a result. And what about prisoners whose cells overlooked woods and farmland? A study showed they were significantly healthier than those with cells overlooking prison yards. The Journal of Environmental Psychology revealed that kids placed in rooms with views of trees and who walked in parks improved their physical and mental attitudes more than kids placed in windowless rooms and then walked through city streets. Another Eco-therapy study, by the British organization MIND, compared a walk in the woods or by a lake to the benefit of taking a stroll through an indoor mall and showed that the former alleviated depression and enhanced self-esteem. In fact, a significant number of the mall walkers felt more depressed after their stroll. So for an Eco-therapy pick-me-up, spend a few quiet minutes enjoying something green. Try sitting on your balcony, in your backyard, or take a nice stroll in the woods or a park. You won’t

titudes and ideas about gender.

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Of course, many women's groups feel they have bigger concerns than menstruation activism. There are issues of pay disparity, reproductive choice, and health care. And yet, Bobel argues, almost every one of these issues can be tied, in some way, to our culture's basic concept of how menstruation is used to define, and in many cases, marginalize, women.

For instance, women are often derided as too "emotionally unstable" to have high powered positions or make their own reproductive or health choices because of how they "can get" during "that time of the month." Menstruation was even used as an argument to keep women out of combat.

Feminine care (FemCare) manufacturers, meanwhile, are using menstruating women as guinea pigs, testing everything from the infamous Rely tampons (responsible for the serious illnesses and even deaths of women in the Eighties) to pills and other devices that can completely eliminate the monthly cycle. The fact that most of these suppressive options haven't been fully tested doesn't seem to matter, as the industry contin-

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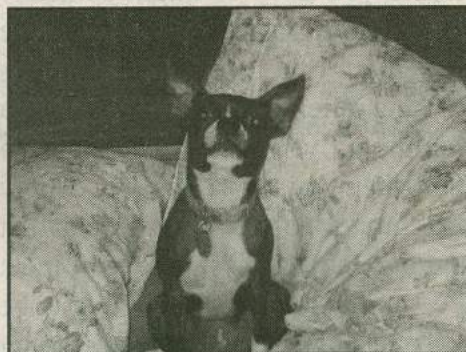
The pictures in the book are also compelling, from Bella Abzug wearing a hat made out of discarded plastic tampon dispensers to shock art and comics from back in the early days of the women's movement.

While this book might not be the first thing a reader pulls off the shelf when they are researching feminism and women's history, "New Blood" is nonetheless a valid and valuable addition to both of those collections, and a fascinating read to boot.

New Blood – Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation

by Chris Bobel is published by Rutgers University Press and is available on line.

Reviewers Grade: 5 out of 5 stars.



Sadie Mae does not read books,
she eats them!

this play is entitled *St. Nicholas*. Because it is a myth much like the tale of Santa Claus? Old European tales created that character as well.

Tony Award-winning Irish playwright Conor McPherson's script is deep on many levels. He painted a vivid story with his words and *Black* brings it to life.

It almost makes me sad to mention the one thing that distracted me, which is the lack of a strong Irish accent. Now, *Black* certainly has a touch of the brogue and it may be just enough because admittedly, the monologue may have been hard to understand if it were any deeper. I worked for an Irishman who had lived most of his life in the United States. He was a professor and highly educated as well. Even after so many years he still retained a rich Irish accent in his speech although it only came out in phrases and some expressions. So that is a small matter.

Recommended for mature audiences, violent sexual content and strong adult language.

St. Nicholas continues through August 8 on the Neuhaus Stage..

The Alley
615 Texas Ave.
713.220.5700
www.alleytheatre.org

then walked through city streets. Another Eco-therapy study, by the British organization MIND, compared a walk in the woods or by a lake to the benefit of taking a stroll through an indoor mall and showed that the former alleviated depression and enhanced self-esteem. In fact, a significant number of the mall walkers felt more depressed after their stroll. So for an Eco-therapy pick-me-up, spend a few quiet minutes enjoying something green. Try sitting on your balcony, in your backyard, or take a nice stroll in the woods or a park. You won't regret it.

A variation on Eco-therapy is "Horticultural therapy" such as gardening. Studies have shown gardening lowers blood pressure and reduces stress. Rikers Island now uses gardening for pre-release prisoners and veterans' hospitals are using it to help vets recover from mental and physical trauma. One L.A. vet hospital even combines "Horticultural Therapy" with "Art Therapy" through a garden/art installation that produces strawberry preserves sold online (veteranspreserves.net). And in Europe they are establishing "care farms" to help people with mental health issues. Among the reasons why dropping down on your knees, or on all fours (giggle) in a garden is therapeutic may be mycobacterium vaccae, a common soil bacteria. According to the American Society for Microbiology, exposure to it may raise serotonin levels and sharpen the senses by enhancing neuron growth. So to relax, or to have some fun, try getting down and dirty in a garden.

www.healthylivingnews.org



Groovelines

by DJ Chris Allen

Howdy disco citizens!

It's time for your weekly dose of Groovelines – your iFriendly source for what's hot and hip in the land of electronic dance music and beyond.

Over at iTunes, and hot for digital download, is the latest mix cd from ATB – *Sunset Beach*. What a release! 10 bux gets ya 27 tracks and 2 hour plus continuous dj mixes. Again, what an album! This ass kicking compilation features hits from Tiesto, Mylo, Late Night Alumni, George Acosta, and more. What a deal! Preview All online at iTunes today.

While recently digging around the iTunes site I came across a booty of dance remixes of top 40 pop tracks that really impressed me. On the list were incredibly well produced covers of songs like *Carry Out*, originally released by Timberland & Justin Timberlake, *Airplanes* by BOP, and even the new Maroon 5 track *Misery*. Holy eff. This stuff is actually really really good. The mixes are dj friendly, on target to the originals, and 100 percent pro-

and interesting release comes to us from The Muppets actually – a video featuring the Swedish Chef called *Popcorn*. This vid highlights the classic synth dance track *Popcorn* by Gershon Kingsly released way before any of us could most likely barely read. L M F A O material for sure. Great stuff. You'll find those floor fillers and more online at iTunes.

You can hear me play these mentioned hits and more weekly at Meteor & JR's in Houston and at Halo in Bryan/College Station. Be sure to tune into Hypersonic Radio every Saturday night at 10 pm to catch Groovelines Aloud on 101X in Austin. Stream it live from the web at hypersonicradio.com or from your iPhone using the free 101X app. For info on all upcoming DJ C.A. events and happenings head over to djchrisallen.com. Stalk my every move at twitter.com/groovelines, MySpace.com/djchrisallen, and facebook.com/djchrisallenofficial. And finally, always feel free to e-mail me directly at djca.groovelines@yahoo.com.



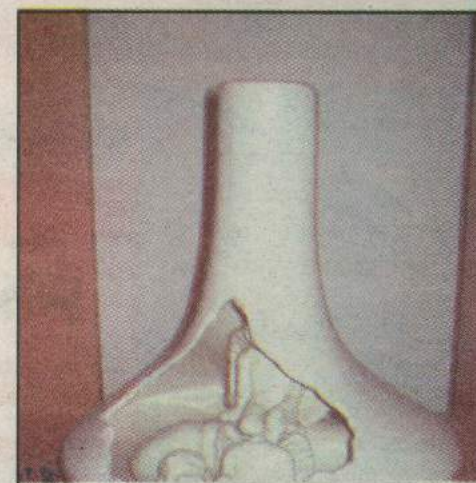
For Art's Sake

by Eugene De Los Reyes

Local artist in Midtown, Rob Baker knows no limits when it comes to creativity, he has been creating art for the past thirty-five years. With no formal training other than High school he has become an amazing artist.

A self-taught free thinker like him, it is hard to believe that in his senior year high school he was given a failing grade by his art teacher, while he still managed to obtain the best of show that same year.

Rob Baker has merged both photo and clay into his art, which he calls PhotoClay Fusion. His inspirations for this medium come from the everyday. A simple crack on the street can stir his creativity and create a series of pieces just in his head. Plus like any other man, sex is always popping into mind. His latest is definitely going to have all of us in awe.



Artist Rob Baker uses diverse styles and medium in his work. He recently shared with the GEM's Eugene De Los Reyes his philos-

While recently digging around the iTunes site I came across a booty of dance remixes of top 40 pop tracks that really impressed me. On the list were incredibly well produced covers of songs like **Carry Out**, originally released by Timberland & Justin Timberlake, **Airplanes** by BOP, and even the new Maroon 5 track **Misery**. Holy eff. This stuff is actually really really good. The mixes are dj friendly, on target to the originals, and 100 percent programmable to a mainstream audience. The label responsible for all this madness is Power Music Inc. A backburner label for sure. Incredibly reminiscent of the 90's cover labels like ZYX and Klone. Gotta say, these guys know what they are doing. I strongly suggest you check them out. Learn all you can at www.powermusic.com and consider the subject covered. LOL!

Also diggin' the good vibes and kick ass grooves being offered up on iTunes from **Rebound** by Lori Michaels – the Giuseppe D Original Mix, **Loving You Is Easy** by Sarah McLachlan – the Dave Aude Club Mix, **Stereo Love** from Edward Maya & Vika Jigulina, **Body Shots** from Kaci Battaglia, Dirty Dancing by Enrique Iglesias, DJ **Got Us Falling In Love** from Usher & Pitbull, and my new favorite – **Beautiful Monster** from Ne-Yo. For an RnB artist Ne-Yo sure has the club vibe stuck in his head. Another incredibly entertaining

from the web at hyperpersonalradio.com or from your iPhone using the free 101X app. For info on all upcoming DJ C.A. events and happenings head over to djchrisallen.com. Stalk my every move at twitter.com/groovelines, MySpace.com/djchrisallen, and facebook.com/djchrisallenofficial. And finally, always feel free to e-mail me directly at djca.groovelines@yahoo.com.

Deep in the heart of Texas, that is the Groovelines for now. You know the golden rule boys and girls - play it loud and disturb the neighbors! The scene can only grow and thrive if we participate in it folks. It exists because we make it so. Be active, support your local talent. Buy, don't share.

Remember, life might not always be the party you had hoped for, but while you're here you might as well dance.



Chris Allen is one of Houston's most popular DJs. He spins at some of the finest clubs in town ~ photo by Tim Stuart

still managed to obtain the best of show that same year.

Rob Baker has merged both photo and clay into his art, Which he calls PhotoClay Fusion. His inspirations for this medium come from the everyday. A simple crack on the street can stir his creativity and create a series of pieces just in his head. Plus like any other man, sex is always popping into mind. His latest is definitely going to have all of us in awe. Two hundred penises in photoclay fusion.

Rob says "when you strip away the Gucci, Prada, or Goodwill, we are all just a bunch of dicks."

In this project surprisingly, a lot of straight guys were really cool about doing their part in the name of art.

For the future artists who will soon be spreading their wings, Rob gives this advice, "be tenacious on what your passion is, to reach that goal."

With the confidence that Rob ex-humes I'm sure a show of erotica art is inevitability coming this fall, For his PG13 ceramics and photoclay fusion, look up www.etsy.com. There you will find art suitable for all ages.

Do you know of a GLBT community artist we should feature? Let us know at:

montrosegem@yahoo.com



Artist Rob Baker uses diverse styles and medium in his work. He recently shared with the GEM's Eugene De Los Reyes his philosophy towards art and a bit about his creative process. Some of his work was too graphic to print in this paper. ~ Photos by Eugene De Los Reyes



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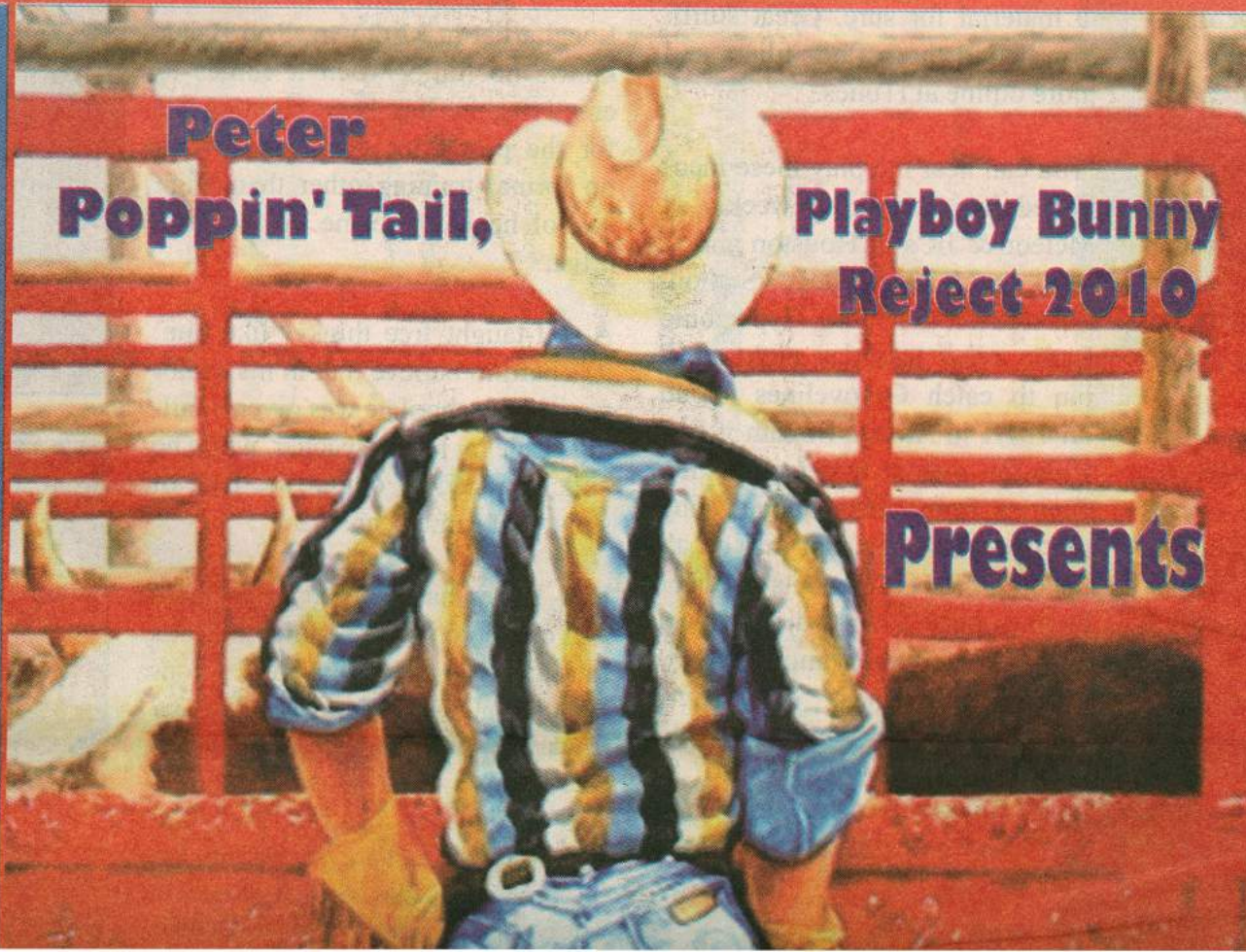
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