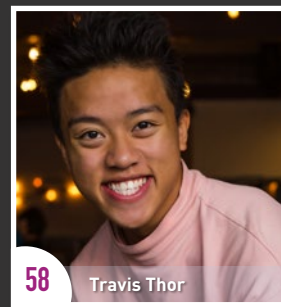


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# HEALTH SPECIAL

A leadership roundtable on **LGBTQ HEALTH CARE**

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

## DEAR QUEER WHITE PEOPLE

New series attempts to clear the air and some common misunderstandings.

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## NOTHING TO HIDE

Queer TV pioneer David Runyon's lasting legacy is all on tape.

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# BUILT TO LAST

**Kjersten Bakke**

Bakke Athletics & Hybrid Athletic Club's owner takes a customized approach to wellness.

November / December 2018



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“Every gay and lesbian person who has been lucky enough to survive the turmoil of growing up is a survivor. Survivors always have an obligation to those who will face the same challenges.”

- Bob Paris; Author, LGBTQ Activist, Bodybuilder, and Former Mr. Universe

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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

Patrick Farabaugh  
Publisher / Editor-in-Chief

Emily Mills  
Editor

Virginia Harrison  
Copy Editor

Contributing Writers

- Vivienne Andersen
- Kjersten Bakke
- Jim Chiolino
- Abby Churchill
- Stacy Harbaugh
- Owen Karcher
- Scott Seyforth
- Gary Tipler
- Travis Thor

Contributing Artists

- Alaura Borealis
- Che Correa
- Ian DeGraft
- Samantha Dutcher
- Vanessa Tortolano
- Max Wendt
- Charles Wetzell

Business Manager

Matt Jelinek

Webmaster

Genesis Keefer

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EDITOR'S NOTE EMILY MILLS

## STAND UP, BE COUNTED

**I'M WRITING THIS IN ADVANCE** of the Mid-term Elections on November 6 (I hope you voted and/or didn't face undue barriers to voting!). By the time you're likely to be reading this issue, the results will be in. So much hinges on what happens, and the whole thing is more than a little nerve-wracking.

Though one election is never the end-all, be-all of our civic duty or political climate, I have hope for the pendulum to swing back toward saner, more humane policies and people. We're at the point now where there is no more time to waste. There is too much work to be done, too many people's lives and well-being on the line, and a ticking clock when it comes to how long we have before we have to change tack from trying to save our planet to enduring an apocalypse (yeah, I said it).

It's not all doom and gloom, though! Despite the very real trials and tribulations at the national level, and despite a very conservative political climate at the capitol here in Madison, Wisconsin has recently seen a number of crucial victories in the realm of LGBTQ rights. We cover the two major decisions in favor of transgender specific health care coverage in our Connect opener, and Attorney Abby Churchill delves into the precedents that contributed to Ash Whitaker's win in the Kenosha School District for trans and nonbinary students.

Progress related to our access to quality and informed health care is highlighted by the incredible medical professionals who so graciously agreed to take part in our first-ever LGBTQ health care roundtable discussion. It was a long and fascinating conversation, so much so that we couldn't possibly fit the full transcript into this issue. You can read an edited version here, or the full transcript online. They also talk about the very real barriers to care and further work that needs to be done (that they are doing!) for full equity to be achieved.

That seems to be the theme these days, and a healthy/holistic way of viewing our condition: Gratitude for and celebration of the hard-won progress we've made. Acknowledgement of the disparities that still exist, and which groups are more impacted than others. Determination to continue the work for as long as it takes.

I continue to be inspired by the people who share their lives with us in this magazine, for the important and awesome work they do. Having the privilege to help share our diverse stories is one I promise to never take lightly—like the duty I have to cast my ballot, and to fight to make sure every citizen has that same access and right. ■



CORRECTION

In our May news report, *Pride, Police, and Protest*, we mistakenly said OutReach has organized the Pride parade for four years. The 2018 parade was their fifth year. Also, Ginger Baier is on OutReach's staff now as Trans Health Advocate, taking over for Darla Lannert.



CONTRIBUTORS



**DR. SAMI SCHALK** is an Assistant Professor of Gender & Women's Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned her BA in English (Creative Writing) and Women's Studies from Miami University in 2008, her MFA in Creative Writing (Poetry) from University of Notre Dame in 2010, and her PhD in Gender Studies from Indiana University in 2014. Dr. Schalk's interdisciplinary research focuses broadly on disability, race, and gender in contemporary American literature and culture, especially African American literature, speculative fiction, and feminist literature. On a personal level, Dr. Schalk identifies as a fat, femme, black, queer, cisgender, nondisabled, middle-class, polyamorous, body-positive, sex-positive, intersectional feminist woman.

**IAN DEGRAFF** is an editorial photographer based in Madison, Wisconsin specializing in lifestyle, travel, and agricultural story telling. He travels everywhere with a camera and light stand so he is always able to create his signature soulful moody lighting wherever he travels. After studying photojournalism at Western Kentucky University he moved back to Madison and lives with his macaw, beehive, and partner. Follow his work at iansteven.com.



**Jim Hartman Ins Agcy Inc**  
Jim Hartman, Agent  
5706 US Highway 51  
Bus: 608-838-4171  
Cell: 608-345-4885  
jim@jimhartman.com

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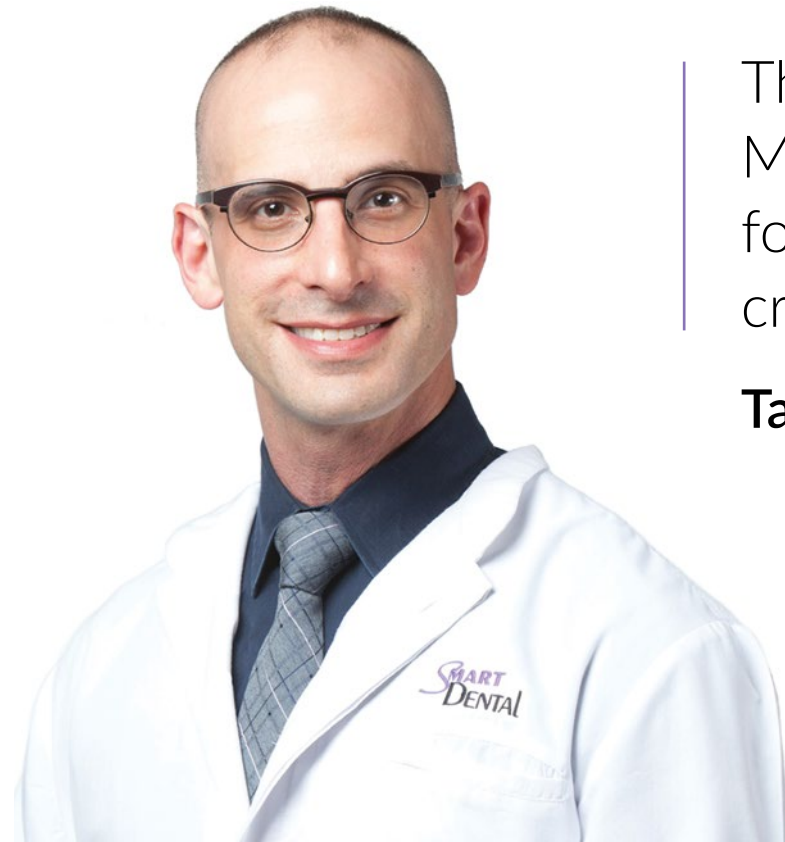


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David Koehler, Madison Community Foundation's VP of Donor Engagement, shares news that, Bill Wartmann (below), left one final gift to MCF through his estate: \$1 million to create a permanent endowment to benefit OutReach LGBT Community Center.



## A Million Reasons Why

A major gift will establish a permanent endowment to support OutReach's work in the Madison area LGBTQ community for decades to come.

ENDOWMENTS PHILANTHROPY LGBTQ ORGANIZATIONS

**LONGTIME PHILANTHROPIST BILL WARTMANN** passed away in June of this year, and, as it turns out, left one final gift to the community in his will. A \$1 million fund to establish a permanent endowment for OutReach LGBT Community Center was announced by the Madison Community Foundation at the center's annual awards banquet in October.

David Koehler, MCF's VP of Donor Engagement, shared news of the donation, which comes through MCF from Wartmann's estate.

"What this gift means is that every year, \$40-50,000 – and growing over time – will go to OutReach, helping create a community where the presence and contributions

of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are welcomed and celebrated; where intolerance is challenged and defeated; where justice prevails; and where civil rights of all people are valued and respected."

Wartmann left his own statement about why he chose to support OutReach with the gift, noting, "The reason I give this philanthropy is that, in a very simple manner, I was taught by my immigrant parents that you have to give back to the world."

Bill and wife Joyce supported many local efforts including music and the arts, Gifts for Kids, various humane societies including Friends of Noah, historical society ventures, plus many annual scholarships to



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Edgerton High School graduates. They also established major endowments at the UW-Madison School of Music and Fine Arts programs, including the Madison Early Music Festival. The Wartmann Endowment for the Performing Arts in Edgerton has become widely known for drawing renowned performers and productions.

Bill began his relationship with OutReach as the founder and co-facilitator of the LGBTQ Alanon group at the center in January 2008. Bill created the group specifically for LGBTQ people so the members could focus on recovery from addiction and not feel stigmatized about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

He later volunteered to fundraise for Out-

Reach, writing letters to donors on behalf of the center and hosting five successful fundraising events at his home in Edgerton. When OutReach moved to their new location in 2016, Bill donated \$20,000 to support moving expenses and to create a gender neutral bathroom for clients.

“Bill Wartmann’s legacy with OutReach is just one of the many examples of the generosity that he and his late wife Joyce provided to countless nonprofit organizations,” said Steve Starkey, OutReach’s Executive Director. “We will forever remember his generous, funny, outgoing, exuberant, eccentric spirit, and will miss his captivating personality.” ■

LEGAL HISTORY | SEX DISCRIMINATION | LGBTQ RIGHTS | TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE

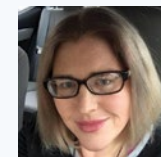
## Major Trans Rights Wins in Wisconsin

Two major court cases in the state were recently decided in favor of transgender people’s rights to equal health insurance coverage.

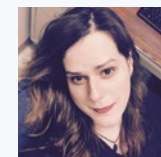
**EXCLUSION OF COVERAGE** for transgender-specific health care is illegal and violates both Title VII and the Affordable Care Act, a federal judge ruled in September. That decision was followed by a jury decision in October to award the plaintiffs \$780,000 in damages.

Alina Boyden and Shannon Andrews, both State of Wisconsin employees and transgender women, sued over the state’s refusal to cover transition-related care, saying it constituted sex discrimination and went against provisions of the ACA. Judge William M. Conley of the United States District Court of Western Wisconsin concurred, using strong language in the ruling.

“I’m pleased the court recognized that denying coverage for my medical care was sex discrimination,” Andrews told *Our Lives* after the decision came down. “I, personally, was lucky to be in a position to have retirement funds and savings I could sell off to fund my medical care, but had I been less fortunate, I would not be alive today. After the Group Insurance Board denied me coverage, I felt saddened that the state I loved and called home had decided I was worthy of providing medical care in my job but not worthy of receiving it. Today, I feel vindicated the court recognized what the state did was wrong. I hope that this will be a powerful signal that trans people are not fair game for discrimination and that our lives and health are not a political football.”



Boyden



Andrews

The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Wisconsin, and volunteer attorneys from the law firm Hawks Quindel filed the lawsuit on behalf of Boyden, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Andrews, a cancer researcher at the University of Wisconsin Medical School.

“I want to thank the judge in the case and the jury for awarding a fair verdict,” said Boyden. “It was wonderful to see a process where eight ordinary Wisconsinites were able to listen to our story, see that we were harmed, and make the decision that they did. No one should have to tell their story to a room full of strangers to justify their medical expenses, but I am thankful that I had the opportunity to share my story. I hope this sends a powerful message to fellow transgender people in Wisconsin that our health matters.”

“No one should be denied health care because of who they are,” added Larry Dupuis, legal director for the ACLU of Wisconsin. “Depriving transgender people of access to transition-related care is discrimination and we are pleased the jury awarded Shannon and Alina the money they need to cover their care

and for the harm they suffered. Discrimination comes with a cost, and for the State of Wisconsin the bill has come.”

A similar decision was made in July for Wisconsin Medicaid recipients. In that case, Sarah Ann Makenzie of Baraboo and Cody Flack of Green Bay sued the state over its refusal to cover gender reassignment surgeries. Judge Conley ruled in that case as well, issuing the initial injunction against the state’s exclusion and ordering it to pay for the procedures.

This comes in the wake of and reaffirms the state’s Group Insurance Board’s narrow vote in late August to remove the exclusion for transgender health coverage from its own policies. The new ruling means that any future possible effort to reinstate the exclusion would be met by a clear court decision rendering it illegal.

The ACA’s incorporation of Title VII in particular has met with various challenges regard-

ing whether or not sex discrimination includes discrimination based on transgender status. Section 1557 of the ACA prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in health programs and activities that receive funding or are overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Under the Trump Administration, the anti-sex discrimination language was specifically removed from a HHS website, signaling a change in stance by the new, more conservative majority party. This came shortly after a conservative judge issued a nationwide preliminary injunction against enforcement of the anti-sex discrimination provision of the ACA. That will be directly challenged by rulings like those in Wisconsin and elsewhere, though the issue is unlikely to be firmly settled for some time, and could work its way all the way to the Supreme Court. ■



## LGBTQ Organizations Update

News | Awards | Staff & Board Changes  
Calls to Action | Events

Reported by Emily Mills

Stay up-to-date with area LGBTQ+ and allied organizations and non-profits, be informed, and get involved.

### NEWS

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

**ARCW** This year’s Wisconsin AIDS Ride raised more than \$108,000, thanks to riders and their generous supporters. The total reflects a nearly six percent increase over last year.

**ARTWRITE COLLECTIVE** The Collective is in the process of merging with Arts + Literature Laboratory. The decision to dissolve ArtWrite as a nonprofit came from a desire to reduce program duplication, strategically leverage administrative labor, and better serve its community. They will combine ArtWrite’s passion for youth development, artist empowerment, and LGBTQ advocacy with ALL’s extensive artist network (and brick-and-mortar center) in order to develop equitable and accessible area arts programs.

Aurora Seidl will transition out of their role as

Executive Director of ArtWrite and into the role of Education & Outreach Director for ALL. “We believe that our community’s resources are better spent through collaboration and in concentrated doses rather than spread thinly between organizations,” notes Seidl.

**FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL** A successful merger has been completed with the leading national family-building nonprofit, Path2Parenthood. This is a significant step forward as the organization expands their programming for members of the LGBTQ community who are considering starting a family. By merging, Family Equality Council is now the nation’s only comprehensive organization serving LGBTQ families.

**FORGE** FORGE became one of 18 outreach grantees for Time’s Up!, the workplace sexual harassment education and legal support fund. They will be concentrating on educating trans

**METHODOLOGY** | *Our Lives* reaches out to area LGBTQ+ organizations to seek information for inclusion in this section. We also gather information from newsletters and social media put out by the various organizations. If your LGBTQ+ organization would like to be included in these updates, please reach out to us directly at [contact@ourlivesmadison.com](mailto:contact@ourlivesmadison.com).

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and non-binary workers nationwide about their legal rights and, where appropriate, linking them with a lawyer who will provide a free consultation and who may be able to help them undertake an employment discrimination case.

**MADISON GAY HOCKEY ASSOCIATION** MGHA is excited for their first round of games on November 5 at Hartmeyer Ice Arena. Games are free and open to the public, and they love to have people cheering in the stands. If you would like more information about the organization or how to join please see [madisongayhockey.org](http://madisongayhockey.org).

**MADISON MINOTAURS RUGBY** In June the league merged with the Minneapolis Mayhem for Bingham Cup 2018 in Amsterdam. As the Midwest Rampage, they won second place for the Hoagland Spoon bracket. It was a great experience for the Madison contingent, and they

were honored to play with another team successfully and play against and meet other inclusive rugby teams around the world.

**MILWAUKEE PRIDE** In honor of PrideFest 2018, the largest LGBTQ event in Wisconsin history, the Milwaukee Pride Board has disbursed over \$23,000 in financial donations, scholarships, and gifts to local causes, including:

- \$12,200 to Diverse & Resilient, via the PrideFest Plus One campaign
- \$3,000 to Kimberly Wilbern, recipient of the 2018 Rising Star Scholarship
- \$2,500 to the Wisconsin LGBT History Project
- \$2,500 to the Milwaukee Pride Parade
- \$2,500 to the Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival
- \$955 in Wom!nz Spot tip donations to Pathfinders Q\*Blok

Milwaukee Pride's mission statement makes firm commitments to the LGBTQ community:

to developing future leaders; to improving access to services; to celebrating our history and heritage; and to creating learning, networking, and activation opportunities. In fall 2018, Milwaukee Pride will assume custodial stewardship of the Wisconsin LGBT History Project as an outreach program of the organization.

This year's community donations of \$23,655 reflect a 48% increase over last year's reinvestment of \$16,000. This is the largest single sum ever donated by Milwaukee Pride, Inc./PrideFest Milwaukee.

**PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS** The group's Winter 2018 and Spring 2019 concerts will be held at a new location, Christ Presbyterian Church, 944 E. Gorham St., Madison. They thank First United Methodist Church for being a welcoming host for many years.

Common Chords, the PHMC outreach ensemble, had an exceptional year performing at 12 events and raising over \$1,000 for the Chorus. For those times and venues where the full Chorus cannot perform, Common Chords helps with the PHMC mission to create, enrich, and transform our community through music.

**PRIDE IN HEALTH CARE** The group hosted a "Trans Health Care Panel" in April that was open to students and the general public. Panelists described personal anecdotes that highlight the systemic barriers trans and gender non-conforming people face when trying to access transition and non-transition related health care. Email [prideinhealthcare@gmail.com](mailto:prideinhealthcare@gmail.com) if you would like notes from this panel.

**AWARDS / RECOGNITION / GRANTS**

*Special thanks for those who do good.*

**CREAM CITY FOUNDATION** The foundation recognizes eight exceptional students who received \$2500 scholarships through their scholarship program: **Diya Marks, DeShanda Williams, Jay Messar, Ren Gresbach, Noah Anderson, Kayla McNeil, Karina Hinojosa, and Emma Kropidlowski.**

**DIVERSE & RESILIENT** Congratulations to **Kristen Ramirez** on her promotion from Youth Coordinator to Grants and Quality Manager. Congratulations as well to **Kofi Short** on his new role as Community Engagement Manager focusing on HIV prevention and building leadership skills among African-American gay and bisexual men in Milwaukee who work in the nonprofit sector.

**MILWAUKEE PRIDE** The organization an-

nounced in October the winners of this year's BeOUT Awards for LGBTQ Visibility. The BeOUT Awards celebrate individuals who have taken heroic strides to elevate the visibility and voice of local LGBTQ people.



Lex Allen

This year's honorees are: **Lex Allen:** After many years as a perennial PrideFest favorite performer, Lex Allen served a critical role in this year's Diverse & Resilient "Colors in Bloom" campaign, which encourages self-love and self-acceptance as the foundation of a healthy identity. Whether as an artist, performer, or spokesperson, Lex relentlessly supports greater visibility, inclusion, and representation of local queer and trans people of color.

**Carla Anne Ernst:** In 2018, Carla shared her deeply personal journey to her best self in *Life Without Pockets: My Long Journey Into Womanhood*. Her book elevates the voice and visibility of diverse transgender lives beyond our local arena, and serves as an inspiration for individuals everywhere who might be beginning their own transition—or doubting their own strength and resilience to do so.

**Dr. Andrew Petroll** and the **Inclusion Health Clinic:** By ensuring access to the highest standards of culturally competent, compassionate, and comprehensive medical care, the Inclusion Health Clinic (840 N. 87th St.) of Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin strengthens the overall health and wellness of our community. Historically, LGBTQ people have been reluctant to discuss their sexual or gender identities with their care providers, fearing discrimination, shame, or other adverse reactions. Milwaukee's transgender and queer persons of color have long experienced barriers to the care they need. The Inclusion Health Clinic will ensure that our community feels welcome and affirmed, while receiving medical care from providers who have the specific expertise and experience they need.

**OUTREACH LGBT CENTER** OutReach announced and recognized some of the people and organizations doing crucial work and advocacy for the LGBTQ community at their 26th annual awards banquet in October. Volunteer of the Year went to **James Van Abel**, Advocate of the Year to **Charles Wetzel**, the Courage Award was given to retired Army Colonel **Sheri Swokowski**, the folks behind the effort to establish the **Clarenbach House** as a local LGBT historic site received a Special Recognition Award, and Organization of the Year went to the **Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce.**

**WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** On October 3, the Chamber presented its annual



Bidar-Sielaff

Business Awards. Local alder and UW Health's Diversity & Inclusion officer, **Shiva Bidar-Sielaff**, was named Advocate of the Year for her work throughout the state. Bidar-Sielaff is also a regular and active participant in the Chamber's leadership council.

**Rockwell Automotive** was named Corporate Partner of the year, and **MOXIE food + drink** in Whitefish Bay was named LGBT Business of the Year. **Short Stack Eatery** in Madison was named Allied Business of the Year (see our profile in the Our Taste column), **Goodwill Industries** of North Central Wisconsin was named Nonprofit Organization of the Year, and **Leonard Sobczak**, of Eastmore Real Estate & the *Wisconsin Gazette*, was named Business Leader of the Year.

**STAFF / BOARD CHANGES**

*Who's moving on or moving into org leadership.*

**ACLU OF WISCONSIN** Milwaukee native **Maxine Webb** has been hired as Development Director. She will lead the revenue generation strategy for the statewide Annual & Major Gifts programs.

New full-time staff members are **Sean Wilson**, Statewide Smart Justice Organizer; **Marissa Ocampo**, Youth Organizer.

## Community radio issues apology to the transgender community for hurtful Access Hour broadcast

**WORT COMMUNITY RADIO's** Board of Directors has issued an official apology to the transgender community for an Access Hour episode that aired in March 2018. The program was hosted by Madison local activist and musician Thistle Pettersen, who featured interviews with two prominent leaders in the anti-transgender radical "feminist" movement.

You can read more about what unfolded in the May 2018 *Our Lives* article, "TERF Wars."

The letter was hand-delivered this week by Doug Holtz, WORT Business and Event Development Director, to Steve Starkey at OutReach LGBT Community Center and shared with the organization's transgender group and programming leaders to be shared publicly (Starkey also shared the letter with *Our Lives*). The full text of the letter follows:

*Dear Members of the Transgender Community,*

*On behalf of WORT's Board of Directors, we would like to apologize for the harm done to the transgender community by the airing of the March 19, 2018 Access Hour. WORT has recently been struggling with the open nature of the Access Hour. Since its inception, the Access Hour has been an open vehicle for members of the community to "take over" the airwaves for an hour. We include a disclaimer message that stresses the opinions and views of the Access Hour do not represent the views of WORT board, staff, or volunteers. Recent events have shown that this is not enough, and we are seeking input from people in the transgender community on ways we can improve the station's function and be a resource for the community.*

*The Board has reaffirmed that Access Hour content must conform to the Mission Statement of WORT. This includes "respecting all peoples and their environments." All potentially controversial Access Hour subject matter must also now be brought to the attention of the Staff Collective for review at the time of application.*

*Please be assured that the views aired during the program in question regarding the trans community are in no way reflective of the culture at WORT Community Radio. We are a welcoming space for all ethnicities and gender identities, and many of our trans volunteers have in fact come forward to help instruct the less-knowledgeable members of our organization why this trans-denying opinion is so harmful.*

*Our sincerest apologies,  
WORT Community Radio Board of Directors*

do you dream of a



but you only have



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**CREAM CITY FOUNDATION** **Eric Peterson** stepped down as chairperson of the board of directors after accepting a job in Arizona. He is succeeded by the previous vice-chairperson, **Patrinia Galgan**. The new vice-chairperson is **Stewart Morrissey**, Director of Global Safety, Health, & Environment at SC Johnson, who also recently returned to the Cream City Foundation board

of directors. Cream City Foundation welcomes new board member **Peter Burgelis**.

**COURAGE MKE** **Ryan Bricks** has been appointed the Board Treasurer and **Leslie Angove** has been appointed the Vice President. Angove previously served as the Board's secretary. Bricks is a CPA with three years of public audit experience and

has previously worked with the local nonprofit, Community Shares of Greater Milwaukee.

**DIVERSE & RESILIENT** Congratulations to newly elected board officers, including chair **Tanya Atkinson** of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, vice chair **Angie Harris** of Marquette University, treasurer **Helmut Hampel** of Arcataur Capital Management, and secretary **Lenore Schell** of the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities.

New staff include **Chris Walton**, Intersectionality Among Men program coordinator; **Amani Carter**, STI Treatment Clinic Assistant; and **Yante Turner**, Public Allies Americorp Apprentice.

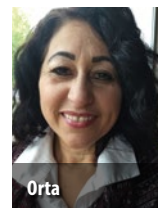
**LGBT CENTER OF SE WISCONSIN** **Barbara Farrar** has been hired as the new Executive Director of the center in Racine. She is a welcome addition and brings new energy and fresh ideas.

**MILWAUKEE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER** **Amy Orta** has been named as the new executive director. Orta joined the Center earlier this year as its Older Adult Program coordinator and advocate. She previously served in senior management positions in the public and nonprofit sectors.

Orta already is well known in Milwaukee's Latinx community. She was a fixture at Centro Hispano for 21 years, rising from social worker to director of operations and special projects. With a background in early childhood education, she left the area in 2014 to head a troubled Head Start/Early Head Start program for Pinellas County, Florida. There, she led a remarkable turnaround that took the program from federal findings of malfeasance by previous leaders to a "Program of Excellence" designation in 2016.

Besides being known for her work at Centro Hispano, Orta is also known by some for her fierce advocacy for her son Eli, who is transgender, when he faced hurdles related to his gender identity in high school here. The two were featured on billboards as part of the "Acceptance Journeys" campaign run by Diverse & Resilient to encourage acceptance and support of LGBTQ+ family members and friends.

The Center is also pleased to announce the addition of four new board directors: **Kevin Flaherty** of PNC Bank, **Katherine Georges** of ORCHESTRA Design Studio, **Nick Morgan** of Ox Optimal, and **George Schneider**, owner of This is It! The board elected **Rick Derksen** to serve as President and **Elena Dominguez** to serve as Vice President. Both to serve one-year terms.



Orta

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL TAKACH.



## Milwaukee turns out in support of trans rights and in opposition to Trump Administration attacks.

**IN RESPONSE TO A LEAKED MEMO** from the Trump Administration declaring the intention to strip civil rights particularly from transgender and nonbinary American citizens, Milwaukee Pride in late October organized a Rally for Resistance at City Hall.

The event, which drew dozens of supporters, featured speeches from local elected officials, organizers, and members of the transgender community.

"An attack on any of us is an attack on all of us," Milwaukee Pride said in a statement. "For over 30 years, we have fought for a world where all people can live proud. We will not accept or allow any attacks on our friends and family."

*The New York Times* reported on October 21 that the Trump administration planned to legally redefine sex and gender as a strict binary and based on gender as assigned at birth, a policy change would effectively exclude transgender and non-binary students from legal protections under Title IX.

Under the Obama administration, federal agencies recognized gender identity as a protected class and considered complaints brought by transgender and non-binary students. A growing number of federal courts have also recognized Title IX's prohibition against sex discrimination to include transgender status.

Among those who spoke at the event was Wisconsin State Rep. Jocasta Zamarripa, Elle Halo of Diverse & Resilient, Yante Turner of Public Allies, Imani Sloan of the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, Ashley Altadonna of FORGE, Alex Corona of the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, and U.S. military veteran Leigh Sanders.

Partner organizations included FORGE, ACLU of Wisconsin, ZAO Milwaukee Church, Courage MKE, the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, and the Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission. Several buildings in downtown Milwaukee lit up in the trans pride colors that evening in a show of support as well.

**OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER** Welcome to new Board Member, **Jill Nagler**. They have been a volunteer at OutReach since 2012..

**OVERTURE CENTER** **Sandra Gajic** was appointed in July as president and CEO through an international search process guided by Arts Consulting Group. Gajic joined the Overture staff in September.

Gajic has nearly 40 years of management experience in the private and public sectors, ranging from furniture manufacturing in Yugoslavia to public health administration in the United Kingdom to producing and presenting organizations in Canada. Her experience in the arts arena includes 16 years at the Canadian Opera Company and as Operations Manager. She was also General Manager and interim CEO at Arts Commons for three years before assuming the role of CEO of the Edmonton Opera from 2011 to 2013. She will be relocating to Madison from Vancouver, Canada, where she has held the position of Director, Vancouver Civic Theaters, since June 2014.

**Dawn Crim** and **Ananda Mirilli** are the newly elected chair and vice chair of the center's Community Advisory Board (CAB). The membership of the group is 45 percent City appointed and 55 percent appointed by Overture as the body fulfills a requirement for the City's annual grant. City appointees are approved by the Madison Common Council to serve on the CAB and act as an assurance that Overture collaborates and communicates with the larger community. The charge of CAB is to assure that Overture serves all of Madison's citizens.

**Emily Gruenewald** has been appointed as vice president of development. Gruenewald, a Monroe, Wis., native, comes to Overture with more than 17 years of non-profit management experience, specializing in major gift fundraising, volunteer engagement, and strategic planning with a focus on the arts and higher education.

**PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS** The Board of Directors has elected officers: **Burt Tower**, President; **Charlie Squires**, Vice President; **Marge Sutinen**, Secretary; and **Mark Oldenburg**, Treasurer. Chorus committees also elected chairs this fall: **Jason Crawford**, Development; **Jeff Roy**, Music Performance; **Marge Sutinen**, Membership; **Dan Ross**, Marketing; **Patrick McGuigan**, Staff Relations; **Mark Oldenburg**, Finance; **Jeff Smith**, Common Chords.

**PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE** To better serve and integrate a public health perspective into the work the group has added a Masters of Public Health graduate student to their executive board.

**WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** **Annie Schmitz** has recently been promoted to the position of Managing Director and will help oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization. She joins **Jason Rae**, who serves as President & CEO and is responsible for the strategic vision and direction of the Chamber.

### CALLS TO ACTION & DEVELOPMENT

*New programs, outreach, or changes in mission.*

**ARCW** Participants ran, walked, and volunteered October 6 at the Summerfest Grounds for the 29th Annual AIDS Walk Wisconsin and 5K Run. This year's walk/run raised \$403,790 to support HIV prevention, care, and treatment programs throughout the state.

**CREAM CITY FOUNDATION** The foundation raised \$10,000 in seed money for their newly announced Trans Leadership Institute at this year's annual Summer Social in July. The program will impart critical leadership skills to trans members of the Southeastern Wisconsin LGBTQ community, enabling them to advocate for themselves and their community, attain political posts that will advance the quality of life for all trans people within the community, and strengthen the Wisconsin LGBTQ community overall.

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*Sandy Eichel, financial advisor at Northwestern Mutual, professional speaker and facilitator.*



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**LGBT CENTER OF SE WISCONSIN** Safe Zone Training for local organizations, businesses, and others is now in the works to help the community understand LGBTQ+ issues. If you would like more information please contact the center at 262-664-4100 or go to [lgbtsewi.org](http://lgbtsewi.org).

**MADISON MINOTAURS RUGBY** Another “Jocks in Frocks” drag fundraiser will be held on November 11 at FIVE Nightclub. Proceeds will benefit both the Madison Minotaurs and GSAFE. More information to come!

**MILWAUKEE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER** In an effort to be a leader in non-gender binary terminology as well as align itself with non-profit best practices, the center’s board recently revised its bylaws to remove all gendered language and pronouns from the document, and adjusted the executive committee to include a President and Vice President role.

**NEW HARVEST FOUNDATION** Seeking enthusiastic volunteers from the LGBTQ+ community to apply for participation on our Board of Directors. If you are interested in a fulfilling role with an organization that has a meaningful impact on Wisconsin’s LGBTQ+ community please check out [newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org) and contact us by

e-mail at [info@newharvestfoundation.org](mailto:info@newharvestfoundation.org). We will be happy to provide you with more information on our history, mission, and the role of Board members!

**GENDER & SEXUALITY CAMPUS CENTER** Announcing the formation of Qouncil, a new initiative intended for student organizations and student leaders affiliated with the Campus Center. Leaders from organizations and entities such as Open House, QLaw, Badger Pride, and the Housing GSAs are invited to gather and collaborate on short- and long-term projects, and explore funding opportunities. We aim to build upon existing partnerships, outline our continuity plans, and grow our collective programming potential. For more info on how to get involved contact Warren Scherer [warren.scherer@wisc.edu](mailto:warren.scherer@wisc.edu) or Jelani elani.rivera@wisc.edu.

**OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER** Outreach is collecting information from trans people about their experiences navigating the health care field. Participation is voluntary and anonymous, and greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about the survey, please email Ginger Baier at [ginger.v.baier@gmail.com](mailto:ginger.v.baier@gmail.com) or Angie Rehling at [angier@lgbtoutreach.org](mailto:angier@lgbtoutreach.org). Survey is online at: [surveymonkey.com/r/6JS3TYG](http://surveymonkey.com/r/6JS3TYG).

**PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE** PRIDE recently worked with SMPH administration to add signs for all-gender bathrooms in the Health Sciences Learning Center. There is also an initiative to increase diversity of standardized patients at SMPH. If interested in becoming a standardized patient, please see this website: [med.wisc.edu/education/clinical-teaching-assessment-center/standardized-patient-faqs](http://med.wisc.edu/education/clinical-teaching-assessment-center/standardized-patient-faqs). If you run into any issues, please email us at [prideinhealthcare@gmail.com](mailto:prideinhealthcare@gmail.com).

**TRANS LIBERATION ART COALITION** TLAC is leading the effort to establish a November Queer Share (brainchild of TLAC member, and Madison legend, T. Banks!) that would take place yearly, in a very similar fashion to The Big Share ([thebigshare.org](http://thebigshare.org)). The point is to network all the queer, grassroots organizations in Madison into a single fundraising event, as well as to highlight why a Queer Share is specifically needed. Even within nonprofit organizations and charities, queer people are staggeringly underserved and underrepresented. Furthermore, queer organizations sometimes cannot afford the loss of political voice that can come with a 501c3 status. Of course, this limits resources and funding. Therefore, it’s essential that our city empowers queer people to lead and serve

themselves. LGBTQ+ organizations interested in participating can reach out to TLAC at [ksullivan.designs.it@transliberation.space](mailto:ksullivan.designs.it@transliberation.space).

**WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** The Chamber recently launched two new initiatives in the Madison area: The Hospitality Council and the LGBT Workplace Alliance. The Hospitality Council works to bring together members in the hospitality industry to learn and work together to build a strong pro-fairness climate. The LGBT Workplace is a collection of area LGBT employee groups that do best practice sharing and work together to grow as organizations.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**  
*Plan ahead to join in.*

**ARCW** The 23rd Annual Jolly Holly Folly will be held Thursday, **November 29** at 7:30 p.m., at Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee. It is a sample tasting from area restaurants, followed by the screenplay comedy, “’Twas the Month Before Christmas.”

**FORGE** Monica Roberts, one of the country’s longest-serving and best-known black trans woman activists, will be FORGE’s keynote speaker at the 2018 Transgender Day of Remembrance. The event will be Sunday, **November 18**, 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the UWMLGBT Resource Center, 2200 E. Kenwood Blvd., Milwaukee. Make sure you’re connected with FORGE’s social media and email listserv to ensure you don’t miss this rare opportunity to connect with one of our foremothers.

**GENDER & SEXUALITY CAMPUS CENTER** The Trans Monologues return for 2018! Mark your calendars for Wednesday, **November 14**, for this powerful community event at the Madison Central Library.

**GSAFE** Friday, **December 7** will be GSAFE’s Fall Unity Summit, the fall gathering for LGBTQ+ and allied students, GSAs, GSA advisors, and students passionate about social justice.

Saturday, **February 2**, 2019, GSAFE’s first Consent Culture Conference will be held at (and developed in collaboration with) Edgewood College. The CCC is open to all educators and professionals who want to understand consent as the basis for human interactions. Friday, March 8, 2019, the biennial statewide Safe Schools, Safe Communities conference for educators, administrators, and other adults working with young people who are invested in the well-being of LGBTQ+ youth will be held. Details at [gsafei.org](http://gsafei.org).

**MAD CITY SISTERS** The annual Felicia Melton-Smythe Holiday Gift Drive will kick off with a tree lighting ceremony at the Shamrock Bar and Grille on Sunday, **November 18**. The finale and holiday party will be held on Thursday, December 13. Donated gifts go to clients of ARCW’s HIV/AIDS programs who are in need and might not otherwise receive gifts at the holidays. Find out more at [madcitysisters.com](http://madcitysisters.com).

**MADISON MINOTAURS RUGBY** Join the team for their second ever Jocks in Frocks drag fundraiser event on Friday, **November 16** at FIVE Nightclub. They’ll once again be raising money for both the team and for GSAFE.

**OPEN** The annual member appreciation party will be held on **November 14** at Plan B in Madison, and includes a silent auction to benefit Freedom Inc as well as remarks from the organization’s co-executive director, M Adams. Register at [openmadison.org](http://openmadison.org).

**OUTREACH LGBT CENTER** The LGBT Senior Alliance’s Thanksgiving potluck will be held Sunday, **November 18** at the office (2701 International Lane, Ste 101) in Madison, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. All ages welcome! Bring a dish to pass if you’re able, \$10 suggested donation.

OutReach’s Annual Holiday Party is Saturday, **December 8** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Mendota Lake House, 704 E. Gorham St. Suggested donation \$30. Donation includes food and drinks.

**PERFECT HARMONY MEN’S CHORUS** Presenting “What the Frolic?” on Friday, **December 7** at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 9, at 3:00 p.m., both at Christ Presbyterian Church, 944 E. Gorham St., Madison. This Winter concert will feature traditional holiday tunes, newer music...and some not-so-traditional arrangements! Tickets are \$15 in advance from members or online, and \$20 at the door. Note that this concert is in a new location.

**PROUD THEATER** Save the dates for more upcoming Proud Theater events into 2019: “Connections” LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Conference to be held **March 9**, 2019, at First United Methodist Church in Madison. Proud Theater Sun Prairie will hold its end-of-year show on **May 10** and **11** at Sun Prairie United Methodist Church. The Madison chapter will hold its end-of-year show on **May 23–25** at the Black Box Theater at Edgewood College. ■

If your LGBTQ+ organization would like to be included in these updates, please reach out to us directly at [contact@ourlivesmadison.com](mailto:contact@ourlivesmadison.com)



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## Lawful Good

Having experienced discrimination and harassment as a young gay kid in Northern Wisconsin and elsewhere, **Jim Chiolino** has dedicated much of his career to advocating on behalf of LGBTQ people and other minorities in the workplace.

**A FEW MONTHS AGO** I started a new job with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Equal Rights Division, as Director of its Civil Rights Bureau. Somehow it feels like a natural progression in my career. At the same time, I am so grateful to have ended up in this important position in an area of the law I care about deeply.

I hope to be a resource to employers doing their best to comply with the anti-discrimination laws we enforce, and to individuals who believe they have been aggrieved under those laws. I am so lucky to be able to work in a field about which I care deeply—with about 50 other people who have the same level of commitment and caring. How did I get here?

### COMING UP, COMING OUT

I grew up in Northern Wisconsin, an experience I wouldn't trade for anything. It is lovely, I had a terrific and quirky family, and good friends, but it was tough at times for a gay kid in the 1960s and '70s. My Italian-American family was fairly unusual in Minocqua, so we felt exotic. But for our Native American cousins (and the nearby Lac du Flambeau reservation), we really were as diverse as it got!

One of my earliest memories is of my mother crying uncontrollably when the news of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination was reported. I was a very small boy, but it captured my attention. She and my Aunt Irene—who lived next door to us and was

once a substitute teacher who brought breakfast on her own dime for poor kids in the Lac du Flambeau school system—taught me about struggles for equality and the consequences of discrimination.

I learned on my own in high school.

I was not the typical Northwoods kid, being interested in the arts and academics and not sports or hunting. I knew at an early age that I was gay, but did everything possible to fit in. The alternative was obvious to me: I saw kids getting bullied and even beaten up if they didn't fit the mold. Luckily, I have an identical twin brother who was a very popular jock, and he made me cool by association.

I left town—got far away from home—and did my undergrad studies at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. It was odd in the '80s to be in a gay bar that was regularly raided and protested against, but that's what happened in that part of the Midwest.

On to Wisconsin in 1985, where—now out—I landed in Madison, the capital of “the Gay Rights State.” I felt emboldened, but usually not enough to make waves. In this era of #MeToo and #LoveIsLove,

we forget what it was like in the '80s and '90s. I worked at a restaurant in Milwaukee where I was subject to harassment by co-workers because of my sexual orientation. While I tried to “give it back to them,” I never complained to management about the treatment. I learned first-hand just how brave one must be to come forward with allegations of harassment.

### DOING THE WORK

Since 1993, I have worked at the Equal Rights Division. I have investigated and supervised on both sides of our agency (Labor Standards and Civil Rights complaints). I have also worked hard to enhance our education and outreach programs. In my spare time, I do community theater and I find that this “showy” part of my life lends toward more interesting presentations for businesses. We offer excellent training at little or no cost to groups who contact us. We can teach the basics or get down to more complex issues, depending on the audiences. Our goal is to ensure all businesses have knowledge of how to comply.

I worked at a restaurant in Milwaukee where I was subject to harassment by co-workers because of my sexual orientation. While I tried to “give it back to them,” I never complained to management about the treatment. I learned first-hand just how brave one must be to come forward with allegations of harassment.

I find that most employers understand the laws we enforce and want to comply with them. They also understand the business case for building a diverse workforce. We do still see complaints, however.

The most pervasive types of discrimination we see are peer-to-peer harassment and retaliation. The Harvey Weinstein case brought sexual harassment to national attention. Since then, we have seen a lot of people filing complaints and coming out with stories of harassment. Employers are taking this seriously and training their supervisors and employees in avoiding all types of harassment in the workplace.

Contact the Equal Rights Division if you or your company would like a speaker on any of the legal topics we cover: Discrimination or wage and hour matters, Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave, employment of minors, etc. Call 608-266-6860 or email [erin@dw.dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:erin@dw.dwd.wisconsin.gov). ■

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myself in a similar position. I found myself back on the journey toward physical health when I joined a local fitness facility that taught me a lot about functional fitness and athleticism. I re-lost all the weight and eventually became a trainer and instructor there. Over the course of four years I had found a niche and my true passion: helping heal people while spreading the love!

WHAT'S FORWRD ALL ABOUT? WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO START IT?

FORWRD is a school of training. We teach humility and patience in all things, which leads to true strength and self-empowerment. At FORWRD we strive to offer a genuine safe space for all humans to learn and bring awareness to the present, to help heal, be well, and strengthen all aspects of who we are, and truly honor that. There is no room for negative mindsets, unhealthy egos, or unrealistic expectations.

FORWRD came about as the end product of a project created by myself and my brother-in-law, Joseph Krebs. He approached me a couple years ago when I was unhappy at my job, and now here we are!

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF YOUR WORK, AND HOW DO YOU WORK TO OVERCOME/DEAL WITH THEM?

The false perception/belief that over-training means better results; that faster is better, and high-level dynamic training should be a goal we all strive to achieve. Throw in a side of competitive ego and there you have it—it makes me want to rip my hair out.

FORWRD's approach aims to target, redefine, and extinguish these limiting and often unrealistic negative mentalities. The approach works to rewire unhealthy patterns associated with health and fitness expectations. This teaches patience for the self and giving the body permission to be at, and work from, its current state rather than imposing unrealistic expectations on it without reason. Our program is designed to filter out this sort of negative approach.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR WORK? WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO KEEP AT IT?

Seeing first-hand the personal and emotional growth and healing occurring in each individual. I want people to discover their own version of what I've found in myself: genuine love, joy, happiness, healing, and strength. It is attainable! Seeing these changes occurring motivates me more than anything. There is something quite rare and transformational happening here at FORWRD, and it is beautiful!

WHY IS THIS KIND OF GYM/TRAINING PROGRAM IMPORTANT AND/OR UNIQUE, DO YOU THINK? WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE IT PLAYING IN THE COMMUNITY?

We allow space for and encourage the patience and humility that's required for long-lasting results. There is no ulterior motive other than to help you continuously move forward. One of the unique things you can find at FORWRD is how we are 100% LGBTQ inclusive! Over 90% of our members identify as LGBTQ. We are proud of the genuine safe-space environment and community being cultivated here. Another thing that sets us apart is how initial assessments are required to participate, but we also don't do weigh-ins or body-fat tests.

One of FORWRD's main roles is to redefine what it means to be strong and healthy with a more realistic approach, rather than focusing on the superficial as a gauge for results or success.

TRAINING LGBTQ BUSINESSES QPOC

# Strength and Healing

FORWRD Training co-owner and founder **Raquel Sanchez** is taking an approach to fitness based on patience, inclusivity, healing, and joy.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF!

My name is Raquel and I'm originally from Sun Prairie, although my parents are originally from Puerto Rico. I'm a Personal Trainer/Instructor, Reiki & Healing Practitioner, Spiritual Advisor, and now an ordained Minister!

A quick backstory: The majority of my life was filled with an abundance of self-hatred and self-harm. A lot of this came from struggling to accept myself as a two-spirited soul experiencing life through an obese, female body that I didn't 100% identify with. After hitting rock bottom, I decided enough was enough—which led to my first weight loss of about 85 lbs. Ironically, I believed this was the answer to fix all that was unstable within me. If only it were that simple!

After a few years I gained almost all the weight back and found

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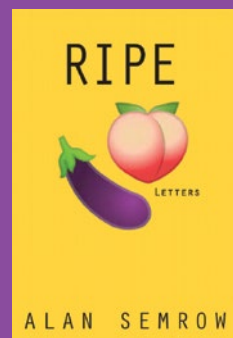
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## “Ripe: Letters”

Madison-based author **Alan Semrow**'s second book is a collection of reflective letters to the men in (and out) of his life navigating the modern gay world.



*Ripe: Letters*, the second book by local Madison author Alan Semrow, was released in October 2018. In this epistolary book, Semrow writes to the men who have impacted his outlook, reminded him of basic life lessons, surprised him in more ways than one—and left him reeling for days. Writing to one-night-flings, men he has never met, and men he'll never stop running into, Semrow touches on some of the most constant human themes—love, lust, longing, and desire. All the while, the book details his journey navigating and blooming by way of the modern gay scene.

“I wanted to write something that was super-honest, very positive, and also funny—as an ode of sorts to the moments I've shared with men over the last few years living in the city,” Semrow says. “More than anything, *Ripe* is a book about the search for human connection in the fast-paced, chaotic world we live in today. I hope whoever reads this will be able to relate, will see things here that are reflective of their own unique experiences.”

In November and December, Semrow is scheduled to have book readings and discussions at A Room of One's Own bookstore and Shamrock Bar & Grille in Madison. Signed copies will be available at A Room of One's Own. The book is also available in paperback and e-book formats on Amazon.com.

Semrow's fiction, nonfiction, and poetry has been featured in over 30 publications. Apart from writing fiction and nonfiction, he is a professional copywriter, a monthly contributor at *Chosen* magazine, and a singer-songwriter. Previously, he was the Fiction Editor for *Black Heart* magazine and a Guest Fiction Editor for the Summer Issue of *Five Quarterly*. Semrow's debut short story collection, *Briefs*, was published in 2016. *Ripe* is his second book. You can visit his blog at [alansemrowriter.wordpress.com](http://alansemrowriter.wordpress.com). ■

WHY SHOULD FOLKS SIGN UP WITH YOU ALL? AND WHERE SHOULD THEY GO FOR MORE INFO?

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E-mail me at [raquel@forwrtraining.com](mailto:raquel@forwrtraining.com), [facebook.com/Forwrtraining](https://www.facebook.com/Forwrtraining).

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**WHEN AND WHY DID THE TRANS RESEARCH LAB COME INTO BEING, WHO WORKS THERE, AND HOW IS IT FUNDED?**

**Stephanie Budge:** The Trans Research Lab (TRL) integrates data into evidence-based practice to guide our advocacy in working towards better access to health care for TNG individuals, including children, adolescents, adults, and families.

The lab started in August 2014, when I moved to Madison, Wisconsin from Louisville, Kentucky. I founded a research lab in Kentucky in 2011 called T\*STAR that is now a research and consulting firm run by TNG community members (tstarlab.com). I translated much of the research and advocacy from T\*STAR to TRL in 2014.

At the current moment, anyone can be a part of the lab. The lab uses a community-based model, whereby research is informed with and by the community. The majority of members of the lab are undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, though some of the team members are community members. Students can sign up for research credit for their work in the lab.

The lab is not currently formally funded. We have a beautiful space in the School of Education, where we meet for one hour per week to discuss research, and we meet every other week to discuss social justice projects. We have received some small grants from the U.W. and are applying for large grants through the NIH and other funding mechanisms.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LARGER FOCUSES OF THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?**

**Budge:** Our biggest project to date was a randomized controlled trial where we studied two different types of psychotherapy for TNG individuals to determine: a) if psychotherapy was effective with either group and, b) if it was effective, how the processes unfolded to provide change. Preliminary results indicate that both groups improved, but that each group had slightly different outcomes.

In addition, we partnered with the Wisconsin Trans Health Coalition and the Trans Youth Resource Network to be involved in the Wisconsin Trans Youth Community Needs Assessment (med.wisc.edu/media/medwiscedu/documents/about-us/CH-174891-18-TNG-Youth-Report-Full.pdf). Individuals in the lab have been analyzing quantitative data focusing on school safety, rural youth, and focus groups with TNG youth around the state.

**THE LAB IS STILL FAIRLY UNIQUE. WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT, AND WHY DID YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THIS KIND OF RESEARCH IN THE FIRST PLACE?**

**Sergio (lab member):** As a Latinx, queer, nonbinary person, it has been difficult to not feel out of place. Growing up, I felt immense pressure to hide various parts of my identity because nothing and no one told me that I could exist the way I wanted to. This was reinforced upon going to college; I was exhausted by the lack of research and resources for people like me. While volunteering for a non-profit, however, I met a child who felt similarly to me. This encounter not only affirmed my experiences, but it also sparked my passion to change the world around me.

**Cynthia (lab member):** As a queer individual in the Master's program in Counseling Psychology at U.W.-Madison, I have always been interested in research around LGBTQIA+ populations, and joining the lab helped me to further explore and affirm this interest. As a future counselor, I hope to offer LGBTQIA+ affirming care to the community, and to work specifically with TNG populations. TRL is actively working to increase the output of research on TNG populations and it is my personal aspiration to aid, in any way I can, in increasing the volume of affirming psychological research around TNG individuals.

**Ash (lab member):** I became involved in the lab during my last semester at U.W. before graduating with a Bachelor's in Psychology. As a queer, nonbinary, trans boy, I had been trying to do projects for my classes that focused on research on trans individuals, and was unable to do so most of the time because there was so little research that I could base my projects on in the first place. I don't remember how I found out about the lab, but I couldn't have resisted if I tried.

**Darren (lab member):** I kind of found out about the lab on accident. A friend of mine told me that they were in it, and it just so happened that my residence hall community was going to be having an event where we got to meet Stephanie Budge. After listening to her talk, I knew immediately that I needed to join. As a queer trans guy myself, being active in my community has always been important, and throughout my college experience I noticed a severe lack of trans-inclusive studies. I would be in classes and if I had to write a paper, I could rarely make it trans focused because there was so little research out there. Being a part of this lab makes it feel like you're truly doing groundbreaking work and in a high-quality way.

**WSJ COLUMNIST CHRIS RICKERT TOOK ISSUE LAST YEAR WITH WHAT HE CALLED A "BLURRING OF THE LINES" BETWEEN THE LAB'S SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND ITS SOCIAL ADVOCACY. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THOSE CRITICS?**

**Budge:** Even though it was personally stressful to read Chris Rickert's article about the lab, I appreciate his criticism. I think it is important for the entire community to be engaged in the work that we do and for individuals to ask us questions about the work. In fact, Rickert's article helped me understand our mission even more clearly and gave me the opportunity to clarify how activism and research are intertwined.

All of the activism that we engage in is evidence-based. We want to decrease barriers and improve access to healthcare for TNG individuals. The data describing the barriers shows abysmal treatment of TNG individuals by health care providers and, as a result, TNG individuals not seeking treatment or receiving poor treatment. When we just use language that focuses on affirming TNG individuals, it is based on the data that indicate that TNG individuals are often discriminated against in health care settings. Affirmation of an individual's identity does not indicate that a provider or researcher is biased.

**Sergio:** One of the most valuable things I have learned in my short time in the Counseling Psychology program has been to check my assumptions. Often times, we are quick to make judgments about people or situations that aren't always entirely true. I think this applies to research as well—we need to be mindful of the questions we ask, how we gather answers, and where those answers fit in. A good way of keeping ourselves in check is for the questions we ask to come directly from the communities we are working with, which in this case is the trans community.

**Ash:** Bias in research is a very real and very difficult topic, and it is a subject that deserves addressing. For the lab, we're not trying to skew the results to fit a political agenda, we're trying to academically uncover results that are as representative as possible using the knowledge and personal experiences of people that are being studied, instead of treating them as specimens under a microscope in a science lab.

**IN TERMS OF THAT RESEARCH, HAVE THERE BEEN ANY RESULTS THAT HAVE SURPRISED YOU? CONFIRMED SUSPICIONS?**

**Budge:** In every project there have been surprising results. In our most recent study where we conducted a clinical trial, we hypothesized that the minority stress therapy group would improve at a higher rate than the group that received trans-affirmative therapy. We hypothesized this because data indicate that minority stress is the primary reason for increased mental health disparities for TNG individuals. However, the data indicated that the trans affirmative therapy group improved at

twice the rate as the minority stress treatment group when looking at general psychological symptoms. Both groups showed improvement on psychological symptoms, but we hypothesize that the trans-affirmative therapy group showed more improvement because they were not primed to discuss minority stress experiences prior to their therapy sessions.

**WHERE DO YOU SEE GAPS IN RESEARCH AND STUDY REGARDING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE, THEIR EXPERIENCES AND MENTAL HEALTH, ETC.—FOR THE LAB TO TACKLE IN THE FUTURE AND/OR THAT YOU HOPE TO SEE STUDIED MORE BROADLY?**

**Budge:** Given all of the focus on the insurance exclusion for TNG individuals' trans-specific medical care, our lab plans to focus on the psychological impact of medical interventions. There is a large body of evidence indicating that medical interventions (hormones, surgery) are effective; our plan is to add to the existing literature to provide more specific data and respond to some of the critiques that have been provided by the State of Wisconsin.

**Ash:** Only recently did researchers start looking specifically into the experiences of TNG people and there's a lot of missing groundwork. We focus specifically on mental health and the general experiences of trans people, but there are very few studies that look at the medical side of being transgender besides hormones or surgeries. For instance, if a trans man has a heart attack, will he likely display symptoms more similar to a cisgender woman or a cisgender man, or will the symptoms be unique?

**ARE THERE WAYS FOR THE COMMUNITY TO GET INVOLVED AND HELP, AND HOW?**

**Budge:** Community members are encouraged to contact us if they are interested in being involved in research. We are closely involved with the Wisconsin Trans Health Coalition, which also has a research team.

**Sergio:** While we pride ourselves in addressing the questions of the community, we also recognize that no research is perfect. A good way for anyone to get involved with our work is simply to hold us accountable. ■

TRANSGENDER NONBINARY RESEARCH ACADEMICS

## Asking Our Questions

The **U.W.'s Trans Research Lab** is pioneering research into mental and physical health needs and care for transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming (TNG) individuals. Lab founder **Stephanie Budge** and several of the lab's researchers weigh in on the importance of the work being done, gaps in current knowledge, and why asking the right questions matters.

Photographed by **Charles Wetzel** for *Our Lives* magazine.



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WEB SERIES FILMMAKERS LGBTQ ENTERTAINMENT

## Small Screen Heroes

Take a look behind-the-scenes of **Hotel Bar**, a new, LGBTQ-inclusive web series that delves into diverse lives—and deaths, and hopes to help put Madison on the filmmaking radar.

**THEY FIRST MET A YEAR AGO.** Linda Lenzke had an idea for a play that would use religious themes to challenge beliefs and tell new stories. She knew Mark Albright from a LGBTQ Narratives group and his years of experience with theater and casting. Bob Barhite had been writing scripts for three years and attended a Madison Indy Filmmakers showcase where Linda pitched the idea.

The result: “Hotel Bar” is a web series being produced in Madison. Though the city may not be the first place that comes to mind when you think of film production, these folks are working to change that.

The concept of “Hotel Bar” is simple: Instead of guarding the pearly gates, St. Peter is a bartender and everyone who comes into his bar is on a pit stop between death and their eternal fate. Peter needs to learn each person’s real story before sending them on their path.

What is most striking about the production of this web series is the number of volunteers involved and the mobilization of resources they bring. Around 35 people come to filming sessions and there are 60–75 people involved overall. There’s high-quality audio and film production in addition to the donation of The Brink Lounge space.

Among the leaders who are attracting talent—from casting to production—is the director and co-producer, Gary Dunham.

Dunham retired after more than 30 years in the film business in Hollywood to move to Madison to be near family. But he says filmmaking

gets in your blood and never goes away. He taught film technology, fundraising, and distribution at Madison Media Institute and stays in touch with his students, some of whom have stayed in Madison and who work on the “Hotel Bar” set.

“I found there are a lot of very talented people here who aren’t willing to sacrifice their lives and lifestyles to pursue their career in filmmaking—and they shouldn’t have to,” says Dunham. “I went to the Madison Indy Filmmakers just to see who was interested. That’s when I met Linda. It was her passion and commitment to chasing this solid idea against all odds that got me interested in ‘Hotel Bar.’”

With the unique production elements of filmmaking, the creators of “Hotel Bar” know what they’re doing has roots in the theater scene, while also providing something completely different for the actors and producers who are involved.

Brian Belz, who plays Saint Peter, acts mostly in theater, but has worked in film projects since 2005. It was his friendship with casting director Mark Albright that got him involved with the web series. Project leaders agree that Belz’s style influences the other actors and he uses his instincts to set the pace.

“Film and theater acting are so different,” says Belz. “In film you have to stay in the frame and work within some limitations of volume and projection. You can’t immediately be big like in theater, and there are more starts and stops. But I enjoy being involved with a team for both.”

As director, Dunham isn’t spending his retirement lightly. He wants the projects he works on to be teaching experiences for the people who work on them and to educate future Midwestern filmmakers who choose Madison over Hollywood. He has a vision for a filmmaking scene in Madison that is self-sustaining and, though “Hotel Bar” is currently a volunteer-driven project, he believes local filmmaking should eventually provide a living wage to its contributors.

“What’s next for filmmaking in Madison, and this web series in particular, depends on sustainability,” says Dunham. “That means distribution and fundraising. ‘Hotel Bar’ could be a flagship for that idea. I have high hopes, but the biggest problem you have is if you succeed because then you have to start producing with deadlines and pressure. You have to be prepared by building your team and letting them rise to the occasion.”

For Linda Lenzke, being a producer is ultimately about doing what it takes to see her idea come to life.

“Originally I thought I was going to write the screenplay,” she says. “And I took a stab at it. But I realized that I’m not the fire. I just stoke it. These people are the fire and it’s the group that’s making it happen.”

The producers of “Hotel Bar” are always looking for extras. As in life, purgatory is a diverse place and all races, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities are welcome to drink prop liquor and be a part of Madison filmmaking in the making. —**Stacy Harbaugh**

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YOUTH HOMELESSNESS MILWAUKEE

## Shelter From the Storm

**Courage House** is poised to become the state’s first home and drop-in space for homeless LGBTQ youth. We asked co-founder **Brad Schlaikowski** the whys and hows of opening the new space in Milwaukee.

**COURAGE HOUSE IS THE FIRST GROUP HOME/SAFE DROP-IN SPOT FOR HOMELESS LGBTQ YOUTH IN MILWAUKEE, AND A FAIRLY UNIQUE MODEL STATEWIDE AND NATIONALLY. WHAT PROMPTED YOU ALL TO OPEN IT?**

My husband Nick and I decided that we needed a model like this here in Milwaukee after hearing the stories our teenage foster daughters shared with us. Stories of bullying, not fitting in, and rejection after rejection, often by their own families. We knew we needed to give these children a place to be themselves.

We at Courage MKE believe that a child is not able to work on themselves until they are able to be themselves. Helping these children see that they are exactly who they are supposed to be and that there are so many people who love them for just that, it will help them in working through their traumas.

**WHAT SUPPORT HAVE YOU GOTTEN?**

The community has been amazing. Without them, we would not have been able to purchase property in cash. People tell Nick and I how amazing it is what “we” are doing. Our response is: We may have had an idea, but it’s the people in our communities, our board, our families and staff that have opened their hearts. THEY are the one that are making this happen.

**WHERE DO THINGS STAND NOW IN TERMS OF WHO’S USING THE SPACE AND HOW?**

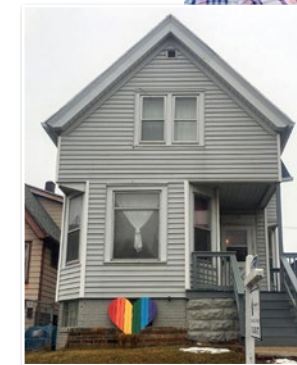
We are in the midst of renovations and licensing. Our goal is to have children in their new home no later than February 2019.

**HOW CAN PEOPLE HELP SUPPORT THE WORK?**

The children that will be living in the home need to be shown what family looks like. We are looking for volunteers that can come cook a meal with the kids, help with homework, make music in our resource center with them, teach life skills or introduce them to new hobbies, or



Courage MKE co-founders: Brad Schlaikowski & Nick Schlaikowski.



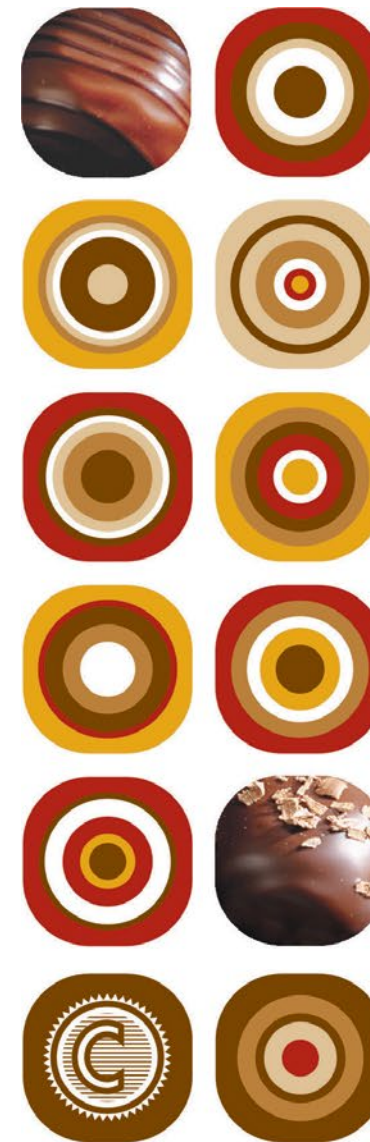
just come and “be” with them to show them just how many people care. Like any nonprofit, financial support will also always be needed, as well as donations such as non-perishable foods, household supplies like toilet paper, light bulbs, laundry soap, etc.

**WHAT DO YOU, PERSONALLY, LEARN FROM DOING THIS WORK AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

I have learned that the people in our communities have enormous hearts. I have learned that the job will never be done when working in the nonprofit sector. I have learned that as soon as we get this location open, we need to focus on the second, third, fourth. I have learned through phone calls from social workers in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa that they want homes like this across the three states. That has taught me that, although it is 2018, parents are still turning their children away.

My entire life has been in corporate America. I’ve benefited from what it’s provided my family, but I have learned that THIS is what I was meant to do. This is important to me because these kids deserve more than a door slammed in their faces. They deserve to be children with positive experiences, instead of fighting and sacrificing just to have a meal.

Getting to where we are has not been easy. We have learned a lot in a short amount of time. We have laughed, we have cried, but there will be no greater feeling than the day we open the front door and tell that first child, “Welcome home.” ■



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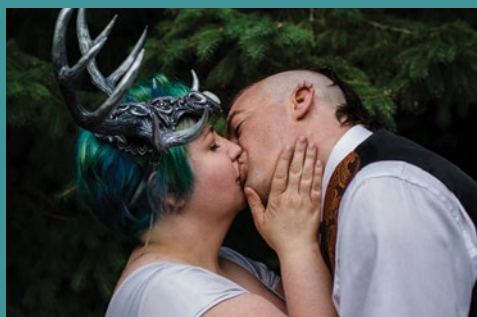
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ZINES LGBTQ CULTURE QUEER ART

## Write-It-Yourself

An unassuming basement in the Riverwest neighborhood of Milwaukee is home to what's believed to be the country's largest independent collection of LGBTQ zines.

**HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS** what looked to be a handwritten and/or Xeroxed copy of a sort of do-it-yourself magazine? Called zines, these independently authored publications are often hyperlocal and incredibly personal. They represent an important and storied part of a variety of traditionally marginalized people and ideas, and have provided an important way for us to share crucial information and build community—without the barriers and censorship often imposed by mainstream outlets.

*Our Lives* spoke with **Christopher Wilde** and **Milo Miller**, the curators of the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) out of Milwaukee, about their efforts to preserve and disseminate queer thought, information, and community in the digital age.

### TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELVES!

**M:** I'm Milo. I use they/them pronouns. I really enjoy making zines and mixtapes, cooking and baking, and riding my bike. I grew up in suburban Milwaukee, went to uni in New York, and lived in the San Francisco Bay Area when Chris and I met.

**C:** I'm Chris. My pronouns are fluid; I often use gender-neutral terms. Originally from Minneapolis, I started making queer zines there in the early 1990s. I have a degree in History from Grinnell College and currently serve on the College's Multicultural Reunion Planning Committee and am an alumni mentor for the student-run Stonewall



Chris Wilde

Resource Center. My other work outside of QZAP is as a sexuality educator at the Tool Shed, An Erotic Boutique.

**HOW DID THE IDEA FOR THE QZAP FIRST COME ABOUT, AND HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT GETTING IT STARTED?**

**M:** The idea for QZAP kind of kicked off when Chris and I met whilst helping to organize a series of radical LGBTQ+ gatherings in the early 2000s called Queeruptation. During the organizing meetings lots of questions would come up about identity or accessibility or how to host a sex party or whatever, and Chris and I would look at each other and say, "Didn't so-and-so write about that in their zine?" So the initial idea was to figure out how to share all this community knowledge about queer lives and queer issues.

Fast forward to 2003. We had relocated (back) to Milwaukee, and were trying to figure out how to make a digital archive happen. One of my co-workers at the time was a fantastic web coder, and had a history with pirate radio and DIY media, and he helped us figure out the first couple of iterations of the digital archive site.

**C:** The main collection of queer zines started from the donation of our own personal

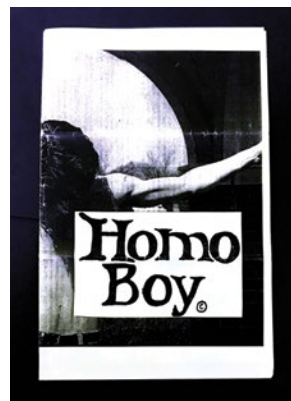
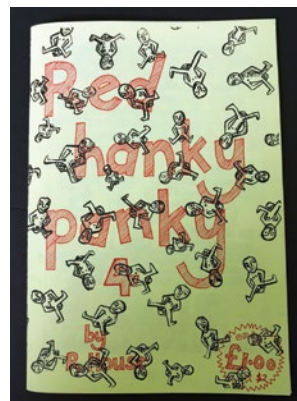


PHOTO BY NEAL EASTERLING.

stashes, which were traded by mail, at shows, or in person throughout the 1990s. Mass digitization projects were in their infancy when we first launched QZAP. Despite advances in digitization technology, we still scan things in much the way we did in 2003—by hand on a flatbed scanner. All collective members help scan zines, and often people who intern with the Project start by learning the digitization process.

**WHY IS A COLLECTION LIKE THIS IMPORTANT? WHAT ROLE DOES PLAY IN OUR COMMUNITY?**

**M:** When we started out, my primary concern was about info sharing and helping to translate what was in queer zines into skills that could be applied to various aspects of our queer communities. Over the years, though, my view has shifted quite a bit. To me the most important things about the zines in our collection is that they come from real folks like us. It's sort of a Humanist perspective. The vast majority of our queer lives stories don't get told in a lot of media formats. Zines, on the other hand, are able to get those stories out into the world.

**C:** Zines are inherently ephemeral yet vitally important in capturing authentic queer voices that are typically marginalized. Our collection is crafted from within the community it represents. Often archives are the work of outsiders who have no connection to the content they preserve. With QZAP, the people who created the zines originally are also invited to be part of the preservation and interpretation of their work.

**M:** To put a fine point on Chris' answer, we explicitly come from the communities whose material we archive. We're queer zinemakers. We've been part of punk and anarcho and radical communities for most of our adult lives. QZAP started and is maintained because we are intrinsically connected to the material in the archive.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TOPICS, THEMES, STORIES, ETC. THAT ARE INCLUDED IN THE ZINES? ANY ONES THAT ARE PARTICULAR FAVORITES OR JUST STAND OUT IN SOME WAY?**

**C:** Queer zine topics are many and varied, with personal stories, education, activism, personal and sexual health, music, film, and pop culture the most prevalent. One of my personal favorites is a queer fanzine from Canada called *King of the Fairies*. Spanning 10 issues, the overarching theme is centered around an unlikely pop star in the form of a gay fiddle player from Atlantic Canada named Ashley MacIsaac. Each issue has lavish art, and some come elaborately packaged.

**M:** Chris covered most of the generalities

of our collection. One of the things we talk about when we talk about the zines in QZAP is that they are "dangerous." Zines challenge traditional media structures in form and format, and the content is all over the place. I am often drawn to zines that teach specific skills. One of my favorites is a zine called *Go Fuck Yourself* that teaches how to make your own sex toys. I also really like vegetarian/vegan cookzines.

**HOW CAN PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE TO THE ARCHIVE, EITHER WITH ZINES OR MONETARY/LOGISTICAL SUPPORT? WHERE CAN FOLKS GO TO BROWSE?**

**C:** We accept donations of queer zines by the folks who created them and also collections of queer zines that people may have amassed over time and want to see them preserved for others. Our funding is mainly through contributions and from folks who purchase QZAP-produced queer zines and merchandise, such as our series *From The Punked Out Files of The Queer Zine Archive Project*.

**M:** The best way to make a monetary donation to us is via the PayPal link at <https://qzap.org>. From our website you can donate directly, and also pick up swag like the zines, cute buttons, and t-shirts. In true zinester style, we'll also accept well-concealed cash. ■



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## UW Health HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Program World AIDS Day Community Event Thursday, November 29 5:30-7:30 pm

Brassworks at  
Goodman Community Center  
214 Waubesa St., Madison

Join us for our "We're All in This Together" celebration and remembrance.

- Keynote speaker: Dr. David Malebranche, Morehouse School of Medicine
- Master of Ceremonies: Josie Lynn
- Food and refreshments will be provided

Free and open to the public.  
RSVP online at [bit.ly/rsvpwad](http://bit.ly/rsvpwad)

Questions? Contact Chris Chapman  
at (608) 265-8798.

Interpretación simultánea inglés-español

UWHealth

[uwhealth.org/HIV](http://uwhealth.org/HIV)

# Nov. & Dec.

'Tis the season. Colder months settle over Wisconsin and we look for ways to get cozy in our communities. Fortunately, there's no shortage of fun options, including ideas for more chilled environments, all the way out to holiday bonanzas. Get in the know with some of our calendar highlights below!



NOVEMBER

29

**LEWIS BLACK**  
*Orpheum Theater*

Known as the king of the rant, the comedian and sometime Daily Show segment host will offer up his particular brand of comedic yelling and finger-pointing to skewer anything and anyone that gets under his skin.  
[lewisblack.com](http://lewisblack.com)

NOVEMBER

1-25

**FORWARD THEATER'S "FUN HOME"**  
*Overture Center*

A unique, funny, and heart-shattering new musical based on graphic novelist Alison Bechdel's own life story zig-zags across her past and present as she tries to make sense of her parents' lives, her own sexuality, and how she maps the terrain of her adult world. Starring Karen Olivo.  
[forwardtheater.com](http://forwardtheater.com)

6

**ELECTION NIGHT PARTY TO BENEFIT LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**  
*High Noon Saloon*

Get out and cast your ballot in the important Midterm elections, then head over to the High Noon Saloon for an evening of live music by local bands. It's a fundraiser for the LWV of Dane County,

an organization that has long worked tirelessly to support voter education and enfranchisement. Sprecher Brewery will be giving away free beer, too, while supplies last.  
[high-noon.com](http://high-noon.com)

7-11

**INTERNATIONAL LADY LAUGHS COMEDY FESTIVAL**  
*Various Locations*

Dina Martinez brings back the celebration of women in comedy for another year jam-packed with some of the best stand-up artists in the world. Classes, contests, performances, and a blow-out final night at the Barrymore Theater fill out of the 5-day fest.  
[ladylaughscomedy.com](http://ladylaughscomedy.com)

8

**HONORING VETERANS LUNCHEON**  
*The Madison Club*

The Fair Wisconsin Education Fund hosts its annual lunch gathering to honor LGBTQ and allied servicemembers, with a keynote address by Major Gen.

(Ret.) Marcia Anderson, who was the first African-American woman to achieve the rank of major general in the U.S. Army.  
[fairwisconsineducationfund.com](http://fairwisconsineducationfund.com)

9-11

**REMEMBERING LENNY**  
*Overture Center*

Madison Symphony Orchestra remembers the storied and significant impacts of Leonard Bernstein, revisiting his original scores, along with selections by Beethoven.  
[madisonsymphony.org](http://madisonsymphony.org)

10

**VEGAN CHILI COOK-OFF**  
*Madison Masonic Center*

Savor the fruits of vegan chef's labor at the Alliance for Animals annual chili cook-off, featuring fare from 8 local restaurants. Attendees get to vote on their favorites, along with a panel of judges who will offer their own opinions. Cost covers chili samples, vegan hot dogs, corn bread, and vegan desserts.  
[allanimals.org](http://allanimals.org)

**ROYAL TEASE: A BURLESQUE SPECTACULAR**  
*FIVE Nightclub*

The Wisconsin Burlesque Association once again blows the lid off modern (and very queer) performance, bringing in artists from across the country for a night of subversive cabaret. Rose Whip headlines, with Lucy Stoole as emcee, and local legend Cass Marie Domino joining the cast for the first time.  
[wisconsinburlesqueassociation.com](http://wisconsinburlesqueassociation.com)

10-11

**WINTER ART FAIR OFF THE SQUARE**  
*Monona Terrace*

This annual, cold weather gathering of artists and craftspeople features over 135 Wisconsin exhibitors and their wares. Everything from pottery, paintings, fiber and glass art, to photography, jewelry, and more. Get your holiday shopping done early!  
[artcraftwis.org](http://artcraftwis.org)

17

**SPHERES**  
*Location TBA*

This underground, invite-only, immersive fashion and dance show aims to highlight emerging artists while reinvesting 100% of profits into local arts. Location will only be revealed to ticket holders at the last-minute.  
[enterspheres.com](http://enterspheres.com)

30-Dec. 2

**A MADISON SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS**  
*Overture Center*

John DeMain and the MSO celebrate the arrival of the holiday season with the Mt. Zion Gospel Choir, the Madison Youth Choirs, and esteemed opera singers Cecelia Violetta López and Kyle Ketelsen.  
[madisonsymphony.org](http://madisonsymphony.org)

DECEMBER

1

**FAIR TRADE HOLIDAY FESTIVAL**  
*Monona Terrace*

For those seeking unique, socially responsible, and fashionable Fair Trade gifts, this shopping fest features wares from around the world, with a focus on business and development based on dialogue, transparency, and respect that seeks to create greater equity in the international trading system.  
[fairtrademadison.com](http://fairtrademadison.com)

2

**QUEER CLIMBING SOCIAL**  
*Boulders Climbing Gym*

Climbing instruction at a steep discount, as well as open gym time for more experienced climbers, in a closed, LGBTQ+ identified only sober environment. Food provided.  
[facebook.com/queerclimbingsocial](https://facebook.com/queerclimbingsocial)

7 & 9

**PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS WINTER CONCERT**  
*Christ Presbyterian Church*

Madison's gay men's choir presents "What the Frolic," bringing holiday cheer to a new venue (with plenty of parking) this year, and performing over the course of two days.  
[perfectharmonychorus.org](http://perfectharmonychorus.org)

9

**MERRY MADNESS INDIE ART SHOW**  
*Plan B*

Check out this all-handmade indie art show with 15+ of your favorite local artists. Libations will be available, Slide Food Cart will be there to feed you, and the Packer game will be on at Noon. Also includes a raffle for free, artist-donated items, with one ticket for every vendor you purchase something from.  
[planbmadison.com](http://planbmadison.com)

**WORT'S 43RD ANNIVERSARY SHOW**  
*High Noon Saloon*

Madison's community radio celebrates its 43rd birthday featuring live music by Jaedyn James & The Hunger, and w/ Tony Kannen & The Sound Garden Crew. Tickets are \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door.  
[high-noon.com](http://high-noon.com)

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W.A.A.C. [artcraftwis.org](http://artcraftwis.org)



# Authentic Gains

**Hybrid Athletic Club** and **Bakke Athletics** owner **Kjersten Bakke** was taught from a young age to embrace her curiosity and the unknown, and to be true to herself. These lessons helped shape her somewhat unlikely life trajectory.

HEALTH & FITNESS | BODYBUILDING | FAMILY | CAREERS

**I AM A WIFE, MOTHER, ATTORNEY**, business owner, personal trainer, and drug-free professional bodybuilder. Did I plan to take on all of these roles? Absolutely not, especially not all at the same time.

My life has been anything but a straight shot to where I am today.

Growing up in DeForest, Wisconsin, I was a small town kid—and a busybody. I was raised and influenced by a whole community, but two individuals in particular—my grandmother and a nanny—fostered and honed my creative energy and curiosity. In hindsight, this is likely only because it meant I was busy learning instead of pestering them.

They taught me how to seek out new challenges without a paralyzing fear of failure. I was allowed to try new things, make mistakes, and then try again. I was encouraged to push the boundaries of what I initially thought was possible and I was not allowed to stop until I figured out a reasonable solution. I was always rewarded based on effort and improvement and never the outcome. As a kid, I didn't really know any better, but I know now that this was the single biggest factor in creating the life that I have today.

Many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality. What we really want seems impossibly out of reach so we never even try. I wasn't willing to accept that for my life. I didn't want to look back and ask, "What if?"

I was extremely fortunate to grow up in a small town that was wholly invested in me as an individual. I was different. I didn't fit into one "type" of person who grew up in my small town, but I was always comfortable being what was later described by one of my teachers as, "unapologetically and fearlessly authentic."

I was surrounded by a community of good people who saw something in me that I didn't always see in myself. I was just being a kid, doing what I loved, ignoring some of the "rules," and letting my curiosity get the best of me.

I had every opportunity to take a much different path in life, but for whatever reason a lot of people saw potential in me and helped keep me on the straight and narrow. They took me to practice when I didn't have a ride, pushed me in athletics, held me accountable in school, and would go out of their way to make sure I had every occasion to learn, develop, and thrive. Many of them are now clients of my businesses and law firm, and I have the privilege of giving some support back to them.

When I was in high school, my grandmother was hit hard with cancer. I watched the disease slowly tear her apart and was with her when she passed away. Not long after that, I also watched as my young cousin was taken by cancer. My eyes were opened to the fact that we are not guaranteed a day in this life. From then on, I have felt a sense of urgency as well as a sense of freedom to try new things and follow my heart.

## EMBRACING THE INNER JOCK

All of these factors were the foundation for the twisting path and right turns, switches, and stumbles to where I am now.

At a very young age, I was involved in every single sport I could find my way into. I played soccer, little league baseball, and football with the boys. In high school I excelled in volleyball, basketball, and track and field, which ultimately lead me to the University of Wisconsin where I competed in varsity basketball and track.

I was just 5'10" tall and 170 lbs. when I walked through the doors at the U.W. I was easily one of the smallest post players in the Big Ten Conference, and a whole lot of people counted me out. It was my responsibil-

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Kjersten (far right) with her wife Stephanie and their two children.

ity, then, to learn how to make the most out of my underlying potential. I spent an incredible amount of time in the weight room with some of the best strength and conditioning coaches in the world. They made sure that my movement patterns were sound, that I was strong, that I was eating properly, and that the sequence of workouts I was subjecting my body to were helping to move me in the direction of my goals. In short, I had to work smart, efficiently, and effectively—there wasn't any other option.

I didn't know it then, but these lessons would grow to become the core of our businesses at Hybrid and Bakke Athletics today.

#### SEARCHING FOR A CALLING

I graduated from the U.W. with a degree in Neuroscience and then attended Copenhagen Business School in Denmark on a scholarship, primarily in an attempt to delay being a "grown-up." I think even then, although I didn't consciously know it, I felt that getting trapped in the lives that I saw most adults living was something I didn't want. I didn't want the routine. I didn't really want the mundane. I needed something more—I just didn't know what that was.

I will be the first to admit that while I was a disciplined student at Wisconsin, my education at Copenhagen Business School didn't involve the same rigor. I didn't spend a whole lot of time in classes or with my head in books. Instead, I spent time meeting people, traveling with them, getting to know their stories and their backgrounds. The whole experi-

ence was an amazing turning point in my life, and it opened my eyes to the fact that life is about a whole lot more than simply marching down this path of a variety of successes and failures. I learned that people mattered, and my experiences with people mattered even more.

It opened my eyes to the fact that much of life's happiness comes not from achievement, a paycheck, and our collection of "stuff," but from how we impact real people. I wanted to do something that helped people be their best selves. I wanted to figure out what the world needed that my talents could provide. I think watching two of my family members die relatively early in life helped me understand and appreciate the value of our time here. Once we are gone, our chance to make an impact is done.

Upon my return home I found a career with Epic, where I spent the next four-and-a-half years. It was a great fit for me early in my life. Epic gave me the freedom

and flexibility to do work that I thought was interesting, work that was hard, and work that demanded my best. I didn't have time to be bored.

#### TURNING A HOBBY INTO A CAREER

During my time at Epic, I continued to lift weights and use my science roots to identify effective and efficient training techniques and sound nutrition principles. I was collecting much of this knowledge and implementing these techniques for purely selfish reasons. I wanted to be the best I could be, and if I wanted to make any progress while facing the demands of my career at Epic, I needed to be efficient.

In the back of my mind I was always thinking of ways to actually make money from my "hobby." I saw swarms of young professionals at Epic move from being reasonably fit young adults to relatively sedentary and unhealthy in as short as two years' time. I escaped that trend using the techniques I was using and knew there was value in it—I just didn't yet know how to monetize it.

When I finally hit the point at Epic where I started to feel that I was just dealing with the same problems in different clothes, I knew I needed a change. I also had this idea that if I didn't leave Epic soon, I was going to get myself into normal adult commitments (which I avoided at all costs to that point) that would make it exponentially more difficult to take a big leap of faith away from the safety and security that Epic provided.

Many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality. What we really want seems impossibly out of reach so we never even try. I wasn't willing to accept that for my life. I didn't want to look back and ask, "What if?"

#### RIGHT TURNS AND BIG WINS

I started searching for what my next risky yet semi-secure move was going to be. I had several friends who were lawyers and saw two opportunities in law school. First, it allowed me to be a student again, which was a big win. Second, I felt that law school could give me some valuable tools regardless of my ultimate career choice.

While most people complain about the demands of law school, it actually provided me with the flexibility and mental space I needed to figure out how to make money doing what I loved—athletics. I finally had a

relatively set schedule and saw an opportunity to use all that I had learned to compete in a drug-free bodybuilding competition.

My first contest was in the spring of 2014 during my second year of law school. I won that show and earned professional status. I then competed in the fall of that same year in WNBF World Championships, finishing eighth. From there, people's interest in my story, my techniques, and my coaching ability began to grow. This was the very beginning of my march to where we are with our businesses today. Throughout the next two years, I continued to compete and win competitions across the country from Sacramento to New York. I knew I had plenty to learn but was willing to put in the effort and stay patient. Somehow, with the right combination of work and luck, my life presented the right opportunities at the right times.

Demand for my consulting services grew with each subsequent contest win, and I made the decision to start Bakke Athletics in early 2015 while I was still in law school. Following graduation, I began work at Michael Best's Madison office as a patent and trademark attorney in the litigation department. While I loved the difficulty of the work that I was tackling at the firm, I knew relatively early on that I wasn't going to be happy or fulfilled doing that work forever. Life has always steered me back to the idea of making a living from my love for athletic performance and bodybuilding, and I simply couldn't do that while handling the demands of being an associate at a large law firm.

#### TAKING THE PLUNGE

The following year, in 2016, I made the decision to leave the epitome of what most law school students dream of—a great job at a large law firm with fantastic colleagues. Walking into my supervising partner's office that day was equal parts terrifying and exciting. I was very aware that I could simultaneously be making the best and worst decisions of my

life, but somehow I knew it was the right move.

I quickly took steps to form my own practice while finishing up some responsibilities for my clients at Michael Best, and was spending time growing Bakke Athletics. I was also scheduled for a bodybuilding contest two weeks later!

I used nearly every minute of the next two weeks working on something—websites, finding software for my law practice, client needs, and making sure I was ready for my contest. I was stressed—but having an absolute blast.

As a gay woman growing up, the people in my life that helped me embrace productive failures also helped me to understand that we needed to be 100% authentic without fear of rejection. To find true peace, I needed to let the armor go.

The expectation that I was the "expert" was lifted and I let myself approach things with kid-like curiosity again. For the first time in a long time I was free from all of the things I was "supposed" to do, and I was able to do things that I wanted to do, the way I thought they should be done.

Two of the coolest transition weeks of my life flew by. I competed on May 14 of 2016, took third, made the decision that I was going to take some time away from competing as a bodybuilder to add some size and finally recover my body—and then my wife entered my life. Literally that same night.

The night that I competed, a mutual friend had a birthday party. Stephanie and I both worked at Epic around the same time, and I remembered her from there, but our interaction was limited to time spent in the same

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Kjersten inside her gym, Hybrid Athletic Club.

Our goal in creating the current Hybrid was to reach more people in the general public that were struggling with how to lose weight in a sustainable and healthy way, and improve their training under the demands of busy careers, children, and the normal pace of daily life.

meetings. To set the stage a bit, you need to understand what I look like after I have just competed in a bodybuilding show. I had an unnaturally dark tan, I hadn't showered in over 48 hours, I still had the remnants of "glaze" on which is intended to give us a sheen on stage, and there is something about the smell of the tanning products that we use that lingers

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in the worst way. So, that was me, looking and smelling like I desperately needed a shower.

And I literally saw the most impressively stunning human being I have ever seen across the room. She made eye contact and then her gaze snapped away, indicating that she was either incredibly interested but shy, or not at all interested—either way, I was going to track her down. Thankfully, she was the one that eventually sought me out that night, and the rest is basically history.

**IN THIS TOGETHER**

Fortunately for me, Steph identifies with my need to live outside the lines a bit. Steph grew up in small town Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, and got her start in trying new things when she left for college in Alaska, where she ultimately lived for eight years. She too played college basketball, and a fundamental part of her life involved weight training and nutrition, even during her professional career at Epic.

As our relationship grew, and we realized that being away from each other was basically torture (we are that strange couple that could spend every minute together), we started talking hypothetically about opening a small gym to accommodate some of the requests I was getting to do hands-on training with groups and individuals, and to allow her to step away from Epic and the travel demands that her career required. I was planning on continuing to run my law practice, and eventually Steph would move into a more operational role for the gym.

In January of 2017 we took a month-long trip to South Africa, where we did some volunteer work and toured the country. We began more seriously discussing the details surrounding the gym idea on our way home, and like most things that involve my decision making, we went from 0 to 100 without really even knowing it.

We got a call in the airport with a tip that Hybrid Athletic Club may be for sale. Within three sleepless weeks of that call the deal was done and we were on our way to starting some significant improvements to the equipment and facility. Also, typical of how Steph and I work—we bought the club on a Tuesday and were married that Friday.

**THE BALANCED LIFE**

Our goal in creating the current Hybrid was to reach more people in the general public that were struggling with how to lose weight in a sustainable and healthy way, and improve their training under the demands of busy careers, children, and the normal pace of daily life.

Anyone who knows me fully understands that my wife is my world. We frequently get questions about how we balance our businesses and family. In all honesty, my wife and kids always come first—my commitment to them may require some very early mornings, late nights, and a little creativity—but we always find a way to put our family first.

We have become pretty good at allocating time and mental energy to everything in our day according to importance. We don't let our emotions and energy get hijacked by relatively insignificant bumps in the road, which allows us to work very efficiently, make time for each other, time for our kids, and move forward with all the good that we have going on.

The biggest challenge we have had together is managing the growth of our businesses and my law practice in a way that preserves the quality and personal touch of our work while still balancing family life. We simply won't compromise on the quality of either. Every single business decision we make starts with a close evaluation of how it will impact our family and our client experiences.

For example, when we first started at Hybrid Athletic Club I was training clients 10–12 hours a day, six days a week because I wanted to ensure that the people who were buying training were getting a very high level of service and education. As a result, our clients have now come to expect

a lot of personal attention and individualized guidance.

In December of 2017, our twins were born and required a couple weeks in the NICU. That was the first time in a year I stepped away from the gym, and since then I've weaned away from those long hours in order to spend valuable time raising my family with my wife and attending to the needs of my law practice.

In order to continue to provide a very high level of service, we have built an extremely talented and well-educated team around us. I am so impressed by, and proud of, the current members of my training teams and their abilities and attention to detail.

**LIVING AND WORKING WITH AUTHENTICITY**

One of our greatest business and personal challenges is finding time and space to experiment with new business ideas. Developing these ideas and figuring out all of the logistics that are required when you set out down a new path takes time and mental resources that aren't always available with three thriving businesses and twin babies. We have a list of business ideas that sits in waiting until I either get so impatient that I need to move ahead with one, or we have time and space that opens up.

On occasion the lack of time necessary to explore some of these ideas is hard for me. I struggle because I get so excited about the potential for some of our new ideas to help people. Sometimes I miss the "kid" feel of exploring something brand new for the first time. We stay patient, though, and work through what we need to in order to get to what we want.

As a gay woman growing up, the people in my life that helped me embrace productive failures also helped me to understand that we needed to be 100% authentic without fear of rejection. To find true peace, I needed to let the armor go. Early in life I found that sometimes our need for acceptance by society could make us invisible. I never wanted to be just like everyone else. I wanted to have my own style. I wanted to have my own voice. We have brought those lessons to our businesses and they have thrived because of it.

Everyone who walks through our doors knows we are a gay family. We are open, honest, and transparent. I could not be more proud of my relationship with my wife, and it is at the center of who I have become as a person and professional.

We are fully aware that there are some people who will not consider being members at our gym, or clients of my law practice, simply because we are gay; and to be honest, that has been one of the things we really haven't had to worry about.

We set out to open a gym so we could share the knowledge, lessons, and skills that we have developed over the last 16 years. We focus on quality. We focus on educating our clients. We genuinely care about every person that is a part of Hybrid and Bakke Athletics. We care about the quality of services we provide. We don't care whether you have just started lifting or whether you are a world-class bodybuilder. Both train at our gym and we help both make progress in the direction of their goals.

The attention to quality and true understanding of each client that walks through our doors has always come first. I think the fact that we care so deeply about our client base has helped even those people that may initially be a bit resistant to accepting us as a gay family feel comfortable to the point where they genuinely care about me, my wife, and my kids.

Our attention to every member that walks through our doors has helped us create what is perhaps the most diverse fitness facility in the area; and yet it has a family feel every time you visit.

Although I never planned on any one of these particular businesses or careers growing up, all of my life experiences blended together to create the life we have now. It takes a sense of curiosity, a sense of adventure, a constant desire to learn and try new things coupled with an open eye for opportunity. And then, a gut-check just before leaping. ■

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# Taking Stock of Health

The LGBTQ community faces unique and ongoing challenges in the quest for equitable health care. What progress has been made, and where do barriers remain?

HEALTH CARE DOCTORS SYSTEMS LGBTQ HEALTH ADVOCACY



**IN EARLY OCTOBER**, *Our Lives* brought together a group of local medical professionals to talk about progress made and challenges remaining for LGBTQ-related health care in Wisconsin. They discussed everything from changes in medical record keeping, to comprehensive training of medical staff at all levels, access to transgender-specific care, our relationships with our doctors, privacy concerns, barriers to care, and much more.

**Molly Herrmann** of Humble Pie Consulting agreed to mediate the conversation. Other participants were **Dr. Kathy Oriel** of Oriel Medicine; **Shiva Bidar**, Chief Diversity Officer for UW Health; **Jay Botsford**, program coordinator with both the Transgender Youth Network of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition; and **Dr. Britt Allen**, assistant professor of pediatrics at the U.W. School of Medicine and Public Health, co-medical director of the Pediatric and Adolescent Transgender Health clinic, and co-founder of the Transgender Youth Resource Network.

## FIRST, THE POSITIVES

**MOLLY HERRMANN** We're in 2018, there've been some changes and things that are going better than they have in the past. I thought we'd just start with recent improvements. What's going well?

**SHIVA BIDAR** The fact that there is actually intentional attention and work that's being done around LGBTQ health care, so that it's not anymore something that is being done in pockets. UW Health is intentionally trying to look at how the delivery of care is happening system-wide and how we can improve that.

The second one—and this is still, like everything, a work in progress—is attention and improvement around our electronic medical records and how can we really make sure that it is allowing us to create a more affirming way of working with our patients.

The third piece is the willingness to have the conversation around creating a comprehensive gender services program at UW Health. We are willing to be out there as an organization and say this is part of what we want to do and to highlight the work.

**KATHY ORIEL** I think some of the really concrete progress has been around policy. There have been fits and starts; there were great hopes with the Non-Discrimination Policy nationally. Then there was an election. There is progress in the fact that there are two people [who won, in court, the right to] medical assistance. Medical assistance is public health insurance for people that don't have a lot of economic resources. There was an injunction saying that services need to be provided by the state. Once there is a ruling with public health insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare, the private insurers tend to follow.

**JAY BOTSFORD** I do want to make sure that I'm clarifying between health care and health outcomes, because health care counts for about 20% of health outcomes, if you have access to care. Looking statewide, some of the things that have been really positive in both realms is—I will echo Shiva in saying that there are more folks focused on intentionally provid-

Something that doesn't get talked about very often, that I think is really important, is accessibility of pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV. It has made a huge impact on health. Particularly for gay, bisexual, and queer men; and other men who have sex with men, and trans folks.

ing exceptional care. Most of that has been within larger health systems.

We still have some gaps for folks who need access to, for example, free and federally qualified health centers. Planned Parenthood has been making progress. Some public health departments have been making progress. I also want to name the success that we had in the Group Insurance Board, for making their decision so that state employees and all employees on the state insurance plan, which ends up being about 250,000 people and their families, will have health insurance starting January 1 that no longer has an exclusion for transition-specific health care.

Looking at health a little bit more broadly, something that doesn't get talked about very often, that I think is really important, is accessibility of pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV. It has made a huge impact on health. Particularly for gay, bisexual, and queer men; and other men who have sex with men, and trans folks. Because in those populations are where we see the most burden of HIV in the state. Having access to PrEP in a meaningful way, to have programs that are trying to get into peoples hands, has really been a huge movement forward.

**BRITT ALLEN** I think the other thing to look at is, what is the information that we have available about health outcomes? There are some things that are measured and that we're able to ask questions about over time, but I think we're still pretty much in the infancy of gathering data about the health of LGBTQ people.

There are huge disparities for some of the kids I've seen from other parts of the state, who are in places where they don't have resources in their schools. They don't have resources locally, in terms of health care. So we have some areas that have invested a lot of resources that are really rich and growing. I think our school district does a really nice job in supporting kids and their health that way. But it is also in contrast to other areas that really haven't been able to take those steps, or haven't taken those steps.

**SB** This is maybe more of a statement about Madison. We talk a lot, and everyone is, in theory, supportive. But what are the actual actions that reflect that value statement that people make? Look at Jay's position. The fact that [UW Health] has gone from a grant-funded position to now a position that's being funded by the organization. Having been able to really say, if we are gonna be talking about these issues, and saying that we really are committed; that we really need to put the money behind it, and the resources.

We just also hired a new RN gender services coordinator whose going to be coordinating the patient experience across the organization. That's

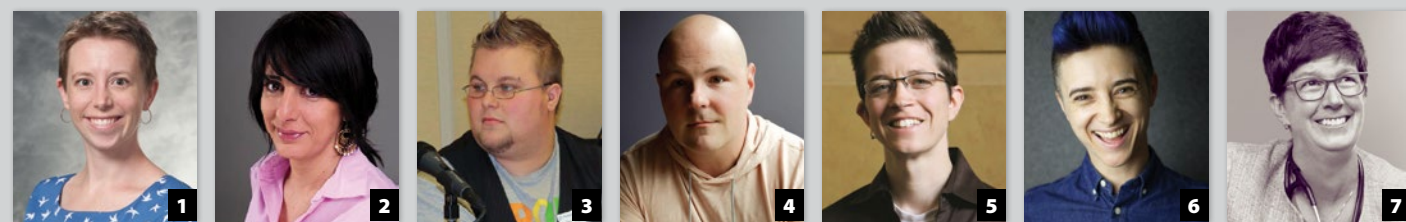
a brand new position that was also approved. I think that's where you start seeing that it really is a longer-term commitment. When people start saying, "Okay, we are gonna actually have roles within a system that are dedicated to this work."

**KO** When we look at health disparities—and again this is through my lens as someone who's been in both worlds, and is currently doing primary care and medically assisted therapy—treatment for people who struggle with substances is obscenely gendered. Residential treatment even, partial hospitalization programs. The positive of that, though, is there are conversations, and there are nationally programs for folks with queer identity. But even very traditional treatment programs are now asking the question, "How can we help people in their recovery and not alienate them with the second intake question?"

**MH** Reminds me of sort of the direction that the intimate partner violence or domestic violence world has been going for a while, from this very "these folks are here, and these folks are there," to that's not always the case. That's an area that has really grown a lot to be more inclusive, and to recognize that it doesn't always look like we always thought it would.

## LOCAL ADVOCATES & SUCCESSES

**SB** There are people who have been able to start their practices, that are really focused, and really relevant to the LGBTQ population. Such as Owen and Chelsea [Karcher]. Having people that are able now to lead work in this very concrete area that continues to be a huge gap, that's a positive that there are people that are doing that work.



**1 Dr. Britt Allen**, assistant professor of pediatrics at the U.W. School of Medicine and Public Health, co-medical director of the Pediatric and Adolescent Transgender Health clinic, and co-founder of the Transgender Youth Resource Network. **2 Shiva Bidar**, Chief Diversity Officer for UW Health **3 Jay Botsford**, program coordinator with both the Transgender Youth Network of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition **4 Patrick Farabaugh**, Editor at *Our Lives* magazine **5 Molly Herrmann**, Humble Pie Consulting **6 Emily Mills**, Editor at *Our Lives* magazine **7 Dr. Kathy Oriel**, Oriel Medicine

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**BA** Right, and just to speak on what you said before, Shiva, also to have resources from the county. So for example, Owen and Chelsea are doing work with support from a county grant to address issues of access to care. I think that is a positive thing. I also think that the work in the formal education that's happening in schools for teachers and for students in the school district, has been something that, from my point of view, as a pediatrician, has changed the way that kids and families talk about LGBTQ identities and experiences. And giving kids access to affirming and supportive language and actually in way that challenge their families and their communities to also be more supportive. I think that's been a good change.

**KO** That made me think; hats off to the journalists in the room. There have been families and individuals who have had the courage to tell their stories publicly. *Our Lives* has played this amazing role in that, too. When I think of especially our youth seeing other people like them in mainstream media, it is a really positive thing.

**JB** I also want to name and uplift the work of some of the organizations that have really been addressing these issues. Particularly looking at health inequities and health outcome inequities and how do we go upstream to address some of this. Diverse & Resilient, which is based in Milwaukee, has been continually pushing these conversations forward.

Freedom Inc doing the work that they are doing to get police out of schools to protect young people from police contact, because the school to prison pipeline continues to massively impact LGBTQ students of color in Madison and throughout the state. We see, over and over again in both juvenile and adult facilities, more LGBTQ people than cis and straight people; and significantly more QTPOC folks than white LGBTQ folks. So there is this concentration that is really happening, and then those spheres abuse and mistreat these young people and these adults horribly.

And then there's a lot of non-LGBTQ organizations that have been really investing in LGBTQ work. One of the ones that the trans health coalition has done a lot of work with is Public Health Madison & Dane County, particularly their sexual and reproductive health folks. They are really invested in making their services accessible, and then also looking at their prevention services. Again, those different determinants of health, what else needs to happen in Dane County to make this an exceptional place to live for LGBTQ+ people. And for everybody to be able to get the highest level of health they can.

## BARRIERS TO CARE

**MH** Britt, I quote you all the time saying, "Somebody interacts with seven people when they come to UW for an appointment." So, how do we get all those seven folks at all those systems? When I think of challenges, I think we've gotten beyond the, "There's that one doctor who's

LGBTQ friendly," but some people are still having experiences, and I'm still hearing about them, where somebody really messes up. It happens around parenting sometimes, like, "Who's the real mom?" or "Who's the parent?" or "How do you fit into this?" That's still a real turn-off.

**JB** Are we past that? No, we're fucking not.

**MH** Not in Milwaukee.

**JB** Not in Madison.

**KO** I have been arguing for 25 years that we don't need a Fenway Health. We don't need a Lyon-Martin Health Services. Queer health care is mainstream. This is not specialty care.

We just also hired a new RN gender services coordinator whose going to be coordinating the patient experience across the organization. That's a brand new position that was also approved. I think that's where you start seeing that it really is a longer-term commitment.

There are such vulnerabilities in large systems, and with medical records where people are telling you the most painful, private things. If you put it in Epic, anybody can go to the search bar. Any visit through the last decade, and they can search that word and find it. With vulnerable folks, intimate partner violence, queerness, substance use that has really intense legal and social consequences, what is the right way to provide care to people? I'm not sure I know, but I think it's something we need to ask.

**JB** Kathy, I appreciate you bringing up the electronic health records. I do a lot of training and education with providers and systems... When I look at EHR EMR, one of the many good things about the Affordable Care Act was that systems had to port over to them.

In talking with providers, one of the major things that comes up every single time about providing trans-affirming and LGBTQ+ affirming health care in general is the goddamn health record, because you can do things like search. So, everybody gets outed to every provider that they see within a system, or every provider that has access to that medical record, because there's a relationship between that system and this system, which you don't know about because it's an opt-out, not an opt-in, and your provider generally doesn't educate you about it because your provider may not even understand it.

**KO** Folks who are 10, 20 years post-transition, they don't have gonads, so they need hormones just like anyone. Two people used this term [to me]. They're like, "I'm not gender dysphoric. I'm gender euphoric."

One of the things I would do is, you have to use the number code, but you can change the wording. I'd put "gender euphoria."

**BA** There's definitely hope, and I think one of the challenges in all this is to recognize, both for systems and individual providers, is helping people sit with the idea that this is complex and sometimes ambiguous. That there may be people that it's really hard to think about that this might be in a note that my orthopedist could find. And other people that are like, "I don't want to come out to every provider that I encounter. Like I want that to be there, and I want it to be consistent, and I want to be appropriately gendered at every visit," and to try to build things that actually support that.

**EMILY MILLS** Wouldn't this help all patients?

**BA** Yes!

**SB** I think that's the exceptionalism of it and the curiosity. Like if it weren't so stigmatized to be trans or non-binary—or gay still, for that matter—no one would be searching for it in the first place.

**MH** That's the issue. We're afraid because we don't know who the provider is and what their belief system is that's going to see it. The problem is that they're overly curious about what kind of body parts we have or how we're partnered or whatever. Then we're withholding information from a provider we do feel comfortable with because of that.

## RESEARCH & CHILL

**KO** I also think that hormones, in their various forms, are not that different. In some ways, I'd like to see medicine just chill, man. My God. We throw oral contraceptives at cis women—which is great, really—and stick implants in arms for contraception and never check a lab test.

We don't have to send folks to a tertiary care medical center for transition hormones. We don't poke them in the arm every two to three months. So, yes, we need to be curious about what might be unique, and this is bread-and-butter medicine that we do every single day.

**JB** I absolutely agree with you. One of the things that gets in the way for providers who are not informed or experts, is "But there's no research!" Part of this is we need to know, so we can tell doctors, "Chill the fuck out."

Or if a system will allow them to actually chill out because there's not a standard evidence-based intervention that demonstrates that this is fine. Systemically there's lots of pressures on just the health system and what they can do to continue to have a contract with Medicaid, to be able to not get sued for violating the many, many health care laws, which then gets transmitted to providers, which then gets transmitted to patients and interferes with the way that care can be provided in a really effective way.

If a health center loses its contract with Medicare or Medicaid, then there are people who have no access to health care in that region at all. So, there's a balancing act. Then we need some research that actually looks at health outcomes for LGBTQ people in general and then effective interventions for LGBTQ people in general. We have how many decades of research about smoking, and this tiny little bit of it actually looks at LGBTQ people, even though we know that the rate is double that of straight people.

**MH** And [abatement efforts] weren't as effective with LGBTQ people. Because smoking's gone down generally, but not for LGBTQ people. Clearly something is going on.

Of intersections and building trust

**SB** I think one important piece is LGBTQ folks of color. I think that if we were talking about, especially in this community, layers of adding to the inequities that we see, that's an area that we really need to be paying attention to.

**JB** What would make the biggest difference for LGBTQ folks of color? Ending racism. Honestly, ending racism would make the world better for everyone, including white people. Ending heterosexism and cissexism would make the world better for everyone, including straight and cis

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people. Making PrEP, for example, more accessible for people is going to significantly address HIV infection.

**BA** And could be a gateway service. If you get somebody in—a young, black, queer man in to get PrEP because it’s a very immediate, solutions-driven prevention strategy—pair that with a primary care visit as well and have that go well. Then you’ve got somebody with a good experience on their record, and so, maybe it’s finding what the gateway service is that would help people.

If you look at the two medical schools in Wisconsin, just as an example, neither of them have required core courses that cover LGBTQ+ health.

**JB** And there is research that indicates that doing that is super-effective. If you have a great LGBTQ-affirming program that is doing PrEP really well and is able to partner with providing primary care in that visit and also in the HIV services realm—I’ve just been reading a bunch of research and doing presentations for comprehensive care providers this month. If you have, again, really affirming HIV care and then are able to partner that with providing hormones for trans folks, that makes folks more likely to come back and continue to get the HIV care that they need whether that’s PrEP or ART.

There are definitely ways, in the systems that are already functioning really well, to find partnerships and add things that, again, have to be meaningfully affirming, affordable, accessible, competent, and appropriate for what folks need. It’s those pieces that most providers cannot do right now because they don’t know how or they panic in the room.

**PATRICK FARABAUGH** A lot of my experience just comes through my own peer and social groups. The thing that I’ve seen the most is when your care isn’t directly related to your identity. People withholding their identity entirely. Probably the thing that I get the most referral requests from people for is primary care providers. As of statistics from a few years ago, gay men in town, the percentage that were out to their PCP was somewhere around 35%. I don’t think that’s gone up much, even now.

**KO** It’s just not the same as behavior. Being a gay man does not necessarily—I know people often don’t know this, but—it does not mean that you’re at higher risk for HIV.

**BA** We did a survey of trans youth in Wisconsin and a large percentage of them were not out to their PCPs.

**JB** It was about a third. Then of the folks that were out, more than three-quarters of them experienced significant harm or negative interactions with their PCP.

**BA** I think that also varies a lot based on geography. There are plenty of kids that come to me from far away that aren’t out to anyone in their community apart from close friends, maybe, and if they get to me they’re out to their parents, usually.

I think there’s on-the-ground stuff that can and should be done, but then I think, what are actually the big-picture things that could drive that? Because I think that a lot of us learn to do a lot of education, and we try to reach out to as many spheres as we can, but I’m thinking about nondiscrimination legislation in every state related to sexual orientation

and gender identity. Having a meaningful, nondiscrimination portion of the ACA or whatever the health care law is, and within organizations also having that. They have to be meaningful, though.

Somebody has to say, “Look, you committed to this, and so I want to hold you accountable.” Like things that are actually reinforced, and there’s actually resources devoted to. If you’re gonna say that you include sexual orientation or gender identity in your non-discrimination policy, that has to mean something, and that means that you review what comes back to patient resources, and you think about what it means to actually change your system in that way.

**MH** This happens in schools, too, where there’s policy, and GSAFE will talk about this, but there’s not procedure built onto the policy. You get this non-discrimination policy that says we can’t discriminate. So what are we gonna do? And that’s when you get into the bathroom facility stuff, that’s when you get into name change, that’s gonna go to student records, and so I think you’re right, it’s the starting point, but then there has to be some ownership on the part of whatever the system is to make it happen so that we’re not discriminating against black people or queer people or black queer people. We’re gonna do these things so that it doesn’t happen. I think it’s the addition of procedure and practice to policy.

### WHO’S EDUCATING MY DOCTOR?

**BA** I think there is room and space to do a lot more. I would say, when you see again what’s happening in medical school now compared to when we’re talking about medical school 20 years ago, great progress. Does everybody have the same training and understanding? No. Are we working to try to have some better standards and what expectations are? Yes. Is it gonna take a while? Yes, too.

**JB** If you look at the two medical schools in Wisconsin, just as an example, neither of them have required core courses that cover LGBTQ+ health. So you can take it as an elective or maybe you go to that one day lecture where they invite a whole bunch of people in and don’t pay them and mine their medical trauma for the benefit of the medical students.

There are definitely examples where there’s required course content or you can choose to opt-in to a whole training series that’s part of your medical school. That’s great. But then we think about just how gender and sex are even talked about in medical curriculum and the ways that pictures even show up in medical texts. It’s ridiculous.

In most health care systems, there are not options for fellowship or training and residency or an internship that actually focuses on LGBT populations in any way. That really varies location to location. We just have tons and tons of mid- and late-career professionals who have never had a patient come up to them, never had had any sort of mention of this population. We have this widely varied experience where folks have intentionally sought education that often they have had to pay for themselves or take time off for themselves to find. Some systems that have a little bit of education built in and some that are trying to do better, and some just aren’t doing anything at all.

### BETTER PATIENT-DOCTOR PARTNERSHIPS

**EM** My particular experience is as a cisgender woman who identifies as bisexual, who is also polyamorous. I’ll go in to my doctor and be like, “I would like to get STI testing.” The doctors sometimes push back and seem confused that I would want that, asking “Have you been having sex

with new male partners?” “Well, no I have not, but I have a new female partner.” And they’re like, “Well why would you care? You don’t need this.” And I’m like, “Why am I educating my doctor right now?”

**KO** I think the reason you’re educating your doctor is because you will get better care. It is only by the grace of hundreds of people who, and not just queer people, folks with relatively rare conditions, that have been patient with me and have brought things to me, and I have learned so much. I think this model of teaching my doctor or my provider isn’t necessarily bad. The question is not, “Do you have to teach them?” but “Are they receptive to input, and are they willing to have a conversation with you about it?”

**BA** I agree. I’m glad you said that Kathy, because I agree that there is this belief or perception that somehow these doctors know it all. They know everything about every condition. And it’s impossible. Why would they know about everything? I think the difference is almost an attitude of inclusion, a behavior that you’ve taken time to learn the basics. I’m sorry but in today’s world, you won’t be like, “what does ‘cisgender’ mean?”

I think it’s really also telling everybody that this is a partnership with your physician....you have to have trust. Trust is the base and I think that the work that needs to be done and that we need to continue engaging is, how do we move from a place in which, for very good reasons, there have been trust issues? Like what Patrick was saying about the percentage of gay men out to their PCPs—it’s a trust issue. People don’t wanna say, because they don’t know, or they have experiences where things have not gone well after they’ve disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**JB** I also think that it is inexcusable, in the era of the internet and a million resources that have been created that are free and often have continuing medical education units attached to them, that any provider is requiring a patient to educate them about their identities, groupness, and communities. It’s one thing if you come in and you have a condition that affects 0.000002% of the population and the doc has never heard of it or maybe heard the word in medical school and now needs some help to make sure that your care is happening in a really good way.

It is another thing when we are talking about targeted, historically, and socially marginalized groups who are in down power positions socially and then are in down power positions when they enter that freaking medical office, and are put in a position of expecting bad care. And now I also have to educate you. I don’t care how open you are. I don’t care how trusting you are. If I have to define what “trans” means, if I have to define my body for you, and you don’t understand what that means, that is absolutely inexcusable. You can look it up.

### PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

**MH** The one thing I would add to that is that there is no one magic solution for addressing unconscious bias. That’s internal work that people need to do. I can provide the truth, which I’m doing, for people to do that work, but it takes personal commitment. Unlearning your biases, unlearning racism, unlearning all of these layers of things that happened to and for the LGBTQ community, all of those, it’s work that I do daily. I realize daily what I have done that wasn’t the right thing to say at the right time. I reflect on those things. It keeps me up. People need to be willing to do that. It is not easy work and it is not like, “Okay, now I honor my racism and I’m over my phobia.” Great. And it was all really a nice trip down some beautiful landscape. No, it’s hard. I think taking responsibility is the

biggest thing.

**BA** And I think people need to make it a priority, right? Insistence on making it a priority. Because it is life or death.

**JB** I tell people that one of the best ways that we can make change is to make things expensive and embarrassing for people over and over again. ‘Cause if you make it expensive and embarrassing, then the system has to change, a person has to change.

### GET INVOLVED, STAY INVOLVED

**MH** What story do we want to tell the LGBTQ+ communities about the status of health care in the future that we see? I think it’s that there’s been change, and there needs to be more.

**JB** Hold us accountable.

**KO** I think that, in addition to work being done systematically, for our community, it is not any one person’s individual responsibility to educate their provider. But, if they’re in a place and they have the energy to write a letter outlining what happened to them in the visit, those are read and those are taken in. It’s not their responsibility, but I think, if people have the motivation to do that, each individual can continue to help shift things so that people understand.

**MH** There is power in an individual or even to just get involved. There are initiatives, down to writing letters. ■



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# Pushing Policy

Madison area native **Todd Larson** went from the Peace Corps to the United Nations to the Obama Administration, helping pioneer the fight for LGBTQI rights within some of the world's most complex bureaucracies.

LGBTQ RIGHTS FOREIGN POLICY GAY PROFESSIONALS

**TODD LARSON GREW UP IN THE MADISON AREA**, graduating from Memorial High School. He attended Carleton College, earning a major in History with an emphasis in French. Todd served as Peace Corps Volunteer in Togo, West Africa, after which he earned his Juris Doctor and Master's Degree (International Studies) from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Todd's first career comprised 20 years with the United Nations (UN), serving in a variety of legal and administrative capacities. His UN career entailed living in an array of countries including Namibia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, and Haiti. He also served for many years at UN Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland and in New York City.

Todd's second career was as senior Presidential Appointee in the Obama Administration. His title was Senior LGBT Coordinator. His mandate was to work with the White House, the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID; where he was based), to help define and give substance to an emerging US foreign policy priority—the human rights and development of LGBTQI persons around the world.

Between his first and second careers Todd was—and presently is—happily retired on his family farm southwest of Madison. For when he decides his second retirement is definitive, Todd has prepared his farm to run as Bed and Breakfast.

*Our Lives* spoke with Todd about how he went from a theater aficionado to a major behind-the-scenes human and LGBTQI rights advocate.

***What was the environment for coming out/being a LGBTQI person when you were growing up? How do you think that influenced your professional trajectory and the work and causes you focused on?***

Truth be told, I was something of a late bloomer when it comes to fully assuming my gay identity. There's a standing joke among LGBTQI Peace Corps alumni: 'Join the Peace Corps, and come out!' That's fairly common, and it pretty much applied to me. There is lots of spare time to reflect. I didn't fully assume my identity until I had returned to the States, after two years in Togo, and started law school.

That said, I was of course questioning and curious as a teenager—probably no more and no less than any other high school student. That was a different era, more hostile in some senses, but in all honesty the delay in full assumption of my gay identity was less a function of societal or familial pressure and much more a function of my personal predisposition to study and reflect on important issues before taking



Todd on his family farm southwest of Madison.

I was literally fired by the head of my then-UN employing agency for being gay. Not for poor performance or professional divergence—on the contrary, my annual evaluations were consistently very favorable—but for being gay. When he learned about my sexuality, the head of the agency said at a gathering of senior staff, "This place is becoming a Cage aux Folles; let's get rid of him."

one route over another. Gay, Virgo, law degree: It's a bad combination.

I came back from the Peace Corps, met a great guy—we're no longer a couple, but he remains one of my closest friends—and have been comfortably ensconced in my gay identity ever since.

***What have some of your own personal challenges been over time, and how did you work to overcome and/or grapple with them? Especially in relation to having such personal elements tied up with your professional work.***

At the beginning of my UN career, I didn't set out to be an LGBTQI leader. I set out to be the best, most effective American serving this important international intergovernmental organization, with staff from all over the world. I am, at my core, a very proud American. Through my earlier undergrad studies overseas and my time with the Peace Corps, I had already begun to understand the value—for both America and the broader international community—of a favorably impactful American role on the international stage.

Personal experience often drives professional trajectory and political conviction, right? I experienced two seminal events early in my UN career, which in essence offered me the mantle of LGBTQI leadership. It was a mantle that I'd have been a coward to decline, as I was much less at risk than my LGBTQI colleagues from most other countries. My immigration status was not a function of my employment status; the worst thing that could have happened to me was that I'd be fired and remained in the U.S. I'd not have been sent back home to possible death.

Back to the two pivotal events, though.

First, I was partnered with a great guy—also a UN employee—who was assassinated in the course of his employment, serving at an international hot spot back in the early '90s. Because the UN didn't recognize our relationship as a bona fide "family unit"—in the same way that opposite gender marital unions have always been recognized by the UN—I had no official standing as his partner in the aftermath of his death.

I had no right to obtain details of the circumstances surrounding his death. No right to interface with the UN's insurance firm in order to ensure his biological family would receive the full insurance benefits to which they were entitled. While I eventually prevailed on both counts, I did so only through the pulling of strings and sympathetic personal connections. That profound ignobility got my blood boiling.

Second, a few years later, I was literally fired by the head of my then-UN employing agency for being gay. Not for poor performance or professional divergence—on the contrary, my annual evaluations were consistently very favorable—but for being gay. When he learned about my sexuality, the head of the agency said at a gathering of senior staff, "This place is becoming a Cage aux Folles; let's get rid of him." Again, it made my blood boil.

I appealed through internal administrative mechanisms, in the direction of the International Labor Organization. I won, establishing important legal precedent; he lost—both the case, and a big chunk of his standing and credibility.

These two experiences led me, in the mid 1990s, to a group of LGBTQI UN employees in New York, which had formed an informal "employee resource group" and begun to identify an agenda. In due course, I was able to help flesh out and pursue the agenda.

***How did you come to work at the UN, and what were your focuses while there?***

Throughout high school and college I was totally into theater, and assumed it would be my career. That passion began to shift when I studied in France during undergrad—seduced by the thrills of living in another country and culture, and interacting with folks in a language other than my mother tongue. I entirely abandoned theater following my next international experience, two years in West Africa with the Peace Corps.

I assessed that I had three basic career options after law and grad schools: 1) foreign service, but I recognized that route would have me spending on average half my career serving an Administration with which I didn't share political conviction, and I wasn't comfortable with that prospect; 2) international non-profit organization, which I did test out immediately following law and grad schools, but I found the single mandate focus, and single-minded constituency, too restricting; 3) international, intergovernmental organization.

I set my sights on the UN, spent 20 years there, and wouldn't change that period in my life or professional trajectory for anything.

***You were instrumental in getting certain LGBTQI employee rights implemented at the UN. Talk about what you and others accomplished in that arena, and some of the work that went into***



From Left to Right: Todd with Desmond Tutu, a South African theologian known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist. With First Lady Michelle Obama.

***achieving it. How difficult is it to change things within an organization like the UN?***

Settle in comfortably: this is necessarily a fairly detailed accounting. And note that I, of course, didn't act alone, but worked alongside scores of courageous, brilliant advocates within the UN—wearing my caps as advisor to both UN GLOBE (the Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees' advocacy group) and FICSA (the Federation of International Civil Servants' Organizations).

Rightly or wrongly, as referenced above, it is well-established practice at the UN that one's employment benefits and entitlements are a function of recognized "family status."

Until about a decade ago, I could have been a single straight guy on day one, met and married a woman on day two, adopted her six children on day three, and on day four would have been earning significant additional annual benefits and entitlements such as movement stipends,

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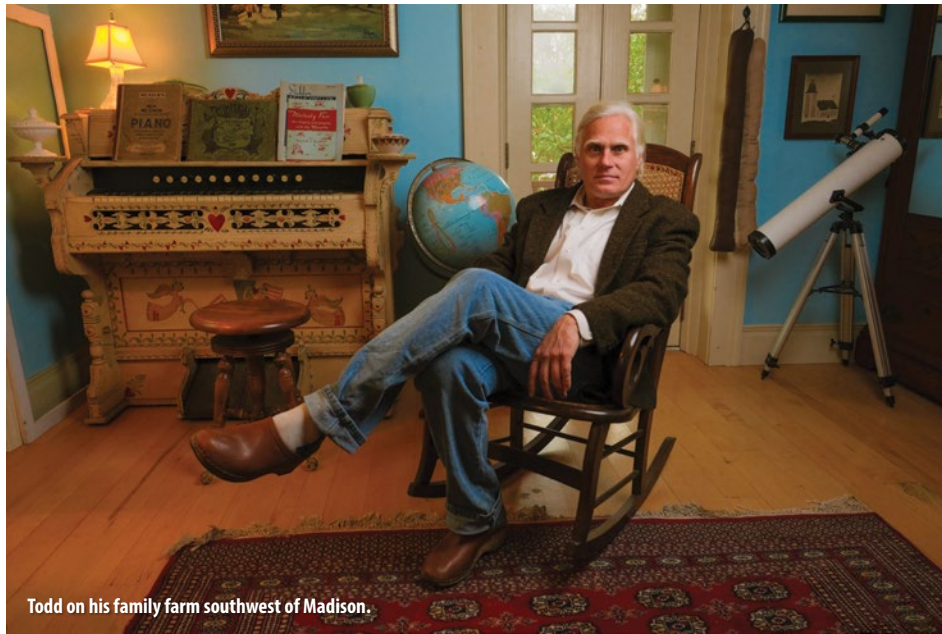


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Todd on his family farm southwest of Madison.



With President Obama in the Oval Office.

I believe the thinking was, “If he had the success he had at the UN, the most intransigent of bureaucracies, it’ll be a cakewalk for him with the U.S. federal government!”

education grants, dependency allowances, etc.

By contradistinction, until about a decade ago, I could have been in a same-gender union of 20 years, and raised from birth the six biological children of my partner or husband—and I would not have earned even one penny of additional employment benefits or entitlements. The UN would not have recognized my family status.

This was, clearly, screamingly unfair. So near the end of Kofi Annan’s (recently deceased; may he rest in peace) second and final term, when Secretaries General can be relied upon to take more courageous decisions, we convinced him to begin to rectify the injustice. It wasn’t all in one step, of course. We diligently increased the pressure in advance, over a period of years, through our array of formal internal appeals on behalf of aggrieved staff (at one stage I even drafted a pro forma appeal, and we circulated it to staff around the world), and by our appearances—some decidedly unwelcome—at an array of regular internal UN administrative convenings.

Kofi Annan initially agreed to recognize only same-gender marriage, but that would have covered only a very privileged few. Working alongside a sympathetic member of his inner circle, we convinced him to also recognize same-gender domestic partnerships. However, he opted to limit UN recognition, as employer, to only those staff whose unions were recognized in their countries of origin. He wouldn’t budge further.

It was a far from perfect first step, as it left behind the vast majority of UN staff—many coming from countries of origin where LGBTQI people were still being jailed or killed for loving who they loved; these staff were very far from gaining any domestic recognition of their unions.

In another sense, though, this imperfect first step was also strategically very sound, and we recognized that. We therefore didn’t dig in our heels about it. Why? Because it violated one of the most fundamental tenets of the human resources administration of international, intergovernmental organizations: that an employee must not be discriminated against as a function of nationality. The imperfect first step set the stage

for an eventual and definitive showdown.

Allow me to illustrate. If a woman is from a country of origin where she is prohibited from working in a mixed-gender workplace, the UN as employer doesn’t tell her, “Sorry, we can’t employ you, because our workplaces are of mixed gender composition.” The UN as employer sets a neutral standard for human resources administration, under which that woman would be allowed to work at the UN—irrespective of related injustices in her country of origin.

Near the end of the the Obama Administration, the anomaly of the “haves” and “have nots” among LGBTQI employees at the UN, from their wide array of countries of origin, was finally addressed. This time around, both internal and external pressure was building and finally came to a head. The Obama Administration was, of course, brilliant. There was significant pushback, especially from Russia, but right prevailed over wrong, and today an LGBTQI employee of the UN can have their union recognized by the UN as employer, despite possible non-recognition or even overt and sanctioned hostility in their country of origin.

Aside: The Trump administration has recently rolled back issuance of visas to same gender domestic partners of foreign diplomats serving in the U.S. A very unfortunate development, but a separate matter from what I am presently talking about.

What we got done at the UN, starting over a decade ago, was hugely important, of enormous historical proportions, and I am immensely proud of it. If I get hit by a bus tomorrow, it will stand as one of my life’s greatest accomplishments (what we got done at the UN; not being hit by a bus).

Still, what we got done at the UN was uniquely internal to the UN, and—I am thrilled to say—has been entirely eclipsed by more recent, much more broadly impactful and externally focused advances at the UN with respect to LGBTQI human rights and development.

Regardless, we broke the ground and laid the foundation.

**You worked with USAID during the Obama Administration, correct? Talk about some of the work you did during that time—what were some of the challenges, and some of the triumphs? What are your thoughts now to see at least some of that progress rolled back and/or threatened under Trump?**

I experienced the honor of my lifetime to serve as senior Presiden-

tial Appointee under Obama, a brilliant man of sincere conviction and impeccable integrity, surrounded by a mind-blowingly competent team. Sincere conviction and impeccable integrity. I do hope those withstand the test of time as prerequisites for future U.S. presidents.

I was essentially brought in to give robust, concrete, and sustainable effect—working with the White House, the State Department, and USAID—to the tenets of a groundbreaking December 2011 Presidential Memorandum entitled “International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons.” I believe the thinking was, “If he had the success he had at the UN, the most intransigent of bureaucracies, it’ll be a cakewalk for him with the U.S. federal government!”

Indeed, the Obama Administration moved mountains on this emerging foreign policy priority. Working alongside scores of right-minded, favorably disposed, and brilliant colleagues, and with the wind of a Presidential Memorandum at our back, my job under Obama was in some senses a lot easier than had been my advocacy at the UN. But I had a lot less time.

I often said to my team that if they spilled a cup of coffee first thing in the morning, it would already be a productive day, as they’d already made history—because everything we did was new and unprecedented. I am fervently committed to capturing our lessons learned under Obama, on this agenda item—our misfires as well as our successes—so that when the day comes that we have another right-minded, favorably predisposed U.S. Administration, they can take this nascent foreign policy priority to the next level, rather than starting back at square one.

All that is a discussion for another day.

**What would your advice be to newer generations of activists, civil servants, etc. for addressing such huge and important issues of**

**human/LGBTQI rights without getting lost in what can certainly sometimes feel like too immense and complicated a task?**

If you hold a sincere conviction, in the purest, most unencumbered sense of that construct, you are probably right rather than wrong, and you will probably stand on the right side of history. Your foes are probably motivated by something other than sincere conviction—fear, shame, or naked self-interest.

Always keep that in mind as you strive to act in accordance with your conviction. And if you believe that good will eventually triumph over evil—which most Midwesterners do—take heart from the eventuality that your side will prevail. It may take some time, effort, and dogmatism. With really challenging issues, you may also need to lean on the progress that generally comes from the march of generations.

Start as early in life as you are able. Conviction early in life is probably the most unfettered. Invest in the long haul. Don’t be so egotistical as to believe that you yourself, or even your generation, will craft complete and utter victory; recognize that you work on the shoulders of those who came before, and are but gaining ground for those who will follow.

Also start as early in your life as you are able because you will then have the satisfaction of watching some of your most unreasonable foes retire from the fray before you do, and/or die of old age, further opening up your path. This may sound cold-hearted, but it’s true. Revenge isn’t always a bad thing. I’m just sayin’.

When working from within a large administrative, legal, or bureaucratic context, do your due diligence to identify the existing process and/or precedent on which you can build. It is there. Even if tedious and slow, chart a course for maximally harnessing that process and/or precedent—dust it off, master it, and wield it intransigently over time, more effectively than your opponents of shorter attention span or patience. ■

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# Our History, On Tape

Gary Tipler and Scott Seyforth chronicle the life and historical legacy left by David Runyon, tireless recorder and advocate of the LGBTQ community.

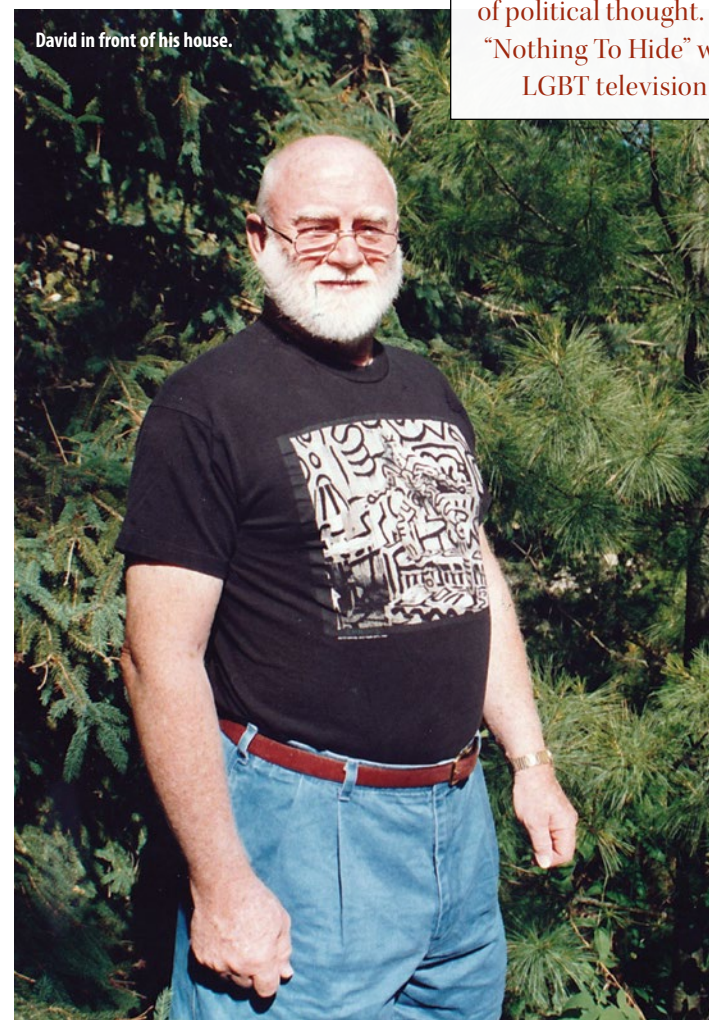
LGBTQ HISTORY COMMUNITY TELEVISION ARCHIVING MEDIA ACTIVISM

**DAVID RUNYON WAS AN ICONIC FORCE** whose presence in Madison touched many lives, from 1965 until his death in January 2001. Through his advocacy and activism, along with a long-running community television program highlighting LGBTQ people in the area, his work impacted people from all walks of life.

A New Jersey native, Runyon had a background that included military service, studying under community organizer Saul Alinsky at a Presbyterian theological seminary, and service as a minister and educator.

He and his wife moved to Madison in 1965 to attend the University of Wisconsin to study in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Art History. As an

Runyon was an ever-present fixture, compiling a remarkable visual record of a changing LGBTQ community locally and nationally, and an extraordinary archive of political thought. At the time of his death, "Nothing To Hide" was the longest-running LGBT television program anywhere.



David in front of his house.

Assistant Professor of Art, he taught art history and architecture at the U.W.-Whitewater beginning in 1968 and until he retired in 1995.

Meanwhile, David participated in establishing and enriching several Madison LGBTQ organizations. He came out in 1978, a year following his amicable divorce, and immersed himself in discussion groups at the Gay Center at the University United Methodist Church at Charter. He loved to sing, so became a founding member of the Madison Gay Men's Chorale in 1980. Years later he and others from the Gay Center and The United worked with District Attorney Hal Harlow to create a legal defense strategy to develop a group for gay teens (which would become Madison's PFLAG chapter), which was established by Jane LaFlash.

He immersed himself in videography via a weekly show on WYOU Community Cable Access and produced well over 800 shows in over 20 years.

Referring to himself as the "crusty curmudgeon," he hosted intersectional groups of his life—his gay friends, colleagues, and students alike—at scores of discussions, gatherings, and potlucks at his home on the north side and in excursions for camping, cycling, theater, sailing, and touring. He founded the group "Shake It Up" to formalize the frequent offering of events and published a monthly newsletter that included activities of many LGBTQ groups up to the time of his death.

In the 1990s, he was generous and gave a new satellite dish to WYOU Community Television, a meeting room to OutReach, Inc., was the first donor for the Social Justice Center, and underwrote plays for Broom Street Theatre. Joel Gersmann, Broom Street's founder and director said, "He was almost a second mentor for me. He was the most unusual and awesome person I have ever met in the city of Madison. There will not be anybody else like him."

On a sunny Friday morning, January 5, 2001, David Runyon died of a heart attack in the arms of a dear friend, Greg Converse, after shoveling heavy snow. A week later, a Celebration of Life to share stories among his friends filled the Unitarian Meeting House sanctuary. Tales of Runyon's work, his humor, his antics, and the inspiration he gave to others brought tears and joyous laughter to the capacity crowd.

In the following days, several people met at Lazy Jane's to plan an effort to see that Runyon's work, in his vast collection of videotapes, wasn't thrown out. The outcome of his estate was unpredictable since he didn't have a will or close blood family.

#### COMMUNITY ACCESS TELEVISION

In 1979, Runyon, then 48, began his work in community access television as a volunteer with Michael Henry for a newly created,

weekly, gay-oriented cable television show on WYOU in Madison, called "Glad To Be Gay." Produced by The United, Madison's lesbian and gay political advocacy group, it was one of the few gay-themed TV shows airing in the nation at the time.

Runyon, had just come out a year earlier and participated in creating the show, taping coverage of the second gay pride parade in Madison in 1979, and recording interviews with Police Chief David Couper, District Attorney James Doyle, U.W.-Madison professor of history Harvey Goldberg, and he recorded musicians Holly Near, Cris Williamson, and Meg Christian.

Interested in having more control over content of the shows, Runyon left "Glad To Be Gay" in 1981 and created his own program, "Nothing To Hide," a weekly hour-long show. It began as a "studio" show, featuring a magazine format of news and panel discussions. By early 1983, he took to filming on the road, capturing local events in the LGBTQ community and talks by visiting celebrities on LGBTQ and other issues.

Runyon was an ever-present fixture, recording events, programs and talks in the Madison community and elsewhere, compiling a remarkable visual record of a changing LGBTQ community locally and nationally, and an extraordinary archive of political thought. At the time of his death, "Nothing To Hide" was the longest-running LGBT television program anywhere.

#### NOTHING TO HIDE

"The idea of the program is to try to expose the straight world and the gay world to something respectable, to our joy, certainly to some of our problems—we ought to be open about them, and forthright. I hope I'm politically sensitive, and I hope I'm politically incorrect." —David Runyon

Spanning 20 years and over 800 tapes, the "Nothing to Hide" Collection is one of the most important LGBTQ video archives of its kind in the country. The collection is noteworthy for its range of topics and being a rare video document of a small Midwestern city gay liberation movement. Although many speakers were considered historically important when Runyon filmed them, their activities were not documented by the mainstream media. Full-length speeches by many of the LGBTQ political luminaries represented in the "Nothing to Hide" Collection are not available in any other public repository in the nation.

Speeches by LGBTQ history-makers in the collection include Harry Hay, founder of the modern gay movement in 1950; Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, founders of the first social and political organization for lesbians in the United States in 1955; Ann Bannon, lesbian pulp-fiction author of the 1950s and '60s; Charlotte Bunch, pioneering strategist and organizer of women's issues in the 1960s and '70s; Virginia Apuzzo, 1970s leader of the first national gay and lesbian lobby organization; Judy Grahn, internationally known poet, and woman-centered cultural theorist; Minnesota State Representative Karen Clark, openly gay state senate candidate in 1980; Carmen Vasquez, coordinator of Lesbian and Gay Health Services for the City of San Francisco from 1988 through 1994; Urvashi Vaid, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force staffer from 1986 to 2001; Mel White, former ghostwriter for the religious right who became a gay-affirming pastor; and Larry Kramer, Author, Playwright, Founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis, and Founder of ACT-UP.

Creators of what would come to be known as the field of Queer Studies are represented through rare recorded speeches by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, John Boswell, Karla Jay, John D'Emilio, George Mosse, Allan Berube, Vito Russo, James Steakley, and George Stambolian.

Lectures by nationally known authors and social critics such as



Toni Morrison, Howard Zinn, Tony Kushner, Angela Davis, and Noam Chomsky are also recorded.

The collection includes documentary footage covering two milestone dates in Wisconsin LGBTQ history. One program was filmed at the Capitol on February 25, 1982, and shows Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus' statement at the signing of AB70, the "Gay Rights Bill" that made Wisconsin the first state in the nation to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Following it is the Governor's press conference and interviews with those who worked toward its passage: Leon Rouse, Barbara Lightner, Terry Gillis, and the chief proponent and organizer behind the bill, Assembly Representative David Clarenbach. Another program covers

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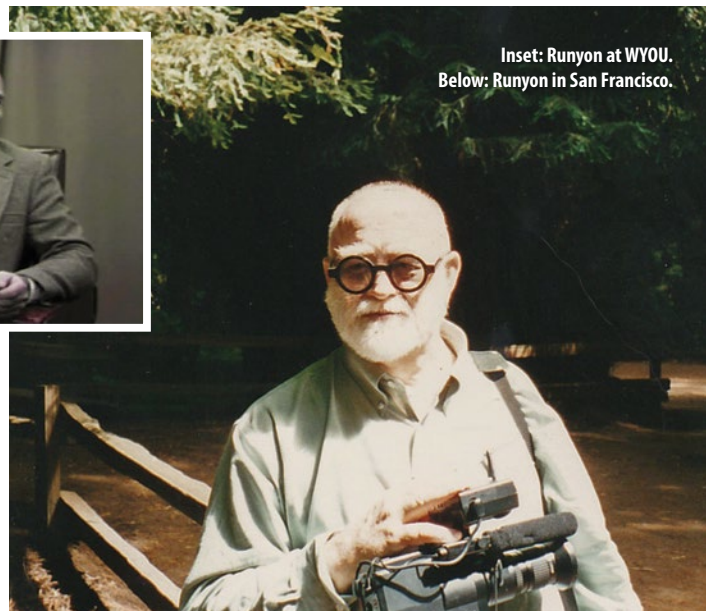
the signing of the Consenting Adults Bill on May 5, 1983 that repealed the “sexual perversion” law that Clarenbach also shepherded through the Legislature.

Shows include footage of Madison marches for LGBTQ Civil Rights from 1989, 1991, and 1996; the 1991 Madison ACT-UP Demonstration at the Governor’s Office; a 1997 Anti-Same Gender Marriage Rally at the State Capitol; and three National Marches on Washington for LGBTQ Civil Rights in 1979, 1987, and 1993.

Coverage of the AIDS epidemic began in 1983 with a two-hour interview with an AIDS patient in his Minneapolis hospital room; a 1985 training video for Hospice volunteers; a 1986 “AIDS Survival Kit” video produced by University Health Services with Blue Bus Director, Tim Tillotson, discussing changing approaches to HIV prevention; and the AIDS Quilt visit to Madison in 1989; among others.

The ban on gays in the military is represented with episodes featuring Leonard Matlovich and Wisconsin residents Miriam Ben Shalom and Jay Hatheway, the three main litigants in the 1970s and ‘80s lawsuits against the government ban. Interviews with later challengers to the policy include Joseph Steffan and Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer.

Local and national political figures are represented in the collection. In the 1990s, in an effort to build a wider viewership for the program, Runyon created four on-going programs each hosted by local progressive political leaders: Former Assemblywoman Midge Miller hosted “Grassroots with Midge,” Monona City Council member Rita Włodarczyk was “In the Trenches with Rita,” former Madison Alderperson Andy Heidt was host of “Hope Is Not a Method,” and gay activist Jay Hatheway presided over “Real Eyes Realize Real Lies.” Other local leaders include Robert Kastenmeier, Dick Wagner, Ron McCrea, Kathleen Nichols, and Earl Bricker. National political leaders such as Geraldine Ferraro, Jesse Jackson, William Proxmire, Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin, and Gaylord Nelson are also represented.



Inset: Runyon at WYOU.  
Below: Runyon in San Francisco.

formed, and Chicago’s Lionheart Gay Theater’s original gay-themed works from 1979 to 1994. Several episodes cover the installation of George Segal’s Gay Liberation figurative sculpture in Orton Park in 1986.

#### PRESERVING A LEGACY

David Runyon wanted public access to the “Nothing To Hide” collection, so he left much of it with WYOU Community Television prior to his untimely death in 2001. The balance he had placed with other entities related to their relative subjects.

There were many missing tapes. Runyon stated in an interview in 1996 that videos from his earliest years were given to the Sociology Library as a repository, though when funding was cut they were deaccessioned.

Runyon gave his monthly women’s program videos to the Women’s Studies Department, of which only 16 tapes of nationally famous lesbians speaking in Madison remain—the programs about local women were discarded. Twenty-four tapes covering AIDS-related topics were in the possession of Madison AIDS Network, presently the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, located in Milwaukee. Their location is unknown.

Other tapes that were lent have since been retrieved, including 50 tapes at OutReach, Inc., the local LGBTQ advocacy center.

Scott Seyforth, an administrator at the University Housing Department and a graduate student in Education, while preparing to teach a gay movement course in 2007, discovered the cache of tapes at WYOU. He realized they were a great historical resource but access to them was stultifying. He spent “a month of Tuesdays” going through a wall of boxes, just listing the titles of the video programs from their labels.

To preserve the collection for future scholarly use and honor David Runyon’s wishes for public access to the collection, Seyforth and WYOU developed a proposal in late 2008 requesting that the University of Wisconsin Madison Library System preserve the “Nothing To Hide” collection by making digitized copies available for viewing through video-streaming. The proposal was sponsored by Joseph W. Elder, Professor of Sociology and Languages and Cultures of Asia; Mary Louise Roberts, Professor of History; James Steakley, Professor of German; John Tortorice, Director of the George L. Mosse Program in History; Mariamne H. Whatley, Professor of Education; and Susan Zaeske, Professor of Communication Arts.

To preserve the collection for future scholarly use and honor David Runyon’s wishes for public access to the collection, Seyforth and WYOU developed a proposal in late 2008 requesting that the University of Wisconsin Madison Library System preserve the “Nothing To Hide” collection by making digitized copies available for viewing through video-streaming.

The collection includes the proceedings of the 5th, 7th, and 9th Annual International Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Elected and Appointed Officials in 1989, 1991, and 1993. The only gathering of its kind, the conference was the largest gathering of LGBTQ leaders from across the country and abroad discussing political concerns and strategies of the day.

Black and White Men Together National Conference proceedings from 1987 to 1990 include discussions on Interracial Gay Dating, issues of Latino, Asian, and First American Gay Men, Gay Men of Color & AIDS.

Runyon’s love of the arts is evident in the recordings of Chicago’s Windy City Chorus, the New Orleans Gay Men’s Chorus, Milwaukee’s Cream City Chorus, Madison’s Gay Men’s Chorale, in which he per-

Nine months later, their proposal was accepted. On Friday, November 13, 2009, in a ceremony at which then-Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and State Representative Spencer Black spoke, the 40 boxes of 800 two-hour videotapes were presented. They had been walked from the studio—then on East Washington—to the Library by station volunteers and friends (including *Our Lives* Publisher, Patrick Faraugh) on foot. Currently, the collection is still, though temporarily, located at the U.W. Memorial Library.

In 2017, David Pavelich, Director of Special Collections & Archives, applied to the Evjue Foundation to underwrite the high-resolution digital scans, archiving and making them available on the web. The request was funded in May 2018.

According to Katie Nash, archivist of the University of Wisconsin Archives, the tapes are queued for digitizing and archiving during the coming year. The videos will be digitally mastered in real time, searchable tags identified, and made available online.

The result will be the largest collection of LGBTQ videos of a crucial era with unique and rare footage not found in other libraries or archives, and will provide material to support emerging LGBTQ Studies programs at home and afar. This archival project is as essential as the ongoing work, today. It is an important part of our legacy—and of the legacy of David Runyon.

#### HOW YOU CAN HELP

David Runyon made many copies and gave them away, covering the programs he recorded and aired on “Glad To Be Gay” and “Nothing To Hide.” People also made copies at home. The Madison LGBTQ Archives Committee is seeking these copies to digitize and archive.

Contact Scott Seyforth at [Scott.Seyforth@housing.wisc.edu](mailto:Scott.Seyforth@housing.wisc.edu) or 608-262-0914. ■

#### Tammy Baldwin on David Runyon

“To me, those people who have prioritized recording the history of the LGBT movement are extremely courageous and heroes in many ways and probably those folks who write the books, who make the videos, who do audio recordings, have no idea how many people they’ve touched. As people come out, there’s often a moment or many years in which they feel they’re isolated and...it’s those treasures... all of sudden feeling a part of something that they were previously estranged from—that’s such a gift, and I think that David Runyon appreciated that, long before many others did.

“When I think of David Runyon, it is my respect for the role he played and the legacy he leaves in chronicling a movement. Absent David Runyon, years and years of activity by literally thousands of activists in this community would evaporate because nobody wrote about it, nobody was there recording it. We have such a body of history that will bring to life what people did to make this immediate community in the world a better place that hopefully will instruct future generations as they’re trying to tackle the problems and social injustices of their day. David Runyon, and by the power of one, he did this. It’s an extraordinary gift to our community.”

—Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin

(from an interview with John Quinlan on “Queery” on WORT, January 15, 2001.)

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LEGAL HISTORY SEX DISCRIMINATION LGBTQ RIGHTS

## Defining Discrimination

From *Frontiero* to *Whitaker*: Attorney **Abby Churchill** offers a brief history of sex discrimination jurisprudence.

**IT HAS BEEN OVER A YEAR** since the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals found in favor of Ash Whitaker, a transgender student then attending high school in the Kenosha Unified School District, ultimately determining that students do have the right to use the restrooms and locker rooms correlating with their gender identity.

However, what is not widely known is *how* the court found for Ash, and what cases had to come before in order to arrive at that decision. This article goes through a very brief history of sex discrimination jurisprudence (jurisprudence = the theory or philosophy of law; the trajectory of a particular legal matter).

Before we jump into the cases, I should explain three key legal players in this case: 1) the U.S. Constitution; 2) Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments; and 3) Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment states: "No state shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." This is called the Equal Protection (EP) clause, and it is used in countless discrimination claims against government entities. Title IX prohibits discrimination on basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. This law is most commonly known for increasing girls' and women's participation in school athletics. Title VII prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sex, among other protected classes. Neither Title IX nor Title VII define "sex."

Okay, let's get to the interesting part. Note that I am only able to cover a few of many cases that steered the course of sex discrimination claims.

### SETTING PRECEDENT

A 1973 landmark case called *Frontiero v. Richardson* is where we will start. It was, interestingly, the first case that lawyer Ruth Bader Ginsburg argued in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Air Force lieutenant Shannon Frontiero applied for additional housing and medical benefits for her husband, whom

she claimed as a "dependent." She was informed that while servicemen could claim their wives as dependents without question, servicewomen had to prove their husbands were, in fact, dependent on them for more than half of their support. She sued under the EP clause, claiming unequal treatment because of her sex. The Court found the Air Force's policy violated the clause and therefore was unconstitutional.

Twenty-three years after RBG argued that first case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, she authored *United States v. Virginia* as a Supreme Court justice. In it, the Court determined that the Virginia Military Institute's (VMI) ban on female students likewise violated the EP clause.

*Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* was a

The firm discriminated against her based on the common stereotypes about how women were "supposed" to act, and her nonconformity with those stereotypes. This opened the gates to gender identity discrimination.

turning point in this trajectory, and as such, is most widely referenced in the cases we see today. In 1983, Ann Hopkins was passed up for partnership at the Price Waterhouse accounting firm solely because she exhibited qualities that the overwhelmingly male partners considered to be too "masculine" for a woman. Hopkins sued, claiming this violated Title VII. The dispute made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the Court found for Hopkins, determining that the firm discriminated against her on the basis of her "sex." Critically, the Court expanded the idea of sex discrimination by finding that the firm had discriminated against her using "sex stereotyping." That is, the firm discriminated against her based on the common stereotypes about how women were "supposed" to act, and her nonconformity with those stereotypes. This opened the gates to gender identity discrimination.

Post-*Price Waterhouse*, there were a

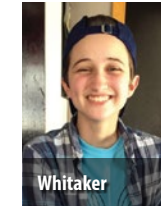
number of gender identity discrimination cases decided by lower courts and agencies under Title VII which helped to further develop this jurisprudence (e.g. *Schroer v. Billington* and *Macy v. Dept. of Justice*), but the most impactful decisions have developed through Title IX and EP claims.

### THE WHITAKER CASE

The facts of Ash's case have been discussed previously, so I'll jump into the legal arguments. Ash argued that the school district's bathroom policy violated Title IX on the basis of "sex." Both the trial court and the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Ash, finding that the school district's policy was discriminatory on the basis of sex because, "[b]y definition, a transgender individual does not conform to the sex-based stereotypes of the sex that he or she was assigned at birth." The appeals court also determined that Ash would likely prevail on his Equal Protection claim.



**ABBY CHURCHILL** is a volunteer attorney with Trans Law Help Wisconsin and is licensed to practice in Wisconsin. She is a member of the LGBT Bar Association of Wisconsin, and is an active board member for OPEN, the Out Professional Engagement Network.



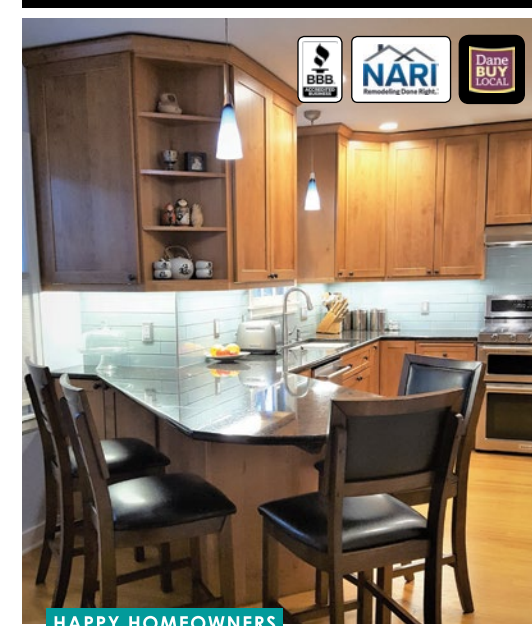
Whitaker

This case was poised to be considered by the U.S. Supreme Court; however, before it did, Ash settled with school district and the school district's petition to the U.S. Supreme Court seeking review was withdrawn.

One of the greatest challenges right now is that some jurisdictions have found for transgender plaintiffs asserting sex discrimination under Title IX, Title VII, and

the EP clause, and some have not. Many of those that have ruled against transgender plaintiffs did so by making a distinction between "sex" and "gender identity," stating that the law only protects against sex discrimination, not gender identity discrimination. There is currently a split in the Federal system's Courts of Appeals, which means sooner than not, the U.S. Supreme Court will be called on to decide the question.

I predict that the (newly conservative-dominated) U.S. Supreme Court will hear this issue within the next five years. For the time being, the law of the 7th Circuit, which includes Wisconsin, remains clear regarding students' rights and sex-segregated facilities: students have the right to use the restrooms and locker rooms correlating with their gender identity. ■

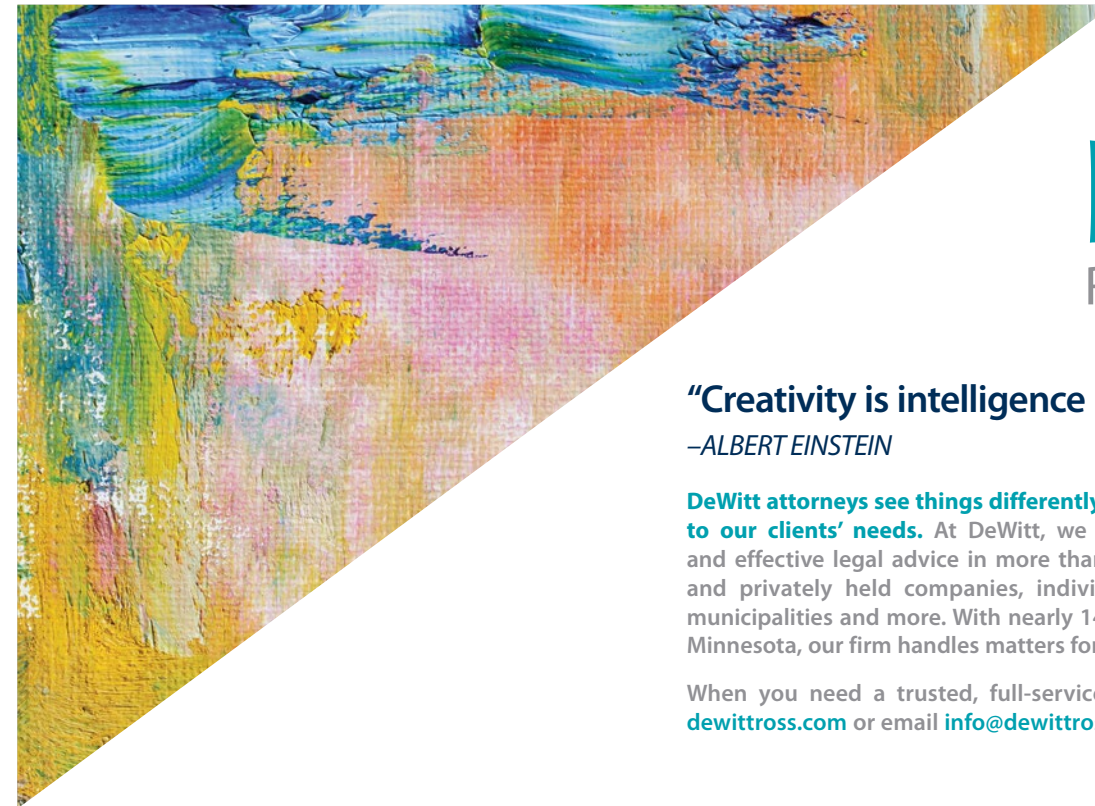


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INTERSECTIONS QTPOC RACE

## Dear Queer White People

Dr. Sami Schalk kicks off a new series of columns that aim to address some of the pressing and oftentimes thornier questions about the intersection of race and queerness in America.

**I AM A BLACK QUEER WOMAN** who is tired of answering questions at the bar, at parties, or on the dance floor, so I'm starting a series of short essays addressing some of the issues my QTPOC friends and I most often encounter in our interactions and conversations with white queer people. For this first piece, let's cover some basic questions:

### WHAT IS "QTPOC?"

QTPOC stands for queer and trans people (or person) of color. Queer and trans are both used as umbrella terms here so this includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, intersex, non-binary, and genderqueer people of color as well.

People of color refers to non-white individuals, mainly Black, Native/Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, Latinx (a gender neutral term for people of Latin American or Hispanic descent), and Middle Eastern people. The term people of color is adapted from the term women of color which was coined by non-white feminists in the 1970s. The term is meant to signal strategic coalition and solidarity across races for those who face related though different forms of racism. QTPOC builds on this term as a way to signal the specific experiences of non-white LBGTQ+ people.

### WON'T MORE LABELS JUST DIVIDE RATHER THAN UNITE US?

The term QTPOC unites queer and trans people of color by allowing us to connect across these specific lines of identity and experience, but it does not divide us from white queer and trans people or straight people of color. Further, naming these experiences as QTPOC simply illuminates existing differences in order to address our particular experiences of homophobia, cissexism, and racism, both within and outside of the queer community. In other words, queer and trans people of



color already experience life differently, and our gender, sexuality, and racial identities are often some of the most salient ways we are read and treated in this world (along with disability status, class, and body size). This label just identifies and gives language to these particular intersectional experiences.

### WHY "WHITE QUEER PEOPLE"? ISN'T THAT RACIST/HOMOPHOBIC?

Calling you white and queer is no different than calling myself black and queer. It is a statement of fact. White people are not used to having their whiteness identified or marked publicly because whiteness is the

The term people of color is adapted from the term women of color which was coined by non-white feminists in the 1970s. QTPOC builds on this term as a way to signal the specific experiences of non-white LBGTQ+ people.

norm. For example, when scheduling to meet a new person over e-mail I often tell them I'm a fat black woman with glasses, but white people never reply to me identifying themselves as white—they don't think about it any more than I would think to tell someone I'm human. Just as I take my humanness for granted, white folks often take their whiteness for granted as unremarkable and unimportant when it actually shapes so much of how they/you are permitted to operate in the world. Additionally, neutrally stating a person's race

when race is relevant to your remarks is not racist. I am targeting my comments here to white queer people. I am naming a group as I name QTPOC.

The reason I am writing what I hope will be a series of open letters to white queer people is because this summer, in the wake of OutReach's decision to rescind permissions for the Sheriff and Madison Police departments to march armed and in uniform in the Pride Parade, I attended a listening session between the Madison PD and the local LGBTQ community. At this listening session of about 100 people, I was one of perhaps a dozen people of color. I spoke about my own fears and anxiety around police and why it's important for more privileged members of our community (cisgender, white, nondisabled, wealthy, etc.) to listen to the voices of marginalized people and to center their needs first and foremost. I spoke about the different between harm and feelings of disappointment or sadness. I don't think I convinced everyone in the room, but I've heard I changed a few minds.

Afterward, dozens of white strangers tried to talk to me or friend me on Facebook or contact me via e-mail. They wanted to thank me or ask me more questions or take me out for dinner to pick my brain about something they are afraid to ask their non-white friends. It was...a lot. I can't talk to every one of you. These interactions take a lot of time, energy, and emotion from me and other people of color; they create tension in my body, and leave me thinking for days afterward how I could have phrased something better or responded more firmly. So when Emily Mills of *Our Lives* asked me if I wanted to start writing for the Intersections column, I viewed it as an opportunity to reach a larger number of white queers in Madison and perhaps provide a resource for other QTPOCs who are tired of answering the same questions, too.

### SO WHAT NOW?

Now, I answer your questions. I address things my QTPOC friends have said they want white people to know and understand. I try my best to help white queer folks learn, grow, and change to become better allies so that we can address racism within the queer community and beyond. And yes, there is racism in our LBGTQ+ communities in Madison and folks are already hard at work trying to address it. Johanna Heineman-Pieper and Shawna Lutzow have been leading discussions about racism in queer spaces at OutReach for over a year now. The Queer Pressure collective explicitly bans harassing and discriminatory behavior at events and often have an entrance sign which reads: "As a community

When scheduling to meet a new person over e-mail I often tell them I'm a fat black woman with glasses, but white people never reply to me identifying themselves as white—they don't think about it any more than I would think to tell someone I'm human.

we acknowledge past and present racism, colonialism, transphobia, ableism, classism, homophobia, etc. Upon entering this space, you are expected to act respectfully or get the fuck out." My writing here aims to complement and lift up the work so many queer folks have already been doing locally.

White queers and QTPOCs alike: reach out, tell me what you want to know or help other people know and I'll do my best to tackle it as clearly and kindly as possible.

Your local fierce black femme on a mission, Sami ■



**DR. SAMI SCHALK** is an Assistant Professor of Gender & Women's Studies at U.W.-Madison. Her research focuses on disability, race, and gender in contemporary American literature and culture, especially African American literature, speculative fiction, and feminist literature.



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## Embracing Pride

Celebrating our queerness is embracing our bodies and our hearts and trusting that they will tell us how to move through the world with confidence.



**PRIDE (NOUN)** \ˈprɪd \

1. A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one’s own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired
2. Confidence and self-respect as expressed by members of a group, typically one that has been socially marginalized, on the basis of their shared identity, culture, and experience
3. Consciousness of one’s own dignity
4. The best state of something; the prime

There is something magical about the collective call within our LGBTQ commu-

nities to recognize and celebrate our dignity with confidence, and to do so in a way that evokes and honors the place of pleasure in our lives. I see the beauty of calling for a time of celebration for the achievements of our communities, for more open reverence for the contributions of our most marginalized community members, and for tending to our hearts, which have felt so much collective trauma, loss, and pain.

I was at a talk earlier this year by adrienne maree brown, a pleasure activist, author, and overall badass, and she started the talk with “I am queer. I am queer as in I trust my body.” I was moved by her statements because I’d never heard anyone start a talk like

that, and I hadn’t heard such a beautifully succinct, accurate description of queerness. Trusting our bodies is inherently what we are all doing—we believe our hearts as they tell us of attractions and desires and loves and inner experiences of truth around our intimate relationships and identities. We are so compelled by these feelings that we risk relationships, livelihood, and safety to pursue our truths and honor the call of our bodies.

As a queer, trans body-oriented art therapist, I sit with LGBTQ individuals as they navigate this inner call for truth and desire that can be contrary to what they’ve seen or been told outside themselves. I am in awe of their bravery as they tell stories of doubt and shame and trauma and as they wrestle with the ramifications for pursuing their path, however that looks. Some of us carry our pride outwardly and many people in our lives know about our relationships or our gender identities. Some of us carry our pride closer to our hearts and allow people in with discretion because that is truer to who we are, or because we fear for our safety. Some of us walk somewhere between very out and closer in.

■

We are so compelled by these feelings that we risk relationships, livelihood, and safety to pursue our truths and honor the call of our bodies.

There have been calls for more people to come out, and to do so in certain ways. I want to caution us against this pressure because it sometimes causes shame when people don’t want those around them to know, or when they don’t feel safe enough for people to find out. Some of us can’t avoid ‘being out’ because we get clocked (noticed as being trans) or because we don’t have access to necessary services that could help us. The broader societal messages give us enough grief about who we are—we don’t need to be doing that to ourselves, too.

Whichever way you present yourself and your relationships, I encourage you to look again at the definition of pride and remember you are a person of dignity, coming from a legacy of achievement and beauty, and that you belong. ■



**OWEN KARCHER** is a bilingual art therapist and social justice consultant based in Madison (arttherapymadison.com). He offers individual therapy services and conducts trainings on inclusivity, creating welcoming environments, allyship, power, privilege, and oppression.

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FOOD & DINING LGBTQ-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES

## Breakfast Wonderland

Vivienne Andersen takes in the offerings at **Short Stack Eatery**, and digs into their stated commitment to LGBTQ and community allyship.

**I AM AN UNAPOLOGETIC BREAKFAST SNOB.** Breakfast is my absolute favorite meal of the day, and it is my favorite meal to eat out—period. If you are the type of person who wants to eat breakfast exclusively before, say, 11:00 a.m., Madison has a lot of great options. If, however, you are like me and try not to be awake that early, or you want breakfast for dinner and lunch and whatever “fourth meal” is, Madison is kind of a breakfast desert.

Enter my champion: Short Stack Eatery.

Frequently during our conversation she spoke of the need to listen, to reach out to diverse communities, and invite them to share their needs. “It is important that we listen so that we let the communities we serve check us and teach us. We don’t come at this with answers.”

At first glance, the restaurant located on the corner of Johnson and State Streets is like many Madison restaurants: fun, kitschy, and modern. Inside the colors are inviting, the space is comfortable if a bit tight, each table is somehow different from its neighbor and features fresh flowers, and there are craft cocktails to be sampled.

The things that make Short Stack stand out for me are that if they’re

open, they’re serving breakfast—and only breakfast. They’re also open late. While lots of other places in Madison stop serving breakfast before Noon, Short Stack is open and slinging hash(browns) until Midnight on Thursday and Friday, and when they open up again on Saturday, they don’t close until 9 p.m. on Sunday. It’s an oasis of breakfast surrounded by Madison.

The food ranges from familiar, comfortable fare like blueberry pancakes to a breakfast burrito that would make Beavis proud, and pulled pork cheesy grits for those who would like something heartier with their breakfast. All of it is delightful. I’ve never had a meal at Short Stack that I wasn’t pleased to have devoured. Judging from the line that is often snaking out the door, I’m not the only one.

When you go, if you like a bit of adventure in your dining, consider ordering the “Blind Special.” You will only pay half price, but you won’t know what it is until it’s served.

Great breakfast, a whimsical environment, and fantastic hours are not the only things that Short Stack is about, though. When the restaurant was opened just over four years ago it was with the intention that it be a place that gives back to the community, too. It would support local farmers and producers. It would intentionally engage with social justice.

None of this is typical. The restaurant industry is one that is too often rife with abuses. The owners set out from the very beginning to be different, saying, “We are going to own a restaurant, and we are going to change the world.”

That is a tall order and tends to be the sort of “feel good” intention businesses proclaim but don’t always live up to. When I sat down with Janelle Bentley, Assistant General Manager, I had lots of questions about intention and follow through. She was quick to disclaim success: “We are just starting to get the hang of it,” she admitted. “We still need to do more to walk the walk.”

Frequently during our conversation she spoke of the need to listen, to reach out to diverse communities, and invite them to share their needs. “It is important that we listen so that we let the communities we serve check us and teach us. We don’t come at this with answers.”

Despite Janelle’s modesty, what the eatery accomplishes is striking.

Every month they partner with a new organization to provide meeting space, special events, and fundraising help (a complete list of previous partnerships can be found online at [shortstackeats.com](http://shortstackeats.com)).

Janelle tells me that they’ve worked very hard to connect specifically with women of color: “It is important to make intentional invitations and to give visibility to people who are often overlooked.” There is a strong desire to be serious about racial and gender justice, to go well beyond tokenism. The windows facing Johnson Street are boldly adorned with rainbow and trans pride flags, and there are public statements about social issues everywhere in the space. They also modify the menu to accommodate special needs in the community—most recently to respond to vegan needs.

I am assured that one of the things that is being planned is providing employee healthcare, including trans healthcare, something virtually unheard of in the industry. There are plans to provide childcare for the employees that need it as well.

Change is hard, though. They’ve experienced some pushback, particularly after hanging the trans flag and proclaiming the eatery to be welcoming to trans people. “There were some ugly comments left on our Facebook page,” Janelle told me. When I asked how they’ve responded to the negativity, or what they would do if someone made a scene about a trans woman using a restroom, Janelle elaborated: “Anyone who works for me or comes to eat pancakes in this space should feel comfortable. Unless they’re causing trouble. Then they can get out.”

I wouldn’t test her, y’all, but I would test the Blind Special. Yum. ■



**VIVIENNE ANDERSEN**, who’s first word was “eat,” is a full-time REALTOR® with eXp Realty in Madison. She grew up in California, but is not at all what the Beach Boys had in mind. She serves on the Cultural Diversity in Housing Committee at the WRA, and blogs about the Madison Real Estate Market at [VivienneAndersen.com](http://VivienneAndersen.com).

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QUEER YOUTH QPOC ACTIVISM

## Becoming Extraordinary

Appleton high school student **Travis Thor** talks finding internal acceptance and joy in coming to terms with his many identities.

**MY NAME IS TRAVIS**, and I am a senior at Appleton West High School and Renaissance School for the Arts. I was the disappointment that sullied my family name.

It was an hour into the argument with my mom, and all I wanted was for it to end. I did not care how; I just wanted it to end. At the age of 13, I was kicked out—out of the place I called home, out of the only place that made me feel safe and secure.

Asian Americans come from many different countries. We have diverse languages, ethnicities, and cultures. While this may mean that our backgrounds differ, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Asian Americans still share similar challenges and experiences throughout their coming out process.

We as LGBTQ youth were told that it gets better, but as an Asian American, coming out can get very complicated. I grew up Catholic. I was told to hide that side of me and to deny.

So I did; I believed that it was not right to feel the way I did. I believed only boys and girls were to be together. I was young, I did not know better, I thought liking other men was not a real thing. I was told that it was wrong.

I was afraid of being bullied more than I already had been. Growing up, I was a small child. I didn't look like the other kids, and being Asian didn't help. Sooner or later I started hating myself even more because I was Asian and gay. I thought it couldn't get any worse, and then my stutter got in the way of my life and became another target for bullying. I became a reserved kid.

I didn't choose to be small. I didn't choose to stutter. I didn't choose to be gay. I fought that feeling for so long. I hated myself for it. I hated myself for being me. Until I broke.

When I finally accepted myself for being me, for being a gay Asian (a Gaysian!), I was the happiest I could ever imagine. For once in my life, I was comfortable in my own skin. That encouraged me to do things I had never imagined before for myself.

I now work my hardest to be the best ver-



Making that change lead to me being given the **Youth of the Year award by the Boys and Girls Club of Fox Valley**. I now am able to tell my story of overcoming the greatest obstacle in life, which is accepting yourself and to not let yourself be your own worst critic.

sion of me. I volunteer around 300–400 hours a year helping with my school. I ring bells for the Salvation Army. I help tutor kids and teach them about diversity and being different. I'm also part of 14 different school clubs and president of four of them. I'm in an acting troupe called Zero Tolerance (a peer-to-peer drama group that educates around ending dating violence, bullying, and racism). I am a student athlete and a team manager. I am a LGBT youth advocate and a representative for Outstanding Youth in Wisconsin. I'm so proud of all of that work.

Making that change lead to me being given the Youth of the Year award by the Boys and Girls Club of Fox Valley. I now am able to tell my story of overcoming the greatest obstacle in life, which is accepting yourself and to not let yourself be your own worst critic. My advisor

and friend, Kristin Griswold of the BGCFV, made sure that I was always the best version of me. She saw a spark in me that I could not see because I was always putting myself down. She gets serious credit for who I am today.

This is who I was meant to be: an athlete, a theater junkie, a techie, a musician, an overly positive person, a happy go-getter, and an out and proud gay person. If I have learned one thing so far in my amazing life, it's this (and I challenge you to do the same):

Choose to be daring. Choose to be impractical. Choose to be different. Choose to stand out. Be anything that plays against the rules of ordinary, and be extraordinary.

My name is Travis Thor, and I am a senior at Appleton West High School and Renaissance School for the Arts. I am the kid with the voice that created an echo. ■



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