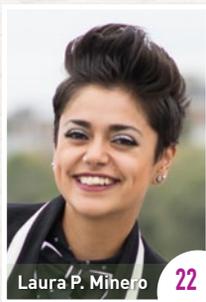


our lives



Laura P. Minero 22



Kaci Sullivan 44



Brianna Brown 28

HEALTH & FAMILY

Local leaders & advocates share insights & ideas.

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

November
December
2017

YET SHE PERSISTS

Tanya Atkinson

President & CEO of
Planned Parenthood
of Wisconsin

**Reader Poll:
Health Care**
p.46

**Culinary
Ladies
Collective**
p.60



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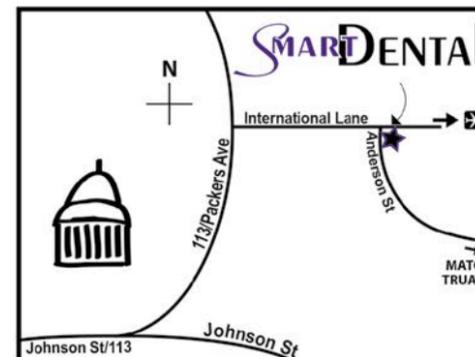
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Tamim Sifri, DDS



"I live in a constellation of intimates, and the shape of us is a family. We touch base and check in, with each other and also—I am so gratified to report—they sometimes check in with one another. Correspondences have sprung up and friendships have started to form beyond my influence. Family has begun to take on a transitive property as well."

- S. Bear Bergman

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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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Cover photo by Timothy Hughes.

EDITOR'S NOTE EMILY MILLS

ONE BIG FAMILY

IT'S STRANGE TO THINK that 2017 is coming to a close. The year since the election has felt both like a whirlwind and a harrowing slog. Sometimes I wonder what would happen if Twitter and Facebook just disappeared. Would that stop some of the madness?

Back here at home, though, life goes on and people continue to make the world a better place. This issue features a host of incredible humans working to improve our lives. I was first introduced to **Laura P. Minero** in our Queer People of Color Pride List, and knew immediately that we needed to share more about her with you. Laura writes about her life and work on immigration reform. As an undocumented queer-identified Latinx, Laura lives at an incredibly vulnerable—and very insightful—in-tersection that has much to offer the world, if we'll just listen.

We should all be so lucky as to have had even one teacher who went out of their way to inspire and support us. **Abby Swetz**, GSAFE's Educator of the Year, has clearly earned her spurs in that regard. The story she tells is a deeply personal tale that focuses on the power of vulnerability, and in creating safe spaces for young people to show their real selves.

When it comes to creating families, LGBTQ people are some of the best. There are many stories of the importance of chosen families in our pages, and **Kaci Sullivan's** journey into trans parenthood is especially poignant. It's still a far underrepresented one, too, and I'm honored that Kaci was willing to share some of his knowledge and experience with us.

In the end, it's good to be able to reach out and connect with people all over the world. It's also important to be able to look next to you, and at the community so close at hand. We find companionship and inspiration. We find support and resources, friends, fun, and meaningful work. I hope you all find some of that in the stories we've been so grateful to be able to share for the last 10 years. Here's to (at least) 10 more! ■



CONTRIBUTORS



LADUMA NGUYUZA, owner at SugarFreePhotography.com, finds beauty in everyone. He has been shooting professionally for the better part of a decade, focusing on senior portraits, families, weddings, headshots, and maternity photos. As a full-time musician for Madison's Fringe Character, a lucky husband and father, Laduma keeps a busy and creative schedule.

MICHAL OSIER is the LGBT Senior Advocate at OutReach. She has been an out lesbian in Madison since her early days as a Women's Transit Authority volunteer, her work with Fair Wisconsin's speakers' bureau, and her co-founding of LAVENDAR (Lesbians Against Violence Even if Dykes Are Responsible). She's a newly retired psychotherapist and a lifelong writer who lives with her beloved wife, Nancy Hutson, and their excellent dog, Rosie. She enjoys kayaking, cooking, needle felting, walking in the woods, appreciating clouds, and travel. She's 63 and has never felt better in her life.

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november
17, 18, 19

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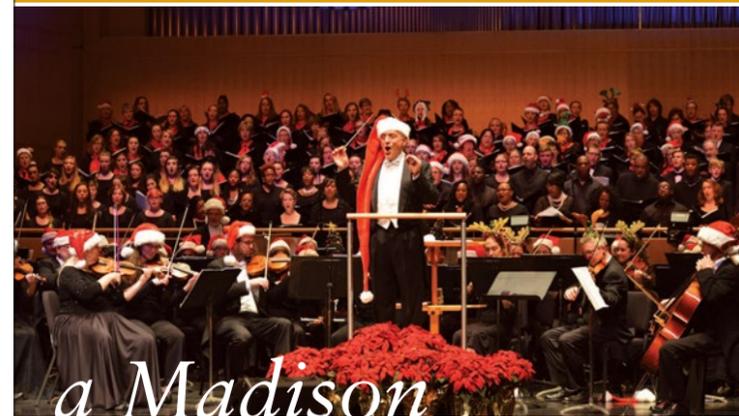
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december 1, 2, 3

This family-friendly celebration is a perfect way to start the holiday season—a beloved community tradition that will send your spirits soaring.

John DeMain, Conductor

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Madison Youth Choirs | Michael Ross, Artistic Director

Mount Zion Gospel Choir
Tamera and Leatha Stanley, Directors

EXPLAINING HEALTH CARE

AN ANONYMOUS READER WRITES:

"I was very curious about the article included in the September issue, 'WI LGBT Chamber of Commerce endorses new health insurance program.' Is this an unedited, invented press release? Do you have a definition of why this plan is called 'progressive?' Do you know of evidence that supports the claim, as the lifestyle plan website does, that 75% of health care costs are attributable to lifestyle? While I agree in trying to be healthy in whatever way we can, I am concerned in the backlash of 'individual responsibility' that these types of plans promote can be regressive ways to blame the victim. Could your next issue respond?"

The article in question was, in fact, a reprinted press release from both the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Benefit Awareness, an insurance marketing and enrollment firm. We reached out to Center for Patient Partnerships at the U.W. for someone who might be able to knowledgeablely write about these questions and the claims made in the press release. Sarah Davis, an Associate Clinical Professor of Law, responds:

Health care costs are a major issue for all of us. Currently these costs consume almost 18% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For those of us fortunate enough to have insurance, premium costs and deductibles average 10% of our incomes. Employers bear significant costs that costs are rising every year. Insurance

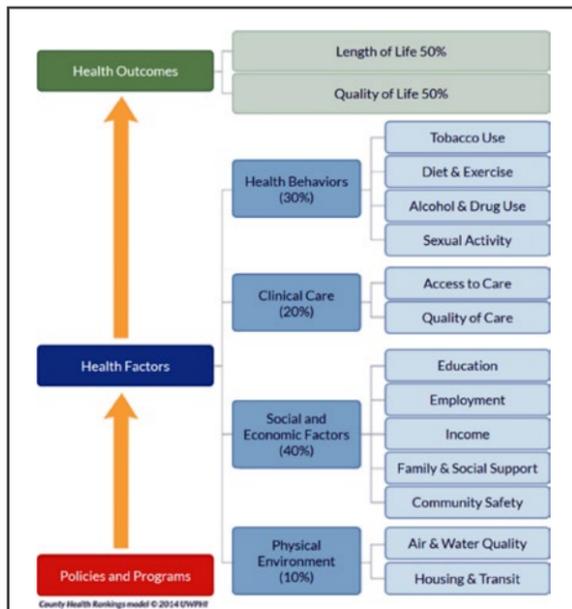
purchasers are looking to reduce costs, and focusing on prevention is a valuable strategy.

Lifestyle Health Plans claims that 75% of health care costs are caused by preventable behaviors and that these behaviors are the cause of escalating health care costs. This is misleading at best, painting a simplistic picture that puts the blame on individuals.

Health behaviors account for approximately 30% of health outcomes. More impactful are social and economic factors, and our physical environment. How safe are our homes? Do we have parks dispersed in our community so all families can easily exercise?

Are we paid a living minimum wage? Even health behaviors themselves have underlying root causes. Take what we eat: Nearly 75% of packaged foods contain sugars, including high fructose corn syrup. Federal government farm subsidies for corn make corn syrup cheap. It is simply more expensive to eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains than packaged foods.

A non-lifestyle way to reduce costs is to reduce over-testing and treatment. This is estimated to cost \$200 billion annually. The Choosing Wisely Initiative offers resources for patients and providers to help guide decision making about what tests and treatments are important, and worthy of the cost. [choosingwisely.org/patient-resources]. When a clinician suggests a



Health Factors that influence Health Outcomes: the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings Model

test, ask why. What information will be gained? Will the test results alter the treatment recommendation? Even if insurance pays for the test, we all end up indirectly bearing the cost.

Lifestyle Health Plans offers health insurance from several different carriers, so each plan will be different—varying in coverage and quality. It is important for employers to understand the details of the coverage they are purchasing for their employees—to assess its total value. Are their employees able to receive the right care at the right time and place—not too little, and not too much? What would the total out-of-pocket costs be to address a life-threatening illness? Would the employee have access to a National Cancer Institute supported Comprehensive Cancer Center?

It is human nature to want simple solutions to complex problems. I commend the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce for its efforts to address escalating health costs, but caution it to consider all factors that impact health care spending. A multi-dimensional approach is needed. Individual health and the health of our community is based upon more than the individual choices we make. It is shaped by public policy, by economics, and by the bias—including homophobia and racism—that we experience every day. It is affected by the support (or lack thereof) of community, state, and national leaders, and by the world we live in. ■



SARAH DAVIS, J.D., MPA is a Clinical Associate Professor of Law and Associate Director of the interdisciplinary Center for Patient Partnerships at the University of Wisconsin.



MADISON, WI

Dana Crumpton

I grew up in Jacksonville, Florida and was raised by my grandmother after my mom died in an automobile accident when I was three years old. The one thing my grandmother instilled in me most was to treat others the way you want to be treated and to always give of yourself.

When I moved to Madison I met an amazing woman who would become one of my best friends: **Felicia Melton-Smyth**. She got me and my late partner involved in the AIDS Ride, which I still volunteer with today. That same year, in December, Felicia came into the Shamrock with all the gift tags from the AIDS Network giving tree at Hilldale Mall. It was two weeks before Christmas, but we still made sure all the tags were taken care of! That's how the Gift Drive was born.

The following year, she came up with the idea to sell paper lightbulbs for \$1 to help raise funds to get the gift requests taken care of. In 2008 Felicia passed the organizing torch to me. Unfortunately, just a week later, she was tragically taken from us while on vacation. I have been the lone organizer of the drive since her passing, hoping the whole time that I'm making her proud.

In 2015 my health took a turn for the worse when I found out that my colon cancer was back and had moved into both of my lungs and now into my liver. As I fight this battle, one which makes it impossible to continue as the lone organizer, I have reached out to the Mad City Sisters for help.

This year will mark the 15th anniversary of the Gift Drive, and the outpouring of donations and support over the years has been tremendous! This year the **Felicia Melton-Smyth Holiday Gift Drive** will kick off on November 19 at 7:00 p.m. with the lighting of Felicia's Giving Tree and will end with the Holiday Appreciation Party on December 7 at 5:00 p.m., both at the Shamrock.

I would like to give a special thank-you to Bob Mahr and the staff at the Shamrock Bar and Grille for giving the gift drive a home for the past 15 years. I know that with the guidance of Bob, Danielle, and the Sisters, that the Felicia Melton-Smyth Gift Drive will live forever.



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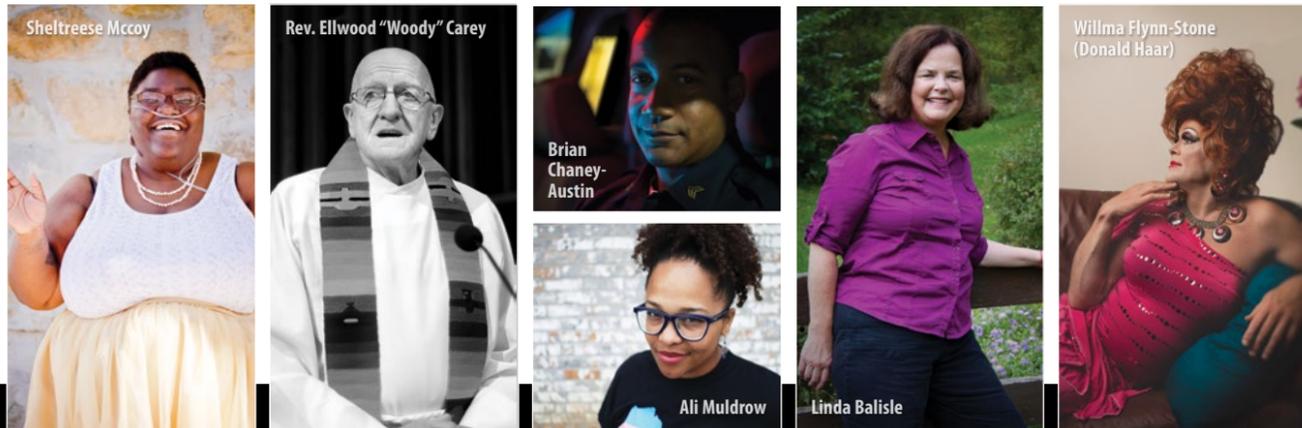
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Winter Warmer

Our Lives closes out its 10th anniversary with a look back at our end-of-the-year issue, and all the people, stories, places, and ideas that have provided a warm place to gather in the coldest of seasons.

THE LEAVES HAVE DROPPED from the trees, the frost has bitten, and snows have likely begun to blow (or at least threaten to). Wisconsinites are experts at finding ways to keep cozy during the winter months. The shorter days and longer nights are also certainly a time for relying on our communities to help us keep our wits. Our November/December issues have reflected that from the start, though their main theme has evolved: What started as a family-focused edition has now expanded to include health and wellness—a good fit, we think, for the time when many of us may struggle with both mental and physical well-being. Take a look back at the ways we’ve sought to come together and lift each other up in the winter. Finally, thank you for coming along with us on this retrospective. Here’s to another 10 (and more) years!

2007



ELI JUDGE, at the time both a U.W. student and the alder for a heavily student district, wrote a compelling narrative about starting Students for a Fair Wisconsin on the year anniversary of the marriage amendment passing, revisiting the highs and lows of the campaign and what compelled him to get active and involved. In a bit of synchronicity, our first November issue also included a piece about this issue’s featured Reader, Dana Crumpton. Publisher Patrick Farabaugh wrote a farewell to and

remembrance for Dana’s longtime partner, John W. Meyer. We also profiled Liz Tymus, who founded and ran the now-defunct but highly influential indieQueer dance parties for several years in Madison. Finally, we profiled then-Senior Minister at First Congregational Church Curt Anderson. Curt was



a consistent and visible ally of the LGBTQ community in the era before marriage equality, and helped pave the way for the church to eventually call its first LGBTQ Senior Minister, Eldonna Hazen. Curt also formed and lead a coalition of faith communities to lobby against the marriage amendment.

2008



WE INTRODUCED the family theme for the first time, with a cover feature focused on Brendan Barrett, Vance Skinner, and their twin daughters—born via surrogacy. It was a fun and

moving portrait of the many ways in which LGBTQ people choose to build families, and included an amazing twist ending (find the article in the archives on our website to find out more). The Law Center for Children and Families put together a great resource guide on the path to parenthood for LGBTQ people. We featured Bonnie Augusta, former LGBTQ liaison for the Madison Metropolitan School District, for her work to pioneer that position and her vocal advocacy for GSAFE and LGBTQ kids in general.

ROBERTO AMEZCUA, BETH MCCONNELL, IAN DEGRAFF, PAUL BAKER PRINDLE, AMBER SOWARDS, ANGELA RICHARDSON, SAMANTHA DUTCHER.

The proto-version of the Our Readers profile introduced the community to Jason Rae, who had generated buzz at the time for being the youngest super delegate in the Democratic Party, and one of the deciding votes in the primary race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Jason has since gone on to be elected as Secretary of the national Democratic Party, among other things.

2009



IN OUR FIRST major attempt at providing corporate accountability around LGBTQ issues, Marty Fox tackled an extensive Corporate Diversity Initiative Report project for us. It compiled and averaged various rankings for a number of larger companies with a presence in Wisconsin, giving a clearer picture of their true diversity and inclusion. The Out Professional Engagement Network (OPEN) was started that year, and one of its co-founders, J. James Tye, gave us the rundown of how it all got going. We introduced readers to Ellen Berz, who was then the AIDS Network board president and has since gone on to become a Dane County judge. Ellen helped see the organization’s food pantry opened. Our Pioneers featured Scott Seyforth talking about the Madison Alliance for Homosexual Equality (MAHE) and that group’s history of firsts. Attorney Tamara Packard shared a piece addressing Obama’s promise to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, and Antoinette Coles wrote a coming out story tied to her transition, with these poignant words to take to heart: “Life’s too short to live these lies. Besides, this was like holding a beach ball underwater; it always surfaces.”

2010



IF YOU EVER SAW the blue Prius emblazoned with phrases like “Kindness Ripples,” that was Paul Wesselmann, who wrote our cover story that year on being brave enough to be your full and true self, and the trickiness of finding that balance. Rev. Ellwood Carey, who most folks knew as Woody, was given the Man of the Year Award by OutReach, in large part for



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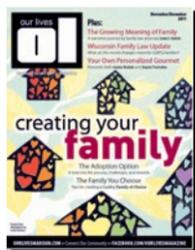


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his work with the New Harvest Foundation and for as the administrator for the AIDS Caring Community program for the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Woody came out while still serving, and he wrote about how he worked to reconcile his faith and his job with his sexuality. He passed away in 2012.

2011



JULIET DARKEN provided our first (and so far only) illustrated cover, highlighting the theme of how LGBTQ people create our own families. Sue Gill wrote the insightful piece behind the cover,

tackling the ways in which we navigate and build our families of choice. The issue also included a beautiful narrative by Linda Balisle, who gifted us with a deep dive into the very difficult spaces she navigated while coming out and building her identity. Linda's life was hit hard by the AIDS crisis, and as a little girl she lived through deseg-

regation in the South (and all its attendant traumas and complexities). Through all of those episodes, she found and built her own family of choice. That was the year that Fair Wisconsin announced its statewide LGBT Leadership Conference with keynote speaker Chaz Bono.

2012



ADOPTION CAN BE a lengthy and complicated process under the best of circumstances. Denise Matyka and Margaret McMurray wrote about the process of adopting their daughter from Russia

in the era before marriage equality, and running a gauntlet of legal and social issues in order to create their family. GSAFE Educator of the Year recipient Abra Bankendorf Vigna wrote a powerful statement of values about her life and work with Briarpatch's Teens Like Us, with group alumni sharing their own thoughts alongside it.

2013



STATE REP. JOCASTA Zamarripa graced our cover that year, writing about finding her way into political work and also reconciling her identity and its intersections, all after building her

initial platform before she was out publicly. Former GSAFE co-director Kristen Petroskius gave us an incredibly vulnerable and important debrief after that organization's board underwent a major racial justice training and mission re-focus. The piece included a helpful chart for determining where your own organization may be on that journey (the All-White Club, the Affirmative Action or Token Organization, the Multicultural Organization, or the Anti-Racist Organization).

2014



IN A DEEPLY PERSONAL narrative about her journey, Judge Rhonda Lanford offered us a fascinating glimpse of the people and events that helped shape her. Judy Dahl put together an excellent

resource guide for those thinking about using surrogacy in order to start a family. The issue included one of our more controversial articles, as we took a look at the local chapter of the Salvation Army and its efforts to be more welcoming toward transgender clients in particular. Sue Gill wrote on being "invisibly queer," and the risk of social isolation even occasional hostility faced by those people too often ignored or erased even within LGBTQ communities.



Abra Bankendorf Vigna

Jane LaFlash

ROBERTO AMEZCUA, BETH MCCONNELL

2015



THEN VICE PROVOST of Madison College, our cover featured now-Provost Turina Bakken and her personal journey, and how it brought her into the education world.

We were pleased to

include a reported piece on the services offered at Briarpatch, which included the voices of both staff and clients. We featured co-founder of PFLAG, Jane LaFlash. We included a piece on Donald Harr and Willma's Fund. Sheltreese McCoy, then the Crossroads Coordinator at the LGBT Campus Center & Multicultural Student Center at the U.W., offered musings on life at the intersections of multiple identities. Alex Hanna wrote about access and barriers to healthcare for trans people, part of her work with the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition (Alex has since moved to Toronto and is an assistant professor at U.T.). We had therapist Owen Karcher talk about image policing, introducing some subconscious ways we might end up policing and stifling others' identities.

PATRICK FARBAUGH.

2016



OUR COVER FEATURED Wisconsin Alumni Association President Paula Bonner, with a reflection on important family ties, barriers broken, gracious mentors, and her life's work to help create

equality and innovation. In the midst of a contentious national discussion about the role of police in our communities, Madison Office Brian Chaney Austin wrote about his life at the intersections of being a gay black man wearing the uniform. GSAFE's Ali Muldrow tackled the subject of juvenile incarceration in Wisconsin, and the challenges faced to fix a broken system.



Jason Rae

2017



YOU HOLD IN YOUR hand the final issue of our 10th anniversary celebration. It's been a wild ride of a year, with seemingly constant outrages and setbacks coming from the national and local stag-

es. It's what makes the positive news, and the work done by the everyday folks (yes, you!) to fight the good fight, all the more crucial to know and share. Tanya Atkinson of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin gets us centered on health and family issues, with a healthy dose of love and laughter to keep us sane. GSAFE Educator of the Year Abby Swetz gives us a roadmap for using vulnerability to create safer schools and healthier kids. Kaci Sullivan lets us all in on his incredibly poignant journey into trans parenthood. And there are many more stories, calls to action, ways to reach out and help and to get help, and so much more in the pages of this issue. We are, as always, so grateful to everyone who contributes their time and energy to help bring this magazine to all of you. Here's to another 10 years, and more, of *Our Lives*. ■

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Dr. David Allen, DDS, MS
Dr. Stephen Schasker, DDS, MS

ENDODONTIST

Dr. Nicholas Anders, DDS, MS

PERIODONTISTS (left to right)

Dr. Matthew Lorson, DDS
Dr. Amjad Nazzal, DDS, MDS



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The Body Politic

New Wisconsin budget includes sweeping changes to Domestic Partnerships. Attorney **Tamara Packard** explains just what the recently signed state budget does and does not mean for those people on the **Domestic Partnership Registry**.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, if your sweetie needs just one more reason to accept your marriage proposal, Scott Walker and his acolytes in the Wisconsin legislature just gave you one. That's right, Scott Walker wants you to get married. To each other. On September 21, Governor Walker signed the belated executive budget act of the 2017 Legislature, which includes changes to the statewide Domestic Partnership Registry. The budget act also phases out domestic partner health insurance coverage for state, municipal, and other governmental employees.

Let's not kid ourselves: Wisconsin Republicans have never really wanted same-sex couples to marry. They have never supported any sort of governmental recognition of our relationships. That is why, after the voters amended the Wisconsin Constitution in 2006 to ban same-sex marriages, as well as anything "substantially similar to" marriage, Governor Doyle and legislative Democrats enacted in 2009 (also through a budget act) the Domestic Partnership Registry. Registration provided same-sex couples with a limited set of legal protections, but nowhere near the benefits



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and obligations of marriage. Nevertheless, thousands of couples flocked to their local county clerk to register.

The governmental recognition and the protections provided through registration were an important step forward in our quest for civil marriage equality.

That same 2009 budget act put in place a number of employment benefits for those employed by the state, their domestic partners, and the children of the partners. Most importantly, state workers and their families gained access to family insurance coverage. Those health insurance benefits also flowed to employees of other governmental bodies participating in health, retirement, and other benefit plans through the Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF).

Five years later, in 2014, the federal courts ruled that Wisconsin's marriage ban was unconstitutional, and recognized that access to

marriage was our civil right. A year later the U.S. Supreme Court agreed. At a purely pragmatic level, now that the gap has been closed with marriage equality, the stop-gap measures of the 2009 budget bill are largely no longer needed. However, people who have organized their lives around those 2009 measures need to know of the changes and take new measures to once again protect their families.

First, while most of the protections tied to Domestic Partnership registration will continue for those already registered, the State will stop accepting new registrations as of April 1, 2018. That means after that date, if you and your sweetie want to make it legal, and receive the protections granted through Domestic Partnership registration (plus hundreds more rights and responsibilities), you will have to marry.

Second, governmental employees who get their insurance through ETF soon will no

longer be able to include their domestic partners and the partner's children on their health insurance. A notice on the ETF website says these benefits will stop as of January 1, 2018. Approximately 4,400 families are affected by this change. One way for these families to maintain their health insurance coverage is through marriage.

For more information about ETF benefits affected by the 2017 budget act, start here: etf.wi.gov/news/ht_20171006.htm. ETF mailed a letter to affected families dated October 9, 2017. If you should have received it, but did not, you can link to it from the website noted above. Please note that if you currently receive benefits through ETF as a surviving domestic partner, your benefits should not change.

Third, other government employees who receive domestic partner health coverage through plans not offered by ETF will also lose this coverage. The end date will vary among employers, but for many the end date will be April 1, 2018. If your family receives

domestic partner coverage through a government employee, check with the employee's human resources office for details on when coverage will end, and what rights you have to continue the benefit at your own cost.

Just as throughout our struggle for civil rights, it is again two steps forward and one step back. Fortunately, this step back is easier to take, because we now have equal access to marriage, and therefore options. Yet since the 2016 election, as we live with increasingly outrageous attacks on all minority groups, including LGBTQ communities, it is hard to feel secure in our recently recognized right to marry. In closing, however, remember that that right comes from the United States Constitution, and a growing majority of Americans support marriage equality. ■



TAMARA PACKARD is a Madison civil rights lawyer, activist, and partner in the law firm of Pines Bach LLP, pinesbach.com.



LGBTQ Organizations Update

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

Reported by **Emily Mills**

NEWS

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

CREAM CITY FOUNDATION On September 22 the organization hosted its 9th annual Business Equality Luncheon at the Pfister Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. The event was attended by over 350 guests and featured the 2017 Cream City Foundation LGBTQ+ scholarship award winners who collectively received over \$25,000 in scholarship awards. The event also featured keynote speaker Col. (Ret.) Sheri Swokowski speaking about her experiences an activism as an out transgender woman.

FORGE The organization had a busy summer and fall travel/training schedule. They trained audiences of victim service providers and/or transgender, non-binary, and SOFFAs (Significant Others, Friends, Family and Allies) in Texas (while Hurricane Harvey was hitting the state!).

METHODOLOGY | *Our Lives* reaches out to area LGBTQ+ and related organizations to seek updates and information for inclusion in this section. We also gather some of the 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.

Indiana, Pennsylvania, California, and Hawaii.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS The group sang as they marched in the Outreach Pride Parade in August, and sang more formally for the Outreach 25th Anniversary Awards Banquet in October. The PHMC outreach ensemble, Common Chords, performed for Woof's King Street Pride in August.

PHMC held its Fall Fundraiser on October 14 with the generous support of Bunky's Catering to a near-capacity crowd. Members also participated in a larger chorus for the It Gets Better Tour performance on October 19 at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with members of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles.

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE The Chamber celebrated its five-year anniversary on September 27, with a large celebration in Milwaukee. The organization has grown to more than 500 members in five years.

Queer basketball group starts in Madison



CALLING ALL BASKETBALL LOVERS of all skill levels! Owen Karcher is helping to start a regular, queer, pickup basketball game group in Madison. Games happen on Sundays at 3:00 p.m. at Garner Park (333 S. Rosa Road, Madison). Join the Facebook group to get updates and post additional times you want to play: facebook.com/groups/159173144661393.

AWARDS / RECOGNITION / GRANTS

Special thanks for those who do good.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT

Kofi Short, D&R's Grants, Compliance and Quality Manager, recently graduated as a Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellow. This follows 10 months of intensive nonprofit leadership skills training for gay men of color working in the field of HIV prevention.

The Naughty Bags condom campaign was awarded Milwaukee Magazine's "Best of 2017" award for "Best Sexcessory."

FORGE

The FORGE staff has its first new baby! Born to Community Engagement and Project Coordinator Ashley Altadonna and her wife in August, the group welcomes and sends best wishes to the whole family.

TRANSLIBERATION ART COALITION

The coalition was deeply honored to be selected for Outreach's Organization of the Year Award. They are so grateful for the opportunity to serve our community in a meaningful way!

STAFF / BOARD CHANGES

Who's moving on or moving into org leadership.

ACLU OF WISCONSIN

Dr. Wayne Bentham of Appleton has joined the statewide board of directors. Bentham is a physician/psychiatrist who, during a 15-year career, has worked in clinical and administrative settings. With a healthcare public policy background, he has participated in national committees on health care, physician education, and economic policy, and has created programs to increase access to effective mental health care across the country.

FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL

The FEC Board of Directors is pleased to welcome five new members. The organization also announced long-time Chief Program Officer **Brent Wright's** promotion to Chief Operating Officer. **Jessika Davidson** joins the team in the newly created Digital Campaigns Manager position. Jessika has dedicated her career to working for non-profit social service and advocacy campaigns, working at the intersection of policy, movement building,



For more than 40 years, Briarpatch Youth Services has served at-risk and homeless youth and their families.

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- Approximately 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.
- It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth in the U.S. die each year as a result of assault, illness, or suicide.
- 849 high school students reported being kicked out by their parents in the last 12 months.
- Homeless teens are more likely to become homeless adults.



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and field and communications strategy. Prior to joining FEC, she worked in marketing and communications for the Houston Museum of African American Culture, and for the Montrose Center, one of the largest LGBTQ service centers in the South.

OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER Outreach is looking for passionate, energetic, hard-working people to grow their board of directors. LGBTQ people of color, people who are disabled, women, people who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming, people of varying faiths and backgrounds, are welcomed and encouraged to apply. Anyone who is interested should reach out to Steve Starkey at steves@lgbtoutreach.org or by phone at 608-255-8582.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS PHMC welcomes new board member **Michael Keller**, a retired music professor from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He taught piano there for 37 years, and directed the Performing Arts Series for five years, as well as serving on numerous university committees.

PFLAG MADISON The local chapter welcomes new board members: **Paul Wertsch**, **Nancy Jones**, and **Ken Jones**.

PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE The current board is comprised of **Theresa Emmerling** (President, Pharmacy Division), **Shane Kloppenberg** (Co-President), **Seth Cross** (Co-President Elect), **Grady East-**

erling (Co-President Elect), **Beatriz Jimenez Cadilla** (Treasurer), **Marnie Janson** (Outreach Chair), and **Velislava Fatchikova** (PiH Representative).

PROUD THEATER The Art and Soul Innovations Board of Directors has added members **Sydney Kleinholz**, **Garrett Stolen**, and **Conor Smyth**.

STAGEQ **Mike Finnegan** served on the board for three years and has now stepped down. Newly elected board members are **Sara Beth Hahner**, **Dawn Bankers**, and **Dennis Yadon**.

TRANSLIBERATION ART COALITION The group welcomes **Ti Banks** to its board of directors. Ti is a strong, creative presence in the community and well known for their activism. The coalition is so excited to begin working with them!

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **Jason Rae** has been promoted to President & CEO. The organization also hired its second staff person, **Annie Schmitz**, as Membership and Programs Coordinator. Schmitz recently graduated with honors from the University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in Government. She previously worked for Montana Public Radio and for an Austin co-operative business. Annie is currently pursuing an M.S. from UWM in Nonprofit Management and Leadership.

DEVELOPMENT

New programs, outreach, or changes in mission.

ARCW Vice President & Chief Operating Officer Debra Endean presented at the Wisconsin Society for Healthcare Risk Management's Fall Conference on September 21 in Lake Geneva. The objective of the conference was to, "create awareness of advocacy and public agencies supporting underserved members of our community," according to event organizers. Deb's presentation highlighted the importance of inclusion and the health of the community. She expounded on the impact of stigma on health, as related to HIV infection as well as race, gender, sexual identity, and poverty.

FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL The organization's Every Child Deserves a Family campaign coordinates action at the federal and state levels across the country to fight anti-LGBTQ discrimination in adoption and foster care systems. For information, visit: familyequality.org/ecdf.

FORGE In an effort to expand its online presence, the group has a new Wisconsin-specific site at forge-wi.org, Facebook page at facebook.com/forge.wi, and a new blog for transgender survivors of violence and those who love/serve them at trans-survivors.com/blog.

Catholic Diocese of Madison doubles down on discrimination

IN A CONFIDENTIAL EMAIL, Vicar General James Bartylla urged priests to consider whether or not to perform funerals for people in same-sex relationships, offering options and alterations that would "minimize scandal" for doing so.

The email comes in response to questions from the diocese's priests, and was confirmed by Bishop Robert Morlino and the Catholic Diocese of Madison, who told News 3 that its directives "conform with the mind of the bishop and meet his approval."

The section entitled "consideration of funeral rites for a person in a homosexual civil or notorious union" was first reported by the Pray Tell blog. Bullet points included in the directive include:

- Was the deceased or the "partner" a promoter of the "gay" lifestyle?
- Did the deceased give some signs of repentance before death?
- To minimize scandal, should there merely be a short scripture service at the funeral home? Or maybe merely a graveside service? Maybe a later "Mass for the Dead" with or without explicit mention of the name of the deceased or "partner" could alternatively or in addition be offered at the parish or even at another parish (to avoid scandal), with or without family members present.
- Any surviving "partner" should not have any public or prominent role at any ecclesiastical funeral rite or service.
- A great risk for scandal and confusion is for the name of the celebrating priest and/or the parish to be listed in any public (e.g., newspaper) or semi-public obituary or notice that also lists the predeceased or surviving "partner" in some manner. This can't happen for obvious reasons.
- There should be no mention of the "partner" either by name or by other reference (nor reference to the unnatural union) in any liturgical booklet, prayer card, homily, sermon, talk by the priest, deacon, etc.

The executive director of LGBT OutReach, Steve Starkley, believed the consideration to be "offensive and discriminatory," but also acknowledged that at least the directive would give priests options rather than a demand. "I just would hope that this day in age the Catholic Church would be more inclusive, and treat people more equally, especially somebody whose coming to the Catholic Church and asking for a funeral service," Starkley said. "They probably have a connection, have been members of the church, and it seems very discriminatory."

Bishop Morlino has a long public record of being stridently anti-gay marriage, and the diocese has fired church staff members for being openly gay, including Charles Philyaw, who had been hired as the director of liturgical music at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Verona but was fired in 2015. ■



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Milwaukee Pride invests in local LGBTQ community

FOLLOWING A RECORD-BREAKING PrideFest Milwaukee 2017, the Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors announced the disbursement of over \$16,000 in financial donations, scholarships, and gifts to local causes, including:

- \$10,218 to GSAFE, through the PrideFest Plus One 2017 campaign
- \$3,000 to Ashley Smith, recipient of the 2017 Rising Star Scholarship
- \$2,500 to the 2017 Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival
- \$723 in Wom!nz Spot tip donations to the Milwaukee Women's Center

"Milwaukee Pride's mission makes firm commitments to the LGBTQ community: to developing future leaders, to improving access to services, to celebrating our history and heritage, to creating learning, networking and outreach opportunities," said Wes Shaver, president of Milwaukee Pride. "Our donations are an investment in the future of LGBTQ Milwaukeee."

This year's PrideFest Plus One campaign raised a record-breaking \$5,109 in community donations for GSAFE, which were matched by the Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors for a grand total donation of \$10,218.

"We're humbled by the generosity shown by everyone who gave to the Plus One Campaign," said Brian Juchems, GSAFE senior director of education. "These donations help trans and queer students develop their voice as advocates for themselves and for others. These dollars will help create schools where LGBTQ youth—particularly trans and queer youth of color—are not just surviving, but thriving."

"This fall, nearly 900,000 students returned to Wisconsin's classrooms," said Michail Takach, Milwaukee Pride's vice president of communications. "We recognize that LGBTQ students may feel increasingly unsafe and unsupported in the academic setting."

"We are honored to support GSAFE in protecting and developing these students in their journey to their best selves—through mentoring, networking, advocacy, policy formation, and educator and administrator training."

PrideFest Plus One nominations are currently being accepted for the 2018 festival season. Submission guidelines and instructions are available at the Milwaukee Pride website. The 2018 PrideFest Plus One honoree will be announced in January. ■



LGBT BOOKS TO PRISONERS The organization's fundraiser raised more than \$1000 to help cover postage—a huge need. Five dollars sends one package with books to LGBTQ inmates, which means the fundraiser brought in enough to cover more than 200 packages. So far in 2017, more than 2,419 packages in total have been sent.

OUTREACH The center has received funding from the State for several years. Their grant is up for renewal, and they will be writing a grant to fund a position for HIV/STI prevention, needle exchange, HIV/STI testing, and education on HIV and STIs in the LGBTQ community.

They also received a grant for their LGBT Senior Advocate, Michal Osier, to fund an information and referral program for LGBT seniors. This program will identify and train existing senior service providers in the Dane County area on LGBTQ-affirming practices.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS PHMC was included in Partners in Giving—the state, university, and UW Health employees combined campaign of Dane County—for the first time.

PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE The organization has been busy: They penned a letter to Wisconsin legislators urging them to pass a ban on so-called gay "conversion therapy," produced transgender healthcare cards for white coat pockets, created references for medical staff on how to use non-gendered pronouns when addressing patients, and handed out rainbow caduceus pins for medical professionals wishing to show their support for LGBTQ people.

TRANSLIBERATION ART COALITION The New Harvest Foundation has selected the Coalition's 2018 Spring Show for sponsorship. This means the group will be able to have a regional event showcasing work from trans and gender non-conforming artists all over Wisconsin. It also means they will be able to offer travel and lodging scholarships for queer trans people of color, and queer trans folx living with disabilities, and QT folx living in rural areas. Additionally, they will be able to provide professional development workshop opportunities to participants.

WI LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Stay tuned for an announcement about an exciting new campaign with Fair Wisconsin "to protect our trans brothers and sisters from discrimination."

CALLS TO ACTION
Where and how you can help.

FORGE October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and FORGE marked it by

featuring their extensive series of webinars and publications that help shelters serve survivors of all genders. If you want to check it out, all are available free online at forge-forward.org.

LGBT BOOKS TO PRISONERS Please join at any volunteer session on Monday or Tuesday evening or midday on Saturdays. The group also keeps a running wish list of needed books on A Room of One's Own's website and through Amazon. They are always excited to meet new people, happy to talk about the project, and eager for new supporters and volunteers.

OUTREACH The center is getting ready for their annual end-of-the-year fundraising campaign. Every fall OutReach sends out over 1,000 letters asking for people's continued financial support. A large portion of their annual budget comes from this fundraising campaign. If you would like to support OutReach's work, please visit their website at lgbtoutreach.org.

PROUD THEATER Art and Soul Innovations (the fiscal sponsor of Proud Theater and Proud Theater Beyond) is looking to add people to their board of directors. If you are interested in helping Proud Theater grow around the state and have skills in financial preparation, business plan development, public relations, and other skill sets that can help enhance the growth of the organization, please contact Executive Director Brian Wild at info@proudtheater.org.

Proud Theater Green Bay is looking for youth mentors in the Green Bay area. People with skills in theater and theater arts, social work, social justice, or a big desire to make the world a better place are welcome to apply. Write info@proudtheater.org for an application.

TRANSLIBERATION ART COALITION Please consider a contribution to the cause: Your donations allow the group to maintain and steadily scale up the impact. They can reach more people, put on better events, and increase the resources provided for the community: gofundme.com/transliberationartcoalition.

UPCOMING EVENTS
Plan ahead to join in.

ACLU OF WISCONSIN The annual Bill of Rights Celebration is **November 8** and will celebrate A Year of Resistance. Awards will be given to Planned Parenthood, the NAACP Youth Commandos of the 1967 fair housing marches, the young plaintiffs in the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake juvenile prison case, and Ruthelle Frank, the late lead plaintiff in the voter ID case. Go to aclu-wi.org/events to buy tickets.



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Trans Research Lab at UW creates needed opportunities for academic study of transgender experiences

ISTHMUS RECENTLY FEATURED the pioneering work of the Trans Research Lab at U.W.-Madison. Created and directed by Prof. Stephanie Budge of the Counseling Psychology Department, the lab conducts what's described as "affirmative research." In 2016, the lab published research on the relationship between geographic location and level of anxiety and depression among transgender populations in America. Right now, the research focus is on the use of psychotherapy for transgender people, an area in which there is little current research. The hope is to improve therapy practices for a population that has typically faced stigma and non-scientifically based treatments.

The lab has no regular location or schedule, but has attracted interest from across the country. There are about 20 volunteer members conducting research, and past interns have gone on to help found a handful of other small labs around the nation that are based on its model.

According to *Isthmus*, "Budge has been researching transgender-related issues for more than a decade. In 2011, she founded the TSTAR lab at the University of Louisville—which she says was the first-ever transgender-focused research lab in psychology. At the time, she was mainly working to figure out what problems the transgender community faces. The little research being done in the area, Budge says, was often 'really bad and really offensive,' with researchers often using outdated and offensive terminology.

"Following years of research and data collection into psychology-related issues, Budge says the problems facing the transgender community are just now coming into focus, and she's hoping the lab will help address them." ■

GSAFE Three annual GSAFE conferences offer three chances to connect with GSAFE, GSAs, educators, and administrators across Wisconsin.

- Fall Unity Conference on December 8
- Middle School GSA Conference on February 9
- Spring GSA Conference on March 9

LGBT BOOKS TO PRISONERS The group is planning to host a Black and Pink Holiday Card Writing Party for Black & Pink again this year. Folks will get together in **late November** or **early December** to write cards for LGBTQ and HIV+ incarcerated people. Check the website or email them for more details about date, time, and location: lgbtbookstoprisoners.org / lgbtbookstoprisoners@gmail.com.

OUTREACH The LGBT Senior Alliance and OutThere invite you to attend a Thanksgiving potluck on Sunday, **November 26** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at OutReach. There is a suggested donation of \$10, or bring a dish to pass. The LGBT Senior Alliance is also hosting a New Year's Day party on **January 1**; time and suggested donation amount TBD. For more information on all these events, please go to lgbtseniors.org.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS "A Winter Evening" concert will be offered on Friday,

December 8 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, **December 10** at 3:00 p.m., both at First United Methodist Church, 203 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison. Tickets are \$20 at the door, or \$15 in advance.

PFLAG MADISON The group holds its monthly meetings on the third Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House, 1704 Roberts Court in Madison. Upcoming topics and guests are as follows: **November 19** with guest speaker Z! Haukeness, **December 17** with GSAFE students and the annual holiday party, **January 21** with a discussion of the "TRANSforming Faith Conference" video featuring Joanne Lee. Parents, friends, and allies of LGBTQ+ people are welcome (as are LGBTQ+ people)!

PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE The group will present a regular Coffee Talk series, held every other Friday at 10:00 a.m. during the semester, in the atrium of the nursing school, next to Revive Cafe. Upcoming dates are: **November 3** and **17**, **December 1** and **15**. Follow them on Facebook or subscribe to the email list to stay up-to-date on events: join-prideinhealthcare@lists.wisc.edu and facebook.com/prideinhealthcare.

PROUD THEATER An informational meeting was held in Green Bay in preparation for a new chapter in that area. Their first full development meeting will be **November 2** at 6:00 p.m. Proud Theater Madison and Proud Theater Sun Prairie will be teaming up to do a performance and talkback at U.W.-River Falls on **November 11** at 1:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater, Kleinpell Fine Arts Building. This is open to the public. Proud Theater Beyond will be holding an Open Mic at Trinity United Methodist Church on **November 13** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Upcoming networking events in Madison include the regular Coffee Connection series, **November 7** at the River Food Pantry, and the Chamber on Tap Holiday Edition on **December 19** at HotelRED.



HOW TO HAVE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NEWS INCLUDED

METHODOLOGY | *Our Lives* reaches out to area LGBTQ+ and related organizations to seek updates and information for inclusion in this section. We also gather some of the 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.

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I OFTEN RECALL THE SIGHTS, sounds, and smells of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Yet the place I once called home is now the one place I haven't been able to return to since my departure 21 years ago.

I remember attending my dad's soccer games every Sunday, and my mother walking me to pre-school as a young child. We lived in one household with two other families; my single mother aunts who had their own daughters. Being an only child, my cousins were like my siblings. My parents, along with most of my extended family, struggled economically. My mom was only able to complete a sixth grade education and my father never received his high school diploma because he missed his last day of school.

They share stories with me about how difficult it was for them to acquire something many of us take for granted in the United States: notebooks and pencils. My dad recalls making his own notebooks for their different classes by dividing loose pages into clasp folders. He said to me once, "We always found a way to make it work." I share this to paint a picture of the economic barriers my parents endured growing up and that eventually fueled their desire to provide me with the opportunity for a better future.

THE DANGEROUS JOURNEY

The realization that Mexico had limited opportunities for us as a family lead my father to journey to the United States. He couldn't apply for a visa because he wasn't financially stable, so he crossed the southern border of the United States hopeful to be able to provide for his family. I still have memories of crying with my mom, talking to my dad on the phone late at night. I hold the pain of missing him that much in my heart to this day.

My dad had found a job and was living with my aunt for a couple of months before my mom and I also journeyed to the United States. At the age of five, on December 25 of 1995, my mom and I packed up our things and ventured to Tijuana. It was my first time on an airplane, and I still recall my mom asking someone for permission to see the ocean through someone else's window seat. I was full of hope and excitement knowing that I would soon be reunited with my dad.

My mom and I met with strangers at the border and I was handed off to a family that would help me cross the border by pretending to be one of their own children. I climbed into a burgundy van that had a mattress in the back and said goodbye to my mom, who indicated she would see me when we reached my dad in the United States. I had to remember a false identity in case border agents asked us questions. From one moment to another, I became "Linda Hernandez." I was scared that if I did not remember this false identity, I wouldn't be able to be reunited my parents. Later on, I found out that my mom had been stowed underneath the passenger seat of a car and had had a much more treacherous journey than I did.

I arrived to the United States and reunited with my dad a few days before my mom joined us as well. I always ask people to think about why a parent would choose to leave everything they know and cross oceans and treacherous mountains for the unknown, the unpromised, and a country that in many ways wants nothing of you.

LIVING ON THE MARGINS

The transition into the United States, having left all that my parents and I knew, was one filled with many trials and tribulations. We lived in my aunt's home for a while as my parents became more settled into their own jobs. My father worked in dairies and my mother worked in

the fields of Central California picking cotton, grapes, and almonds. I still remember her getting picked up at five in the morning and coming home with her hair, face, and clothes full of dust.

For years all the way until this very day, I have seen my parents work laborious jobs for long hours. My dad has often had day and two a.m. shifts with fixed days off and no paid leave, and my mother has worked 12-hour long days with multiple health complications

The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. The ending of this program means that I will have to drop out of my Ph.D. program if a resolution is not approved by Congress.

but no access to health insurance. These were and continue to be my parent's circumstances because they are undocumented. My parents are exhausted but, despite this, they don't complain and are simply thankful to have an opportunity to work. Labor rights are not a thing they are familiar with, and in fact are afraid to pursue any information about because they fear losing their job and being reported to deportation officials.



MINERO GIVEN ALIX OLSON AWARD

The 2017 Alix Olson Award for the Promotion of a Tolerant and Just Community was presented to Laura Minero in October, by members of Seeking Tolerance and Justice

Over Hate (STAJOH), at a ceremony at Monona Terrace.

Minero is a Ph.D. student in counseling psychology at U.W.-Madison and is a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient. She has emerged as a leading and persuasive voice for just and humane immigration reform, as a member of, and on behalf of, the undocumented community. Laura P. Minero is an outspoken advocate; leading marches, giving presentations, meeting with lawmakers, taking interviews so that a broad audience may hear and learn of the concerns around DACA. Laura's academic life focuses on the experience of transgender immigrants and intersectionalities within the immigrant and LGBTQ communities. She mentors through the U.W.-Madison posse program and local high schools with a focus on Latin youth.

STAJOH is an anti-hate crime group composed of representatives of government agencies from the City of Madison, Dane County, Madison Metropolitan School District, State of Wisconsin, and University of Wisconsin-Madison as well as other community-based agencies throughout Dane County.

The award recognizes contributions of individuals who make a difference by promoting tolerance and justice in their community. Retired MPD Detective Alix Olson was "the heart and soul of STAJOH and this award is given in honor of her service." ■

I Am UndocuQueer

U.W. Ph.D. candidate **Laura P. Minero** draws strength and inspiration for her work from her own experiences as an undocumented, queer Latinx—and from the parents who worked so hard to give her opportunity.

Photographed by Laduma Nguyuza for *Our Lives* magazine.

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CONNECT → OUR ADVOCATES

Being witness to my parent's pain and living in a state of "aguantar" (withstanding) because they feel they don't have the same rights as U.S. citizens is one of the major sources of motivation for my advocacy and social justice work. I share their story because there are many misconceptions about them, including that they don't pay taxes and that they take advantage of government programs. My parents have paid taxes since they began working, and they contribute to Social Security even though they have no access to it or any kind of retirement fund of their own. They've never had access to viable health insurance.

Growing up, I had faced my own struggles. I was teased for speaking Spanish, and later on for being queer. I recall eating lunches alone often and having things written on my locker for being different. I put my energy into school because I found refuge in the encouragement of my teachers, despite being misunderstood by my peers.

PURSUING THE DREAM

However, my own struggles growing up undocumented primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you've grown up in the United States.

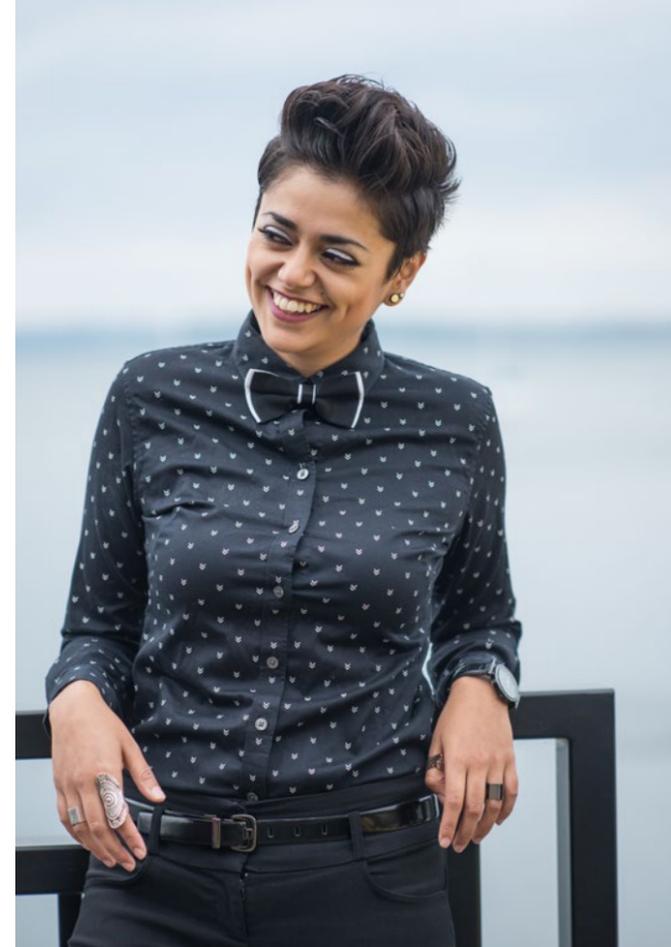
I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor's office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies.

The ending of this program means that I will have to drop out of my Ph.D. program if a resolution is not approved by Congress. However, it is my own belief that passing a legislative solution to protect only us who have benefitted from DACA will only further perpetuate the good-versus-bad immigrant stereotype that has prevented us from passing humane, comprehensive, and inclusive reform that will protect families, children, and further prevent families from being unjustly separated.

My personal experiences propelled me to develop an expertise in examining how prejudicial, discriminatory attitudes and policy impacts the lived experiences of Latinx, Spanish-speaking, undocumented immigrant and LGBTQAI+ populations within the United States. As



a social justice-oriented researcher, I believe that science can help us identify how to better serve our communities through more inclusive implementation and teaching of clinical practice, policy, distribution of services, and increasing equal access to education.

AN INTERSECTIONAL LOVE

Although my work and own life experiences primarily focus on the intersectionality of undocumented immigration and LGBTQAI+ experiences, it is undeniable how the fight of other marginalized groups is one-in-the-same. More recently, we have been seeing the ways in which presently enacted policy by Trump and his administration are slowly cutting funding from the sciences and the arts, removing LGBTQ information from their websites, prevented transgender people from enlisting in the army, proposed the RAISE Act which would slash the levels of legal immigration to the country, threaten people's lives by defunding affordable health care, and using immigrants as pawns against one another to propose militarization of the border.

We have also continued to witness the heart-wrenching and unfathomable killing of Black and Brown men at the hands of police, and continue to threaten water and security for our Native siblings. Despite this systemic oppression and marginalization, I am continuously inspired by my community, who rise in the face of racist, classist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic policies and rhetoric every single day of our lives.

We need to recognize that our "privilege" is only an illusion, for no single human being is better than anyone else. It is not until we recognize the humanity and heart of every single person and stand shoulder to shoulder with them that we will be able to live in a just world. In order for us to move forward, love must be at the center of our social justice work: love for ourselves, love for the other, love for all that we are. ■

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Family on Wheels

In roller derby, **Eddie “Rufhouse Wainwright” Lupella** finally discovered a sport that not only welcomed queer people, but provided a needed team environment that ended up feeling more like family.

I GREW UP IN CENTRAL MINNESOTA—not the best environment for an outspoken kid who couldn’t contain his queerness to save his life. I never said it out loud, and it took me a long time to accept it myself. All of which was based on fear.

I have an identical twin, which might’ve affected a lot of people’s response to who I was as a child. “That one seems normal, but what’s up with that one?”

I lived the stereotypical “boy” life; played tee-ball and Little League, but preferred to pick the daisies. I was made fun of on a pretty constant basis, so even when I had interest in playing, I didn’t feel encouraged to do so. I loved playing soccer when I was little, but the small area I came from didn’t offer it.

The closest I got to sports in junior high and high school were five years of cross-country running. I could never see a place for myself in team sports, and I liked that I could do something athletic that only focused on me. I started taking dance lessons later in high school, which was a much friendlier environment, though in Minnesota I still faced a lot of questioning and assumptions being in dance. “Oh, you dance? I once knew this guy who danced so he could get all the girls!” Can’t say I was a fan of gendering activities and, looking back, it seemed like most people were trying to excuse or block out my potential queerness.

I continued dancing through college. I liked dancing, especially tap dancing, but it never fully clicked for me. Eventually I’d figure out it was because no one was smashing into each other (on purpose) when they were tap dancing. My other activities in college and through school were always arts related, which I still participate in when I can.

WOMEN LEAD THE WAY

At the end of college, I had a friend who joined a women’s roller derby league in Stevens Point (shout-out to Midstate Sisters of Skate and Poundstooth). I had heard of roller derby, and I loved the idea of what it seemed to represent. Still, I’d never watched it, or even played



Photographed by Mike Hiller for *Our Lives* magazine.

it! I watched what the sport was doing for her. Whether she noticed it or not, her confidence went up. She got so excited talking about it. It seemed like there was something there.

Something about a woman-centric sport really appealed to me. In other sports, how often do you hear the default sport name used to refer to a league of predominantly women? There’s always the qualifier: “Women’s Basketball,” and so on.

I always felt safer in women’s spaces than male-dominated ones. Years of being berated for just being me and not being “man enough” or fitting whatever mold I was expected to fit made me fearful, but really when it came down to it, I didn’t want to be a part of those spaces anyway.

I moved to Milwaukee after college and was trying to find my place. I wanted a break from arts (especially after studying them) and had always wanted to try team sports. There were inter-leagues in college, but I never had time to do any of them. Seeing Poundstooth’s response to it made me curious, and with a Google search I found there was actually a men’s roller derby league in Milwaukee. At the time, it was called the Milwaukee Blitzkrieg, but we’ve evolved into Wisconsin Men’s Roller Derby since combining with the amazing Madison men’s derby team, Mad Men. They had open practices and encouraged

attending one to see if it was something you wanted to try, and I thought, “What the hell? Why not?”

I think I had it in my mind it was something I wanted to do. The first practice I went to was a little bit to see how it was played, but it was really to feel out if I could feel safe in this space. It was a group of men, but the coach was a woman. When everyone introduced themselves to me, I saw the same lights in everyone’s eyes as

Something about a woman-centric sport really appealed to me. In other sports, how often do you hear the default sport name used to refer to a league of predominantly women? There’s always the qualifier: “Women’s Basketball,” and so on.

Poundstooth when she joined her league, and saw so many different kinds of people there skating, I knew I would try. There was one individual skating who flamboyantly introduced himself and I realized, “Wow, no one here cares who you are.”

THE WHOLE ATHLETE

I’m now going into my seventh season of derby. There are a few other queer-identified men that are part of my league now, though I started as the only one. I stuck around because, for the first time, I was playing a team sport. I saw the value and excitement of being a part of something bigger than me—my team, my family.

I also saw men and women, those in between, and everyone working and playing together all for the love of getting smashed into on quad skates. I’ll never forget getting laid out on my ass by Stank Girl when we scrimmaged the Dairyland Dolls several seasons ago, and I’m 6’2” and 250 pounds. Size, age, gender; nothing matters. Roller derby leveled the playing field, but moreso, I think it showed how ridiculous preconceived notions of gender or abilities—or anything else—are.

Underneath it all, I felt inspired knowing that I was a part of something woman-led. I’ve seen some backlash against men’s derby in my time, which I understand. Men’s sports are dominant, but the reason I joined derby wasn’t to try to take something from women—it was to learn from them.

I’m a lot more confident in who I am now, both through growing up, and through roller derby. My attraction and gender identity doesn’t define what boxes I have to fit into. Just because my size 13-wide quad skates are bright pink doesn’t mean I can’t knock your ass down. Come at me, bro. ■



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Unapologetic Craft

Filmmaker and YouTube star **Bria Brown** carves out space for queer, black identity in an entertainment and cultural landscape still largely hostile to her existence.

AS A LOCAL VIDEOGRAPHER I film a lot of events around Madison. Lately, clients have been asking for interviews at their events. They want testimonials to put into words the impact of the space they've created. I love doing it and, everytime, I have to remember that people are really uncomfortable in front of the camera. As a person who has been on stage since the age of seven, and at 24 have found myself building a career both in front of and behind the camera, I can't relate.

I started making YouTube videos at a time of great uproar in this country. While I don't remember who or what exactly was the catalyst, there were many protests, many online arguments, and a lot of tension. I needed a place to speak truth to power, if you will. I changed my pace when I was attacked online by a Neo-Nazi (seriously, one of her most popular videos was her singing Happy Birthday to Hitler). This kind of action is par for the course on YouTube, though. The attack on content created by black folks, queer folks, feminists, etc., is a frequent occurrence.

This caused a shift in my content and especially because I needed relief and a moment to explore a passion of mine: comedy. I grew up in the golden age of Black Comedy. My family gathered around *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Family Matters*, *Sister-Sister*, *That's So Raven*, and more, for a decade of comedic gold. Seeing myself on screen inspired me and made me not even think twice about preparing myself for a life in show business. I studied acting until I was 18 years old and promptly changed my path. I stopped seeing myself in the same way—or I'd see myself in the same role regurgitated and recreated and I was afraid of entering a career of tropes—so I didn't.



TURNING POINT

Fast forward to the Emmy's in 2017. Lena Waithe becomes the first Black woman to receive the Emmy for best writing in a comedy and then all of a sudden, I knew exactly in whose footsteps I am following.

I want to reiterate the importance of Lena Waithe for a moment. Lena was the first black woman to win this award, and she did it by writing about her real experience as a black, queer woman. That's nothing short of iconic. Often in the race for representation, queer people are last. In a "you can get yours, after we get ours" kind of way. In a "straight couples are consumable by 'mainstream' audiences but queer couples are too much too soon" kind of way. Lena made history as a black woman because her story of blackness and queerness—and how we sit in the middle of those identities—resonated so widely. Our stories are relatable because we are human. Our stories are worthy because they exist, and there is no pecking order for whose story gets to be told or when.

Sometimes, when I try to emphasize the importance of this moment to others, I get really emotional. I have spent years telling myself what careers I can't have because there is no space for me and because the world of entertainment was not made for a black, queer woman who is just trying to survive and make my people smile and feel joy.

In creating my YouTube channel and my production company, I found my space because I created it. I created "Unapologetically Bria Bea" because I truly apologized for my voice, laugh, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long. When I started my channel, I calculated how consumable I could be; how nice



In creating my YouTube channel and my production company, I found my space because I created it. I created "Unapologetically Bria Bea" because I truly apologized for my voice, laugh, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long.

I could talk about serious issues, how I could make sure no one was overwhelmed by my blackness or queerness. Those days are gone. I embrace my identities unapologetically because I deserve to do so.

WHY NOT BOTH?

One week I was frantically recording a first-person comedy video and editing a client video and losing sleep and I really had to stop and ask myself what the point of all of this was? I could drop the acting thing and become a Director of Photography/Cinematographer or Director and work solely behind the scenes. But I also have this passion and drive to use my voice and have spent my life training to do so.

So why both? I see Franchesca Ramsey, Lena Waithe, Lilly Singh, and so many other powerful women of color creating in front of and behind the camera, and I realize that that's the way for me. I can't just let other people write my stories, I can't just let other people direct my stories. I'm working toward developing something that allows the stories of queer folks, women, non-binary folks, folks of color, disabled folks, and everyone else who has been left out—to be told. On our own terms.

People often talk about "passing the mic" to women, people of color, and so on. The thing is, we have our own mics. We are talking, we are telling stories. We have been since the beginning of time. Think about it this way: Our histories are systemically erased, re-written, and forgotten by a standardized curriculum, and yet we still know or can gain access to that history.

This is the powerful storytelling that has sustained us. You all just have to decide to listen.

Find Bria on Youtube by searching "Unapologetically Bria Bea" and on Instagram at @beaunapologetic. ■

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Nov. & Dec.

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NOVEMBER

9

FAIR WISCONSIN'S VETERANS DAY LUNCHEON

The Madison Club

The Fair Wisconsin Education Fund holds its annual event in honor of all veterans, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tickets are \$75, complimentary for veterans and active service members. fairwisconsineducationfund.com



NOVEMBER

3 & 5

MADISON OPERA'S "CARMEN"

Overture Center

Madison Opera presents Georges Bizet's famous opera, "Carmen." With some of the most famous music in the genre, Bizet's passionate composition is a vivid story of love, jealousy, and betrayal.

madisonopera.org



9

OPEN MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PARTY

Plan B

Reflect and appreciate all the good that has happened over the year as the Out Professional Engagement Network presents their annual member appreciation party.

openmadison.org

ONE MADISON'S THIRD ANNIVERSARY SHOW

Art In

Madison's indie arts and culture website celebrates three years of publishing and events with

music from five Madison-based acts: Tippy, 3rd Dimension, Exploration Team, and DJs Ilana Bryne and Glynis.

tonemadison.com

11

JOCKS IN FROCKS: A MADISON RUGBY DRAG SHOW

Five Nightclub

Madison Minotaurs and Wisconsin Women's Rugby team up to present a fun evening of drag performance and fundraising. A portion of the proceeds raised by the drag queen/king shows, raffle, and merchandise sales will go to benefit GSAFE. \$5 at the door.

fivenightclubmadison.com

a great selection of pottery, paintings, fiber, glass art, wood, photography, jewelry, graphics, sculpture, and more. In addition, on Saturday the art festival features a Silent Auction of artwork contributed by our exhibitors.

artcraftwis.org

18 & 19

MMOCA ART & GIFT FAIR

Madison Museum of Contemporary Art

Formerly known as the Holiday Art Fair, the event will feature a wide array of fine art and craft, handmade items, and gourmet treats for sale. Guests to the fair will enjoy shopping at nearly 100 booths, designer vignettes, holiday "selfie booths," a silent auction, performances by local art organizations, and the popular Rediscovered Treasures Sale. This festive event is one of MMoCA's most important annual fundraisers, providing crucial support for exhibitions and education programming.

mmoca.org

11 & 12

WINTER ART FAIR OFF THE SQUARE

Monona Terrace

The Wisconsin Alliance of Artists and Craftspeople holds its annual event, featuring over 135 Wisconsin exhibitors with

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DECEMBER

1-16

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bartelltheatre.org

8 & 10

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OCTOBER 15 GSAFE Trick-or-Trot 5K



PHOTOS BY SPENCER MICKA & SHANNON HAYES.

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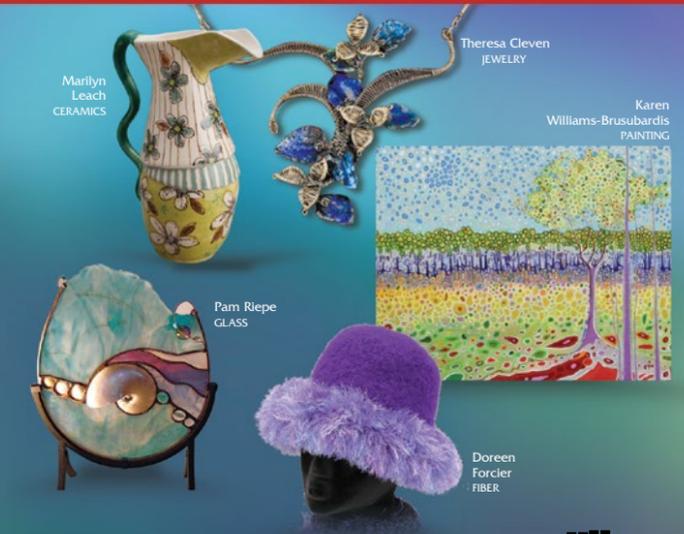
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Mission Driven

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin President **Tanya Atkinson** takes a holistic view of social justice and healthcare advocacy, with plenty of love and laughter along the way.

I'VE WASHED A LOT OF ANIMALS in my life: A horse, a cow, a pig, a cat (once), a dog—with tomato juice and more recently a high-tech “dry shampoo.” I recently rescued a mouse that we found paddling furiously in our dog’s water dish on the deck. I’m not sure I was necessarily washing the mouse, but it seemed cleaner as it scurried away.

This is when I should probably tell you I grew up on a farm and was in 4-H—hence the washing of the animals. Of course, I’ve since aged out of 4-H. And I have a job. But I still wash the dog and the occasional misplaced mouse.

The point is, when I was knee-deep in cheap shampoo and animal hair (trying to mentally convey to the horse, pig, or cow that they would be the most gorgeous horse, pig, or cow when it was all over), I never dreamt in a million years that I would become a social worker, or activist, or stand-up comedian. Rinsing out all the cheap soap was the extent of the dream for me.

RURAL ROOTS

I grew up on a small dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin, and that’s where the seeds were sown for my future. It’s really those kernels that stick with you (I can do this for days).

In retrospect, I’m so grateful for that childhood. As children we were surrounded by community—neighbors rolling up their sleeves and helping each other get the job done, supporting each other in tough times, or having neighborhood parties with all the kids in tow. A community where casseroles = love and euchre trash-talk is an art form.

My parents Bill and Char were civically engaged, along with my grandparents and a tight-knit family who were farmers, road workers, teachers, nurses, and proud union members. My parents took my little sister Heather and me to the polls when they voted, cementing that right and responsibility early on. I remember spirited family conversations about whom they had voted for and why. They really conveyed that their

votes mattered, one of the many reasons I so passionately believe it’s a complete and utter affront to our democracy that there is a sustained and well-resourced effort to take away this fundamental right from those that don’t carry specific kinds of privileges.

Life on a farm can be beautiful, but it can be tough. Being farmers whose income could vary greatly impacted by pricing or even nature, the cost of health care could be a major source of stress. If any of us had health issues when we were uninsured, the bills were devastating. I remember watching my parents sitting at the kitchen table wondering how they were going to manage our medical bills. Mom worked the night shift to provide the family with health insurance. The memory of my parents struggling with health care sticks with me to this day. I believe it connects me in a personal way to Planned Parenthood’s mission to ensure all people have access to the care they need.

STUMBLING INTO SOCIAL WORK

I also believe those roots made social work a natural fit for my future. Originally my plan had been to be a professional actress in the theatre (I’m writing that with dramatic flair). I attended Carroll University, which has a great drama department. I took a social work class mistakenly believing it met a core requirement (I’m not detail oriented). The professor,

I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.

Claudette McShane, showed us the dynamic nature of individuals and their communities, and I was hooked. Claudette herself became an incredible mentor and that safe person for me when I was just beginning to come out—that person I wish for all of us.

Then the Legislature changed the juvenile justice code with harsher sentences, reaching younger ages. There was not a concurrent community investment. I remember sitting across from kids who were so young and facing incarceration, wondering how this helped anyone. I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY

The second happiest day of my life was our wedding day. A gorgeous beachfront wedding at sunset, friends, family, and a runaway dog all wished us well. It was like a barefoot lesbian fairy tale. The happiest day was a few days prior when my incredible wife Laurie and I got our wedding license. It was 2008 in Santa Barbara, 1.5 months before Prop 8. We went in to the Santa Barbara courthouse and filled out our paperwork.

After we had signed, the clerk stuck his head out of his little glass window, looked to the left, looked to the right, and then looked right at us and said, “See? Society didn’t crumble. Congratulations on your marriage.” We both unexpectedly burst into tears because our marriage was “real.” For us, that meant something.

We were able to have that beautiful wedding because of brave activists who came before us risking their safety and lives to fight for our ability to be our authentic selves and love who we love.

I never envisioned being married in my lifetime (legally and the reality of actually meeting someone with the patience of a saint). I flashed back to the moment that anchored my future in activism:

Estate planning for LGBTQ older Americans



BALISLE FAMILY LAW LEGAL COUNSEL, S.C.
LINDA BALISLE, ATTORNEY OWNER

How can seniors in the LGBTQ community take care of each other as they age without losing their entire estate? Now that marriage is an option for LGBTQ couples, estate planning often includes a consideration of whether marriage benefits them. The multitude of benefits affected by marriage don’t affect every couple the same way. Some have existing plans that include children from other relationships as well as other family members. Other couples must address the effect of one partner’s current or future need for medical assistance or other special services on how assets and income are allocated. The complexity of eligibility and financial requirements related to these benefits and the fact that they are frequently amended by state and federal legislation has caused many seniors to rethink their existing estate plans, or to take seriously their need for one. There is no one-size-fits-all for estate planning, and there are new options and new concerns to consider.

Services for those dealing with drug overdose



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CHERI MILTON & JESSIE SHIVELER,
COMMUNITY GRIEF SUPPORT COUNSELORS

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TIPS & TRENDS

looking for on-going, continuous grief support groups. We offer grief groups that families can join at any point as long as they feel it is beneficial. The new Agrace Grief Support Center (opened in August) is a resource available to anyone who is looking for guidance and support after loss. We serve both adults and children, so many of our spaces are designed to help kids feel comfortable, including therapeutic play and art spaces. Information is available at Agrace.org/griefcenter.

LGBTQ family planning revolution



ELIZABETH PRITTS, MD
WISCONSIN FERTILITY INSTITUTE

Over the past few years there has been a revolution in the available options for creating a family for members of the LGBTQ community. These options, in combination called “third party reproduction,” involve both older and more established treatments, as well as new and exciting innovations. Examples include: Donor sperm insemination, available for single women or a member of a female-female couple; Donor oocytes with In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), an option often used by male-male couples, single males, and females who have fertility issues themselves; Embryo donation, available to any individual or couple with a uterus that would like to carry a child; Gestational carriers, for those unable to carry a pregnancy due to medical problems, lack of desire, or absence of a uterus within the individual or couple. The goal of these services is to help any individual or couple, regardless of composition, to achieve parenthood if they so desire.

In 1996 when I was attending the U.W., I was fortunate to have an internship in Tammy Baldwin’s state legislative office. Then-Representative Baldwin was leading a fight against a “Defense of Marriage” bill. In a last-minute maneuver, legislative leadership moved the hearing to Wausau, for all the obvious reasons that have nothing to do with fairness or democracy.

That backfired with rainbow-colored beauty, and busloads of people went to Wausau to oppose the legislation. The high school lunchroom

They said vile things about the safety of children around people like us, and at least one person called for our deaths. The chairman of the committee asked for clarification, and it was repeated for clarity.

was packed, and you could cut the tension with a knife. I stood there and watched beautiful LGBTQ families talk about how this bill would harm them. I watched ally families talk about how important their friends were and how gay relationships did not harm their marriage, incredulous that it even needed to be said out loud—akin to water is wet. Children got up and talked about their moms and their dads and how very loved they are. Not a dry eye on our side.

When the anti-gay marriage people spoke, they claimed that we threatened the very foundation of marriage. Then it got worse. They said vile things about the safety of children around people like us, and at least one person called for our deaths. The chairman of the committee asked for clarification, and it was repeated for clarity. There was no doubt what the man testifying thought should happen to half of the people in that room. In that moment, any questions I had about whether to return to direct



With her wife Laurie at their 2008 wedding in Santa Barbara.

practice social work or stay in advocacy evaporated. I spent the next couple of years working in the legislature for Rebecca Young and Peter Bock, both progressive elected officials committed to social justice.

HOLDING SPACE

Though marriage equality was achieved, it can’t be said enough that we are so far from achieving justice in the LGBTQ (or any marginalized) community, and under this current “administration” we risk erosion of so many of our rights, including reproductive rights.

The political environment is alarming, not only for the LGBTQ community, but for many others that align with us, like Planned Parenthood. Most people in Wisconsin and across the country value the services Planned Parenthood provides, yet we’re tossed around like a political football. This has a real and almost immediate impact on real people. A few years ago, Governor Walker eliminated Planned Parenthood’s state funding for preventive health care, forcing us to close five rural family planning health centers. No provider has been able to step in and fill that service gap, and they are seeing rising STD rates.

Our current political climate is extremely hostile to so many. At Planned Parenthood, we know that economic security cannot be achieved without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’ve invested for decades in dividing us. Like the hearing in Wausau, it’s starting to backfire with beautiful glory. My deepest hope is that we stay vigilant, organized, and allies to a larger social justice movement. We have to make sure to stretch and carb-load because this is a marathon!

I’m so honored to be the board chair of Diverse & Resilient, Wisconsin’s statewide LGBTQ public health organization. Their mission embodies working at those intersections that will advance public health and end discrimination. It’s a joy to see so many organizations across Wisconsin working so hard every day to make this a more just and equitable place.

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TIPS & TRENDS

Cryopreservation for transgender parents



DR. CHRISTINA BROADWELL, FERTILITY CARE SPECIALIST
GENERATIONS FERTILITY CARE

Patients often have questions about freezing their eggs or sperm. Also known as cryopreservation, this step is especially important to consider before you go through gender transition. Surgery and hormones used during transition can reduce your body's ability to produce sperm or eggs, making it difficult later in life to have children who are biologically related to you. Freezing sperm before traveling to an area where Zika virus is present also is advised. Zika virus can be transmitted with sexual intercourse and can be found in ejaculated sperm after potential infection/exposure has been cleared. For more information about cryopreservation, please contact Generations Fertility Care clinic at (608) 824-6160.

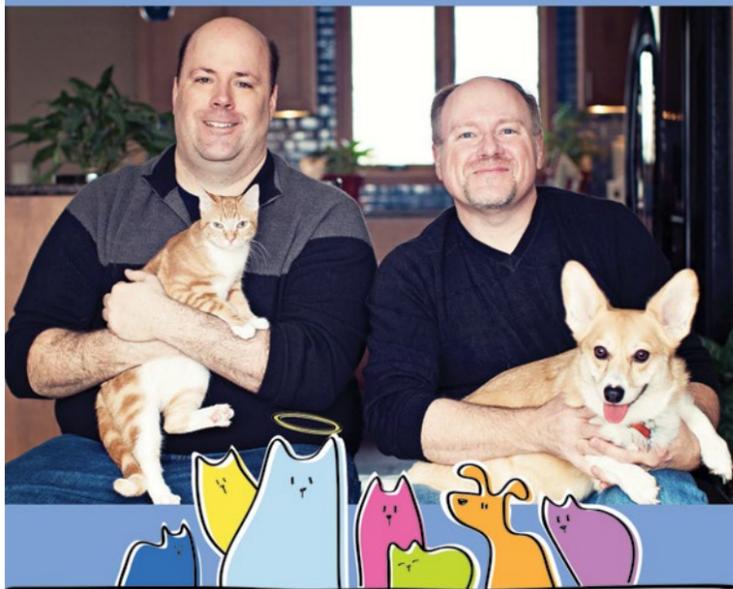
SCOTUS to determine LGBTQ rights case



MICHELE PERREAULT, ATTORNEY
DEWITT ROSS & STEVENS, SC

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to take up a case regarding whether LGBTQ individuals are entitled to protections against discrimination in the workplace. Currently, certain groups have protections that make it illegal to take adverse action (e.g., fire them, discipline, reduced pay for equal work, refuse to hire) based on their status. For example, an employer can't terminate someone from employment because they don't like minorities, or they think women should not be in particular jobs. If an employer

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THE BEST MEDICINE

Throughout my career, I realized that laughter was imperative for a healthy balance! I also never lost the bug for the stage and theatre (written with dramatic flair!). I was in an improv group in college, and then found my way to the stand-up stage—there's a step stage right. Ba-dum-bump!

I remember my first open-mic at the SafeHouse in Milwaukee, waiting until midnight for my name to be called to be able to have a whole three minutes of stage time. Mike Marvel, who books comedy clubs around the Midwest, took me under his wing and really championed me. He was important for my comedy career proper, and also so supportive of me being my authentic self. Unlike many other comedians that gave me "advice" he never once suggested I hide my identity to achieve success. He also never suggested I bail on some of my terrible bits that were my inside jokes to myself. Mike connected me with others and the rest is proverbial history. I spent about 10 years traveling around the country performing at comedy clubs, casinos, and supper clubs (those were my people!). Shockingly, I did not attain fame on my national tour of bowling alleys that "served up frozen pizzas and fresh laughs." But I loved it and had a blast. I was performing almost every weekend. It got to a point where I needed to decide to whether I would be a full-time comedian or not. Fortunately I had my other true love, Planned Parenthood.

SAYING YES TO PROGRESS

Taking a bus to D.C. is a rite of passage for community organizers. The week before I began my career at PPWI I volunteered to be a bus captain for the Women's March. It was magical: A bus full of pink-shirted forces of nature. The gas station oases didn't know what hit them, as bus after bus of similarly clad women from across the nation stopped to use the restroom and stock up on Dr. Pepper, corn nuts, and string cheese—the fuel of activists. Or, maybe just me.

The march numbered around a million, and the feeling of community and hope was exhilarating. What a way to begin the next phase of my professional life. It is a thrill and an honor to work for PPWI.

Our staff and supporters know we play a critical role in providing access, that every day that we open our doors, we are supporting a mission that makes a significant impact on the lives of people throughout Wisconsin.

Growing up, we approached our work, and our play, with a real sense of family, teamwork, and community. Very similar to how we approach our work at Planned Parenthood. Our community came together to support one another—especially our young people. Everyone wanted to help them pursue their interests—whether that meant athletics, forensics, mechanics, or the arts. To me that translated into two things: taking care of your family and your neighbors, and elevating others. That is the part of leadership I cherish most—to be in a place where I can elevate the talent of others. I feel so fortunate to have come up in this organization. Every day I have the privilege of seeing an amazing amount of strength and talent in my colleagues at PPWI.

What makes me really proud about Planned Parenthood is the way we are present for people in a deeply compassionate way. I wish everyone could see the Planned Parenthood team up-close and in-action because—whether it's our patients, our supporters, or our staff—you find yourself surrounded by people with incredible compassion. It's not just what we do; it's how we do it—with an intense amount of empathy and love. That may sound like an exaggeration, but I think you would be hard-pressed to find a word other than "love" to describe it.

Early on, I had never envisioned that I would have the opportunity to become the organization's CEO. I questioned whether I had the background and skill set to achieve that level of service. Over time, my incredible colleagues nurtured, encouraged, and championed me. It sank in that someone with a background as an organizer, policy advocate, social



worker, and even comedian could bring value to the mission.

Life on the road as a comic did teach me a few things about being a CEO. There are definitely transferable lessons: the importance of listening, the power of "yes," and teamwork. In improv comedy, you are taught to listen intently, say "yes," and work with what your teammate is cooking up. That combination can result in comedic magic. An immediate "no" stops progress and damages the team flow. In stand-up, you engage the audience by taking a journey together. It's a lesson in the positive power of innovation and adapting to what's in front of you—even hecklers! Strong organizations have to do the same: work as a team, innovate, adapt, and push through the tough times.

That's what we plan to do.

GRATITUDE

I love to joke a lot about the farm, washing animals, and the incredible amount of vests I owned in the '90s. They say humor is a mask we hide behind. That's true for me as well, to a degree.

I also carry with me an immense amount of gratitude for all the people who have supported, helped, and mentored me along the way. Beginning with my humble farm roots (she writes dramatically and with a Midwestern accent), I had parents, a sister, and family down to the youngest cousin who have been so incredibly supportive and have loved me exactly the way I am in any given moment (it definitely varies).

Throughout my coming out/maturing process, and my professional growth, there have been too many people to list that have watched out for me, mentored me, and kept me safe. To them I owe a debt of gratitude, and some long overdue phone calls. I presently find myself in a place where, professionally, I am surrounded by an incomparable group of brilliant, compassionate, passionate coworkers, volunteers, and supporters. Personally, our friends are incredible, talented, and delightfully wacky in all the right ways. All of this and of course my smart, beautiful, supportive wife, create this reality that I never could have imagined in my suds-soaked days gearing up for the Crawford County Fair.

Simply put, throughout my life, people have demonstrated immeasurable kindness to me. That's what I ask of myself, and all of us. That we move around this world in a way that we pay attention to the little things, which to someone else may be huge. In this environment, there are a lot of messages coming at us in even louder ways about our worth, our looks, our safety, our "right" to health care—and the list goes on.

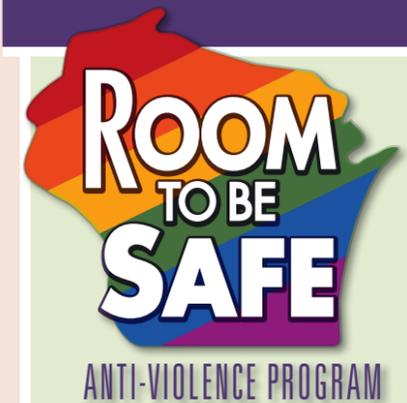
We need to seek out justice, fight against the big things—racism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism—and pay close attention to the small things, the kindnesses that to you may be little, but to someone else, in that moment, on that day, that kindness is huge. That one day, where a young person feels alone and we stop to really listen. Or a day someone feels unsafe, and we stay with them. Or a day someone believes they're invisible, and we really see them. Or a day someone doesn't believe in themselves, and we tell them "you've got this!"

Those small acts of kindness have a cumulative effect on a life. ■

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Visit **Room To Be Safe** at www.roomtobesafe.org for more detailed information on Intimate Partner Violence and resources in your area.



Room to Be Safe is a program of Diverse & Resilient

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The Power of Vulnerability

Former middle school teacher **Abigail Swetz** reflects on the triumphs and travails of the classroom, how wanting to be a good role model for her students pushed her toward a healthier and more open sense of self, and why she's leaving the profession to work in public policy.

"MY NAME IS ABIGAIL SWETZ, my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I am a proud queer public school teacher."

These words began my speech at the Celebration of Leadership where I accepted the award of GSAFE Educator of the Year last May. These words are the perfect summation of why I believe being out made me a better teacher. These words are also indicative of why I am leaving the profession. It is not because I can no longer be a proud queer public school teacher; it is because I no longer believe that is enough.

I said I was a proud queer public school teacher because I love the work I do with students as a public educator, but also because I am proud I can be an out queer woman and a teacher at the same time. It is the intersection of these identities that made me an effective teacher because this intersection mandated I strive to create a safe space in my classroom. After all, I needed to be safe there, too.

It is not my contention that teachers must be queer and out to be effective—far from it. I have known truly transformative teachers who are not queer and also those who are and are in the closet. What we all have in common is our understanding of the need for safe spaces.

I happen to enter that understanding through my queerness; other teachers come to this understanding through different avenues, be they because of other oppressed identities or just really great professional development (I'm a big believer in great professional development; after all, I met my wife at an MMSD Welcoming Schools PD, which consisted of, of course, workshops on the importance of safe spaces and how to create them). And even though we all understand the need for safe spaces, we all go about creating them in different ways because we are all unique individuals. Me, I chose to create my safe space through the power of vulnerability.

THE MAGIC OF VULNERABILITY

The language describing the state of being vulnerable is violent language, with definitions like "open to attack" and "susceptible to being wounded." I would define being vulnerable as openly being a whole person when being a fraction of one would be easier. And that is who I



was as a teacher. As a result, that is who my students were, too. As result, we created a safe space and we grew together. It felt a little bit like magic. And as a result, I am leaving teaching.

This may sound contradictory. Let me explain.

I have spent much of my life being a fraction of my whole self. It made me very unsafe. From the age of 14 to 24, I lived with an eating disorder. Its intensity varied over that decade, but it eventually became severe enough to endanger my life. Even in my darkest days, I refused to acknowledge my problem to myself and to those who loved me; looking back, I know this is because I did not feel worthy of living. Thankfully, those who loved me refused to accept this and convinced me to begin inpatient treatment. So in July of 2006, I checked into Laureate Psychiatric Hospital. Five months later, I discharged a different person—a whole, healthy person for the first time in my adult life.

The decade I spent in the throes of my eating disorder was a hell I would not wish on anyone, but the journey out of it made me the person I am today. The work required to believe you are worthy of living is difficult and sometimes disturbing work, but most significantly, it is worth it. And as I gained my health, I gained a deeper understanding of myself.

It was in a Tulsa, Oklahoma psych hospital that I first realized I was queer. In realizing I was worthy of love, I realized I was worthy of giving it, too, and to whom I wanted to give it. I grew up in the Unitarian Universalist church and had known many queer people my entire life, and while society at large told me queerness was wrong, I never received that message from my own family or community. If anything, I heard the opposite. Some of our closest family friends were queer, and my first protest, at the age of 8, was one organized by my church as a counter-protest of a Westboro Baptist Church anti-gay demonstration.

Still, it took five months of soul-searching in a mental hospital for me to realize and accept my own queer identity. Yes, I think this partly shows the power of society's stigma even in the face of the positive messages I received from my family and community. I think it also shows the power of mental illness. When I was my most ill, it was all-consum-

ing. At its core, anorexia is a denial of the self, and for 10 years, I denied myself the possibility of anything outside of mere survival. Things like desire were not possible. Things like trust and vulnerability, integral in the coming out process, were unthinkable. This is why my healthy identity is so bound together with my queer identity.

SHARING YOUR WHOLE SELF

As a 35-year-old, I have now been a healthy adult longer than I was a sick one. Students are one of the reasons I got out of that disorder as well as many of the reasons I have stayed out. When I was trying to make my decision over whether or not to enter the hospital, I thought of all the people who believed in me despite the fact that I did not believe in myself. I thought of my hope to someday be a mother. I thought of my dream of becoming a teacher. I knew I was in no physical position to put myself in front of a classroom as a potential role model looking the way I looked and behaving the way I behaved. These were the primary reasons I got help.

I share this story with my students. I actually think it makes me a better role model because it makes me a whole person who has been through struggle and come out on the other side. Too many of my students understand this struggle all too well. I wish eating disorders were a more foreign concept to them, but they are not. In telling this story, I make myself vulnerable, and my students respect the trust that involves.

Respect is an important aspect of any student-teacher and teacher-student relationship. It is also a word that is so often thrown around in books about pedagogy and in professional development workshops that I fear it has lost much of its meaning. But trust and vulnerability? We don't talk about those concepts, and they are, I would maintain, just as essential. Because they are what respect can be built upon.

The most significant day of vulnerability and trust, and thus the most meaningful and proudest day of my teaching career, was November 9, 2016. Saying that this was the most vulnerable and trusting day ever in my classroom is no small statement considering my classroom was the home of soul-baring Open Mics during the annual poetry unit. Still, it is the day after the election that is burned in my memory.

My students walked in that morning eerily quiet. They felt bewildered; they felt sad and lost; they felt more than a little betrayed. I didn't know how to keep them safe anymore. I didn't know how to teach this. So I turned class over to my students. We talked. And then something really special happened: We cried together.

I thought of my dream of becoming a teacher. I knew I was in no physical position to put myself in front of a classroom as a potential role model looking the way I looked and behaving the way I behaved. These were the primary reasons I got help.

I had agonized over what to do that day all night and all morning. All I had written in my lesson plan book was "process the election," but I wasn't sure how to do that in the face of their raw emotion. As we talked, and as students cried together, I crafted a writing activity.

I told them a wise president once said, "We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives." I told them President John F. Kennedy would want them to reach out and thank people. I told them that a lot of people were going to be hurting or scared today. I told them it was a good day to think about expressing kindness. To think about gratitude. Who are you thankful for today? Who in your life could use a word of kindness? I told them to write that person a letter, a

fires someone because they are (a particular race, age), that employee can file a employment discrimination action against the employer.

The question before the Supreme Court can be summarized as this, "Can an employer fire an employee or refuse to hire a potential employee solely because that person is not heterosexual?" The answer will hinge on the question as to whether discrimination against non-heterosexuals is "sex discrimination." For example, a lesbian would argue that a man married to a woman would not have been terminated, but she was fired because she is a woman married to a woman. This technical argument could have a huge impact.

Connections for new parents



JONATHAN ZAROV, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
MADISON CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

New parents are hungry to provide their babies and toddlers with early learning and child development opportunities, and they want to do that in community. At Madison Children's Museum, we recently launched a First-Time Parent Membership program, providing a free membership for new families.

Here are some of the top comments we hear from these new members: We are grateful for a quiet, dedicated place for babies—where there's less chance of being run over by big kids. We are excited to talk about child development with skilled staff and other parents. We are eager to see our child interact with other children. (One of our young visitors wasn't crawling yet. He came to a playgroup at MCM where he watched bigger kids crawling—and crawled within the week. His happy mom credited it to having watched other kids.)

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letter telling them why they were grateful for them and thanking them for being in their life.

And this is where the magic happened. You could have heard a pin drop. I asked them to be kind, to reach out, and they were, and they did.

They wrote to their parents, to neighbors, to teachers, to friends, to mentors in the community, to family. But most touching of all, they wrote to each other. They reached out to classmates they saw hurting, classmates having an especially hard time, and they said, "I'm here for you." And they were. It was a day of intense vulnerability and trust, and I will hold these students and their stories with me for the rest of my life.

Later, a former student currently in high school told me that when she woke up and heard the news of Trump's election, she had the immediate thought, "I want to spend this morning in Ms. Swetz's class." I wish she had. I think she would have felt safe. I also wish she hadn't felt she needed to come to my classroom to feel that safety. I wish she had more safe spaces than our classroom. I wish her world were a safe space, too.

SAFE SPACES FOR ALL

That is why I'm leaving teaching. I still love the work I do with students, but I am tired of spending a year creating and then living in a safe space with them only to reach June and push them out the door into the big, bad, unsafe world. It's not as though my classroom existed in a vacuum; the big, bad world has always been a part of class. We discussed current events, we wrestled with our understanding of privilege, and we wrote about our difficult experiences, but thanks to our community, we were able to approach all of this feeling supported in our struggle. Where is that space, that safety, that support in Trump's America?

I don't know. But I'm determined to find it. And if I don't, I'll call up some former students and get them to help me create it. Because, as I said at the end of my GSAFE speech in a thank you to my students:

"Never forget you have the power to change the world. Never forget you already have. Never forget you matter. Never forget there are people in this world who love you exactly as you are and exactly as you want to be. Always remember you are worthy of that love. My students, you taught me to stand up, to speak out, and to be kind. It has been an honor being your teacher, and I will remain your student far longer than you were ever mine."

It is safe spaces that taught me I was worthy of living and of loving. Now that I am starting on a new journey in life as a graduate student in the University of Wisconsin's LaFollette School of Public Affairs Masters program, I will continue to strive to create those spaces wherever I go. And now that I am starting on a new journey in love as a newly married spouse of that amazing human I met at an MMSD professional development, I know I have the support required to do so. Now it is time to take the lessons my students and I built together to the rest of the world. It is time to make our world a safe space. Because this country is not just Trump's America, it is ours, too. ■

Students Speak Up

Former students of Ms. Swetz offer their reflections about the time spent discovering their own vulnerability and truth in the classroom, and why those safe spaces matter.

FATOU (AGE 14) Everyone deserves a safe space, but then again, everyone should be able to go anywhere and already feel safe. To me, a safe space is somewhere I can be myself and not be judged. Somewhere my opinions are respected. Having my classroom as a safe space made it easier to go through the day. Even if my day started off bad, I would always remind myself that my safe space was always there.

Having an out queer teacher gave me hope. Hope that my personality would be the main thing people see when they look at me, and not my sexuality. Hope that in the future I can go to work without having to worry about being harassed or judged. Ms. Swetz gave me that safe space, and Ms. Swetz gave me that hope.

RHYS (AGE 15) I never really knew what a safe space was until I entered Ms. Swetz's classroom, one of the most righteous and caring people I think I could ever know. She showed me what a safe space was; somewhere a person could say what they needed to say and it would be kept in that place without being disrespected or criticized. I have to say, I started the year as quite a shy guy with showing my emotions, but after I saw my chance with the safe space, I could tell my class anything about what was happening in my life, and I knew it would be respected. And that rule was sacred, making it a safe space was a space of raw emotion and truth telling. Without a safe space this year, I would still have my emotions kept inside of me, and that definitely isn't OK. Thankfully, I was with Ms. Swetz, and she protected my class and me like a momma bear protecting her cubs. I cannot thank Ms. Swetz enough for what she has done for me, and I know others can't thank her enough either.

NADJA (AGE 14) In an environment like middle school where compromising your identity to fit into a label is the norm, a safe space that encourages inclusivity, intersectionality, and self-exploration is absolutely essential—yet rare. I was lucky enough to find such a space in Ms. Swetz's class. As a member of her 8th grade homeroom, Social Studies, and English/Language Arts classes, I became more aware of current events that connected to me and my community, and developed my own opinions and reactions to them. I witnessed quiet, disengaged peers responding to our material in a way they hadn't before. It made me proud to be growing alongside them, knowing they had finally found a place where they were heard and respected.

In addition, I was a part of my school's weekly Gender and Sexuality Alliance club. GSA, led by Ms. Swetz and another out gay teacher, was a safe space to me and many of my friends and peers; a space that I know those of us moving on will miss dearly. Twice every week we met for various reasons, but we were united by our need for community. While some meetings were carefree and silly, often providing release after a long day of judgement and sadness, others were down-to-earth and productive. We dedicated that time to events like the Day of Silence (which honors historically silenced communities such as women, LGBTQ+, Black Lives Matter, and others), reaching out to a larger community, hoping to cause change and acceptance. However, the GSA days I remember the most were the emotional ones, where we let out



our anger, sadness, and fear. We cried and felt together, but the important part is that everyone felt safe because we were together, without fear of judgement or harassment, and we always left feeling as though things needed to change, and we had been given the tools with which to change them. To conclude, safe spaces MAKE A DIFFERENCE. They help people grow and learn about themselves as well as build community and essential values as active, informed members of society.

HAZEL (AGE 14) Having an out queer teacher is a special and rare thing for a multitude of reasons. It takes bravery to come out to 30 different people every year—many people struggle to do it once. It means this teacher probably has a wall or two to keep hateful comments out. Having a queer teacher is not the same as having an out queer teacher. It means they not only have walls, but being willing to knock down those walls to let others in. It's selfless and for you at the same time. It creates meaning to the word "queer" other than a schoolyard taunt.

It gave me hope to see that no matter what, someone was fighting. It showed people that being yourself is redeeming, because you can't make a connection with a papier-mache dummy. Ms. Swetz came into the room every morning being herself, and being vulnerable. But she didn't let people knock her down. When the election came, she was devastated. In room 202, we all were. She could've stayed home in bed and cried. She could've moped all day, throughout lessons. But she took this opportunity to let us connect with one another and learn that hope is always an option. Abby was always herself in the classroom, and that is what helped her students understand that they could be themselves, too. Fear was always an option as well, but that it was far less redeeming than hope. She taught us day-to-day school things, but more importantly, she taught us to share, that being vulnerable and open is better than having walls and being safe, but alone. ■

TIPS & TRENDS

The fight is more crucial than ever



MEGIN MCDONNELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FAIR WISCONSIN

As a statewide advocacy group, we focus on making change at the state and local level, but in the last year, Fair Wisconsin has had to spend more time than ever before on federal issues. The current administration has demonstrated they are determined to revoke all legal protections for LGBTQ Americans.

This is a stark reminder that states must pass comprehensive nondiscrimination laws. Without a federal nondiscrimination law, updating our state law to include explicit protections for transgender Wisconsinites has never been more important.

Getting back to the patient relationship



KATHY ORIEL, FAMILY PHYSICIAN
ORIEL MEDICINE, LLC

There is a small-but-notable trend for family physicians, most of whom are women, to leave the increasingly corporatized, large medical groups to start small, solo practices. Some of these small practices take insurance, others charge a monthly fee. By networking with these empowered women docs, it gave me the courage to break out on my own. Patients are pleased because they don't have to talk to three different people when trying to reach their doctor, and doctors are pleased because they spend more time with their patients and less time doing computer-based trainings and mandatory meetings.



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THE POWER OF A PREGNANCY

I've been lucky. I haven't suffered from too much dysphoria as a direct result of being pregnant. That isn't to say I don't deal with dysphoria almost daily, because I certainly do. However, the dysphoria would be there regardless, as there are immutable attributes of my body and mind (where they fall on their particular spectrums) that will always be in conflict. For me, every day is another unique journey where I must make my peace with that. There are moments of grief for what will never be, wrapped up in an overall gratitude and joy for what is.

Every time I've been pregnant, it has been of profound emotional significance. My first pregnancy was before I had even come out, let alone transitioned, and at that point I knew I was transgender. However, I was still clinging to the delusion that I could force myself to be someone I wasn't.

Pregnancy put me under the stress necessary to transform my mind-space. It required reaching some horrifying lows, but I finally arrived at a place of personal power and conviction. A few months after my first child was born, I came out and socially transitioned. I began medical treatment about a year after that.

My first pregnancy was about finding clarity and authenticity, and so is my second—yet the path is very different. All the stress and trauma has been replaced with deep introspection and a significant sense of vulnerability. This pregnancy has invited to the surface everything I thought I could fix by refusing to think about. It has forced me to confront my internalized toxicities, work through them, and grow.

This has been painful, challenging, and cathartic. Sometimes it feels like running in circles, and sometimes it is. More often than not, though, I reach an even deeper understanding of myself. With that comes a release of something I can't identify. It's like a fragrance that catches you by surprise, somehow unique and painfully familiar at the same time.

FINDING CARE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

There are so many joyous moments that have peppered this pregnancy: Hearing the heartbeat, seeing the baby during ultrasounds, and feeling life move inside of me. Not to mention the ineffable closeness I feel to this brand-new life I'm bringing Earth-side. There are these incredibly beautiful moments with my partner. I am bliss personified, watching all that love and excitement on his face while he talks to the bump, when he sees something at the store he wants to provide for the baby, when he watches the

ultrasound screen. We are making so much more than a baby right now, and I am learning so much about being present as I take these moments in, needing to remember them forever.

Of course, pregnancy is as much a physical journey as it is an emotional one, and medical support is required. One of the biggest decisions we faced after getting pregnant was who our provider was going to be, and whether we would choose a hospital physician or a midwife. I'd already had a hospital experience that I wasn't happy with, and I knew I wanted

to try something different. However, my partner had never had a baby before, and we needed to make an educated decision together. We scheduled two 8-week appointments, one at a hospital clinic and one with a midwife.

Our appointment with the midwife was absolutely amazing. We were given as much time as we needed (it ended up being hours) to understand what we were getting into. She thoroughly explained all of our options for a safe delivery, and she supplied us with ample, diversified information to make a choice. She applied absolutely no pressure towards our final decision and genuinely wished us all the best (plus, the entire consult was free of charge!).

By contrast, the hospital clinician rushed us out the door. The appointment length didn't allow for her to even get through her spiel, let alone create room for a dialogue or our questions. She pushed a bunch of pamphlets and free formula samples onto us and sent us on our way. Not to mention her constant mis-gendering of me, or the way she spoke of pregnancy as a cisgender woman-specific undertaking.

When we ultimately chose a homebirth with the midwife, we called the hospital clinic to cancel our follow-up appointment. They were very aggressive in attempting to retain me. In fact, the doctor herself called me twice to tell me what a terrible choice she thought I was making. Her invading, dominating attitude is a strong example of a problematic (though certainly not omnipresent) hospital prenatal and birthing care culture. It is exactly why we chose a homebirth.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING

Other transmasculine folk often ask me for advice. I think that first and foremost it's crucial to **know yourself**. If you're able to anticipate the elements of pregnancy you might struggle with, so much the better. On that note, research is very empowering. If you familiarize yourself

with the process, you'll be able to ask better questions and make better decisions. **Learn your body.** Go exploring, find your cervix, track its changes, understand your cycle and its indicators.

Trust your body. This is a big one, and one with which I wasn't anticipating so much of a struggle. It took us six months to get pregnant, and even though that's not a long time, it was plenty long enough for me to agonize over whether or not I'd compromised my fertility (as a result of the few years I'd been on testosterone). This was compounded by the fact that I couldn't readily find information on transmasculine fertility, conception, or pregnancy.

Ultimately, I found a single study and lots of anecdotal evidence (that's an oxymoron, I know), and it was all overwhelmingly positive. It would seem that a majority of transmasculine folk, even after a decade on testosterone, maintain their fertility (assuming hormone therapy began 16+).

Additionally, **you really cannot have too much support**, as pregnancy is bound to kick your ass in ways you never expected. Invite your friends and loved ones to be a part of the process. Let them do your dishes and bring you food. Allow yourself a decreased workload. Take naps.

It's a beautiful thing to bring another human into the world, but it's also a tremendous, complicated effort. Energies erupt, magnify, modify, and elevate. So much is birthed alongside a baby. You are bound to discover new pieces of yourself, to redefine what you thought you knew and to remember all those things you'd forgotten. The experience of pregnancy is defined by a great many things, but gender is not one of them. ■

Editor's Note: We'll be checking in with Kaci after the birth of their child, for an update about how the process went, both medically and emotionally.

Breaking Binaries

Kaci Sullivan speaks to being transmasculine and pregnant in a society still steeped in binary expectations and understandings of childbirth.

GENDER...

...is not synonymous with gender role. Where gender is an inborn trait native to the architecture of one's brain, a gender role is merely an archetype of what it means to be male or female, as prescribed by a patriarchal society hell-bent on an oppressive binary rule.

Sex (as defined by the existence of first and secondary physical sex characteristics) does not follow binary law any more than gender does. In fact, both demand a spectrum that expresses their variable outcomes.

Therefore, pregnancy is not specific to, nor contingent upon, any particular gender (binary or otherwise), as we cannot equivocally identify a singular gender/sex combination that pregnancy is uniquely applicable to.

Regardless, no one is spared gender role expectations, and we face them internally with the same ferocity that our society commands them.

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READER POLL

The Health Care Minefield

America's health care system is tricky enough to navigate as-is, but add LGBTQ+ identity to the mix, and the process can be downright traumatizing.



SEEKING OUT MEDICAL CARE while LGBTQ+ can be a daunting and often stressful process. Progress is being made in many ways, with groups and individual practitioners doing the work to become more inclusive and educated around the particular needs of the community.

Still, there are still serious barriers for LGBTQ+ folks seeking quality and considerate care. We polled *Our Lives* readers for some of their best and worst experiences in the medical world, and got their thoughts on ways our healthcare system could stand to improve. We hope some of the information is helpful for those seeking quality care, and that those with the power to make change are also paying attention.

NOTE: We are keeping responses anonymous to protect privacy, and are including self-identifications as they were submitted. For legal reasons, we have removed the specific names of area health care providers included in some of the negative responses.

RESPONDENT 1 (Bisexual/Cisgender)

✓ “For physical (and mental health), I had a great experience at UnityPoint Health on West Washington near the capitol. The doctor spent over an hour talking with me and helping me understand my options. When I brought up LGBTQ-specific issues, he seemed to be familiar with what I was talking about, even if he didn’t directly understand. He also did a great job listening without interjecting.”

✗ “I had one really poor experience at the University Health Services. While most of my experiences there were great, I had one or two that were cringe-worthy. For example, I went in to get a routine STI test done. All the questions were heteronormative and asked if I had been using condoms. When I said ‘sometimes,’ she assumed that I didn’t always use protection and began to lecture. However, I said it was because I used different types of protection depending on my partner. It was incredibly uncomfortable when she critiqued the number of sexual partners I had. All recent experiences had been consensual and protected, so I didn’t understand where her judgement was coming from. Overall, I thought it was still important to be tested. I just made sure to never go back to her again.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “I’m finishing my masters degree in speech-language pathology, and my program is deeply lacking in education related to LGBTQ issues. Most people in my cohort have never taken a course that talks about the LGBTQ community or, for that matter, any marginalized group. While in my program, we rarely (if ever) discuss systems of privilege/oppression and how that impacts healthcare. Therefore, I want create inclusive services that can cater to the LGBTQ community (and other communities who have had poor experiences in healthcare).”

RESPONDENT 2 (Gay/Transgender Man)

✓ “My doctor, Beth Potter at Wingra Family Medical Center, has been very supportive and helpful regarding my transition care. She was honest about what she didn’t know, and did the work to educate herself wherever needed. The whole team at Wingra—those whom I’ve interacted with, at least—has been great.”

✗ “Despite having my name and gender changed on all records (ID, SSN, birth certificate, etc), [my medical] records still incorrectly list my gender, and apparently this ‘cannot’ be updated. A couple doctors I’ve seen have alluded to this being a higher-level institutional issue. My employer, a ‘progressive’ local start-up (~5 years old) has a trans healthcare exclusion in their health insurance policy. To my knowledge, there is no local employer that actually fully covers transition care through their insurance. I’ve heard anecdotally from trans Epic employees that they also have an exclusion. I had to raise many thousands of dollars to cover necessary surgery. I pay for other transition-related care out-of-pocket. I’m told I’m unlikely to be covered for a hysterectomy because it would fall under transition-related care, despite the above issue re: U.W. records.”

RESPONDENT 3 (Queer Male/Gender-Fluid)

✗ “Unfortunately, all of my experiences have been terrible. The worst was when I went in to get my wisdom teeth removed at [a local dental clinic], and the dentist asked me if I took receptive anal intercourse. He also asked when I came out. He failed to refer me to an oral surgeon for the removal of four wisdom teeth. Four years later, I am going

to court, representing myself and going to Mayo Hospital for a Total TMJ Replacement, bilateral. It’s been an absolute disaster, and ruined my life.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Not acting like they’ve never heard of LGBT. Sex talk. Hormones. Knowledge of PREP/PEP.”

RESPONDENT 4 (Queer/non-binary)

✓ “My ‘best’ experiences are simply healthcare professionals not commenting on or making assumptions about my identity.” It’s difficult to go to “LGBT-oriented healthcare professionals who are cisgender/straight. When I look for a queer healthcare professional it’s because I want a safe space and someone who is familiar with my own experiences.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Training healthcare professionals to not make assumptions based on identity. Example: Telling a trans man that ‘men’ don’t get UTIs, making assumptions about non-cisnormative people.”

RESPONDENT 5 (Pansexual/Cisgender Woman)

✓ “I was at my first visit with a new PCP and when she asked me what my sexuality is (which was a relevant question, she wasn’t just asking for her own curiosity), she didn’t bat an eye when I said Pansexual. She knew what it meant and it was nice not having to explain.”

✗ “When I was registering at a new clinic, I was asked who my emergency contact was. I gave their name, number, and relationship to me. When I said ‘girlfriend,’ the receptionist made a big deal about labeling them as ‘friend.’ Excuse me, but it is not your job to edit what I tell you or relabel my relationship for me! I was too taken aback and intimidated by her to respond, but I refuse to return to that healthcare entity. I’m not sure what I expected from a clinic with a religious affiliation, but that’s still not acceptable.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Cultural competency training needs to be given to ALL healthcare workers, doctors, and receptionists alike, because LGBTQ folks face harassment at all levels.”

RESPONDENT 6 (Queer/Bisexual Cisgender Male)

✓ “When I was diagnosed HIV+ at my university clinic (U.W.-Madison), I was immediately connected to an amazing case worker who helps me get the care I need.”

✗ “I was on my father’s health insurance for the past two years, which means I had to see my ID specialist in La Crosse (two hours from Madison) and have many blood draws in my hometown (one hour away). The labs in my hometown clinics do not often do draws for HIV patients and have, on several occasions, misdrawn or mishandled the blood, forcing me to return for another draw or go without one.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Small town labs need to learn how to better draw for HIV testing and care.”

RESPONDENT 7 (Queer)

✓ “Not having my marriage or identity questioned during an overnight hospitalization.”

✗ “I used to work as an EMT. We were called to a scene where a patient was having a psychiatric emergency. I suspected that patient was transgender but couldn’t confirm it and hadn’t asked because it simply wasn’t relevant. I treated the patient and we drove them to the ER. During my assessment I asked about pronouns and they advised me of the ones to

Rolling back LGBTQ data collection



GERRY COON, PRESIDENT & CEO DIVERSE & RESILIENT

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has recently eliminated questions about LGBTQ people from the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants, and also removed questions on LGBTQ identities for individuals with disabilities from the Annual Program Performance Report for Centers for Independent Living. By removing this data, HHS will erase the experiences of LGBTQ seniors and people with disabilities and make it impossible to identify and end LGBTQ disparities and discrimination in taxpayer-funded programs.

Immersion programs offer head start to youth



TURINA BAKKEN, PROVOST MADISON COLLEGE

As the need for qualified health care professionals continues to be in high demand, Madison College focuses on partnering with local employers, high schools, and universities to create a robust pipeline of professionals into the workforce. We are working with local high schools to create intensive immersion programs for high school students. These programs help students get a jump-start on career options in nursing and allied health careers—and start their college education early. Other programs are expanding capacity for full- and part-time students in key areas such as dental assistant, dental hygiene, therapeutic massage, medical assistant, radiography, nursing assistant, and more.

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use. When we arrived at the ER there was obviously no interest—among my partner and several of the nurses. I gave my report, said goodbye to the patient and informed the nurse who I was transferring care to what the proper pronouns were. As I was leaving I heard the nurse use the opposite pronouns. Then I went over to my partner at the nurses station and found him and other nurses talking about the patient’s gender openly and poking fun at it. I made a nasty comment to them all and left. This was a terrible experience for the patient, I have no doubt, and was particularly infuriating to me because of how backwards my partner and the other ER staff was.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “LGBTQ scientific, social, and cultural competency programs/education for all levels of providers. Policies that can be enforced against providers who discriminate, from reprimand and training to termination. Adding updated sections to medical texts.”

RESPONDENT 8 (Transgender Male)

✓ “My best experience has always been with the folks at the Northeast Family Medical Center. Everybody there—from my provider to the clinic staff, pharmacy, all the way down to the registrars—has always been respectful of my gender identity, never once batting an eyelash at the medical paperwork that still reads ‘Female’ in the Sex/Gender marker. I would name my favorites, but there are too many.”

✗ “I had to go to [a local hospital] for a short period of time due to a change in insurance. I have had plenty of experience with the mixed bag of reactions I get from folks who aren’t used to seeing a bearded man with an ‘F’ on his identification, so I tend to make lighthearted jokes to lessen the awkwardness. This particular visit was trainwreck in slow motion. I checked in and immediately noticed the registrar’s not-so-subtle raised eyebrow as she looked at my records. Same crap happened with the

triage nurse, only instead of a raised eyebrow, this person decided it would be appropriate to ask me about my opinions on the bathroom bill, which ultimately meant I got to sit on an exam table while this man I’d never met before voiced his concerns about ‘guys in dresses going in the same bathroom as a little girl.’ I reported the incident and have heard nothing since. This was about two years ago and I haven’t set foot in there since.”

RESPONDENT 9 (Cisgender Male)

✓ “ARCW in Madison has staff that are not only compassionate caregivers, but they also are very aware of the unique health challenges that gay/bi/queer men face. All of my questions about sexual health have been answered in a non-judgemental way. I’ve always felt comfortable discussing all my health concerns with the clinic doctors and staff.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “More sexually active men need to know the importance of getting a pap smear. There needs to be training so doctors and other healthcare providers know the health concerns of queer people, including mental health issues that are more prevalent in the queer communities. Also: addiction, disease, depression, anorexia, etc. Everyone in healthcare needs to know how to treat trans* people with dignity and respect. They must be trained how to care for folks in transition.”

RESPONDENT 10 (Gay Woman)

✓ “My health insurance provider, GHC, covers my husband’s testosterone therapy, psychiatric appointments, and gender reassignment surgery. They also put his preferred name and sex in their system so they never use his female birth name at appointments!”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “They need to have a better process for reassignment surgery. Right now there are still a lot of hoops to jump through.”

RESPONDENT 11 (Gay Male)

✗ “I was in the ER in need of stitches. The nurse told the intern that I was a ‘whiney fag’ while she was talking about my cut—which she told me didn’t need stitches but resulted in six. She then went and flirted with/sat in the lap of the head doctor. I complained to the hospital and nothing happened.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “I have heard similar stories from all the emergency departments over transgender health issues. Training could help.”

RESPONDENT 12 (Lesbian)

✓ “Every moment with Dr. Kathy Oriel is a positive one. She and her amazing staff have been respectful, smart, and caring.”

RESPONDENT 13 (Lesbian)

✓ “I was at Meriter Hospital, on antepartum bedrest, and needed to get married prior to the birth of our child so my wife would be on the birth certificate. The hospital accommodated our ceremony and even sent up a small cake and sparkling cider to our room to help us celebrate. Also, Madison Women’s Health sent us flowers and gave us congrats.”

✗ “[A local healthcare clinic] where some medical staff consistently ask questions about ‘dad’ or our child’s ‘father’ in ignorance.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Medical forms with parental boxes instead of father and mother.”

RESPONDENT 14 (Gay Male)

✓ “Most caregivers, who were not phased by my same-sex marriage and welcoming of my partner.”

RESPONDENT 15 (Bisexual/Queer)

✓ “My experiences have been generally positive. I am a patient at the U.W. Northeast Clinic, and their staff are well-trained on alternative families.”

✗ “My partner is a transgender man. A local provider wrote in my chart that I am sexually involved with a female. While she may have been trying to be accurate, it made me feel unsafe. It felt disrespectful to his history and to his lengthy efforts to be recognized as male. Another time, I went to a doctor for prenatal counseling. Once she learned that I’m in a queer relationship, she immediately pushed for me not to conceive through donor sperm and instead to adopt through foster care. While adopting through the child welfare system can be a beautiful thing, I know that the process can be fraught with uncertainty and years of waiting. Locally, there are virtually no children that are simply legally free for adoption through the foster care system: their parents are provided the opportunity to work a program and regain custody. I found a provider who could be more supportive of my efforts to conceive a child biologically, which I saw as a more certain path to building my family.”

RESPONDENT 16 (Gay)

✓ “I’ve been seen by the U.W. HIV clinic for the past 20–25 years. I’ve always been amazed at my doctor’s ability to do whatever needed to be done for me. All the staff are helpful, genuine, and caring.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “There might be room for healthcare providers to indicate their comfort and ability to provide LGBTQ-specific healthcare. It’s difficult reading the lists of physicians, and the much smaller list of those taking new patients, to determine if they’re a good fit.” ■

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The Bathroom Issue

Abigail Churchill gives a no-nonsense overview of the legislative and legal state of transgender civil rights in the U.S., especially where it concerns public accommodation.

Note: This article is adapted from a chapter in the forthcoming State Bar of Wisconsin PINNACLE® publication, "Changing Times, Changing Law: LGBTQ Issues."

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, we've seen an increase in national attention on the transgender community. Much of this attention has focused on access to bathrooms, locker rooms, and other sex-segregated facilities. This article will examine this issue through a legal lens. There are two parts to this discussion: 1) laws prohibiting discrimination; and 2) laws restricting access.

"PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION"

A public accommodation is an entity which, although privately owned, is available to the public at large. Wisconsin law gives a few examples of places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, bars, hospitals, cemeteries, "... and any place where accommodations, amusement, goods, or services are available either free or for a consideration." Most, if not all, of these establishments have sex-segregated facilities available to their patrons.

NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS & ORDINANCES

Wisconsin has a statute in place prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, or ancestry. Although there exists a growing body of law about whether the term "sex" includes the notion of "gender identity" for the purpose of protecting against discrimination, this has not yet been developed within the context of Wisconsin's relevant non-discrimination laws.

Wisconsin does not yet have a state statute prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of gender identity. There are a few city ordinances that include gender identity in their policies, including Madison, Milwaukee, and La Crosse. Additionally, the Dane County Board of Supervisors issued a statement in early 2017 which stated, "[it] declare[s] Dane County to be a safe space for all, regardless of... gender identity."

In June of 2017, the Privacy Protection and Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Act was introduced in the Wisconsin State Assembly and the Wisconsin Senate simultaneously. The

bill, sponsored by State Rep. Mark Spreitzer, State Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa, and State Sen. Tim Carpenter, proposes adding "gender identity" as a protected class under the state's non-discrimination statute.

THE BATHROOM BILLS

The term "bathroom bill" is a colloquial term generally describing legislation which restricts access to multi-use restrooms, locker rooms, and other public sex-segregated facilities on the basis of sex. Many of these bills define sex as, "the physical condition of being male or female, as determined by an individual's chromosomes and identified at birth by that individual's anatomy." Typically, this type of proposed legislation also includes, "as indicated on the individual's birth certificate."

The reason this is a significant legal issue is because of the proof many of these bills require. As stated, most of these bills would require an individual to use the restroom that correlates with the gender marker on their birth certificate. There are many different requirements across the country for changing one's gender marker on their birth certificate. Many states, including Wisconsin, require that an individual provide proof they have undergone gender confirmation surgery (GCS). However, due to the expense related to most of these surgeries, and because of the prevalence of gender transition-related exclusions in insurance policies, providing the required proof can be financially difficult, if not impossible, to achieve for many gender-transitioning individuals.

Additionally, there are gender-transitioning individuals who do not wish to pursue GCS. As a result, they may be unable to change the gender marker on their birth certificate. According to many of these bills, these individuals would then be obligated to use the restroom correlating with the gender marker on their birth



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certificate regardless of their gender identity and gender expression. So far, only one state in the country has implemented one of these bathroom bills. North Carolina's law, commonly known as HB2, was signed into law on March 23, 2016. As a result of heavy pressure from various industries contributing to the state's economy, they repealed the most controversial portions of the law on March 30, 2017.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Much of the development in this area has been within the context of public schools and Title IX. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 is best known for its impact on high school and collegiate athletics. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded schools. There have been a handful of cases across the country addressing the question whether the term "sex" includes "gender identity."

In *G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board*, Gavin Grimm sued his school district, asserting that their implementation and enforcement of a policy restricting bathroom access on the basis of sex violates Title IX. The lower court found for the school board, stating that the definition of sex in Title IX does not include protection from discrimination on the basis of gender identity. However, the 4th Circuit reversed the District Court's decision. It cited a

2015 opinion letter from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, which states: "[w]hen a school elects to separate or treat students differently on the basis of sex... a school generally must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity." Because of this, it found that Title IX's definition of sex does include gender identity.

The case was accepted for review by the Supreme Court in October of 2016. However, in March of 2017, the Supreme Court returned the decision to the 4th Circuit without hearing the case. It did so because of the Trump Administration's rescindment of the Department of Education's federal guidelines regarding Title IX and gender identity. Since the 4th Circuit relied upon these guidelines in reaching their decision, the Supreme Court now needs for the 4th Circuit to reconsider the issue without the guidelines as an available resource.

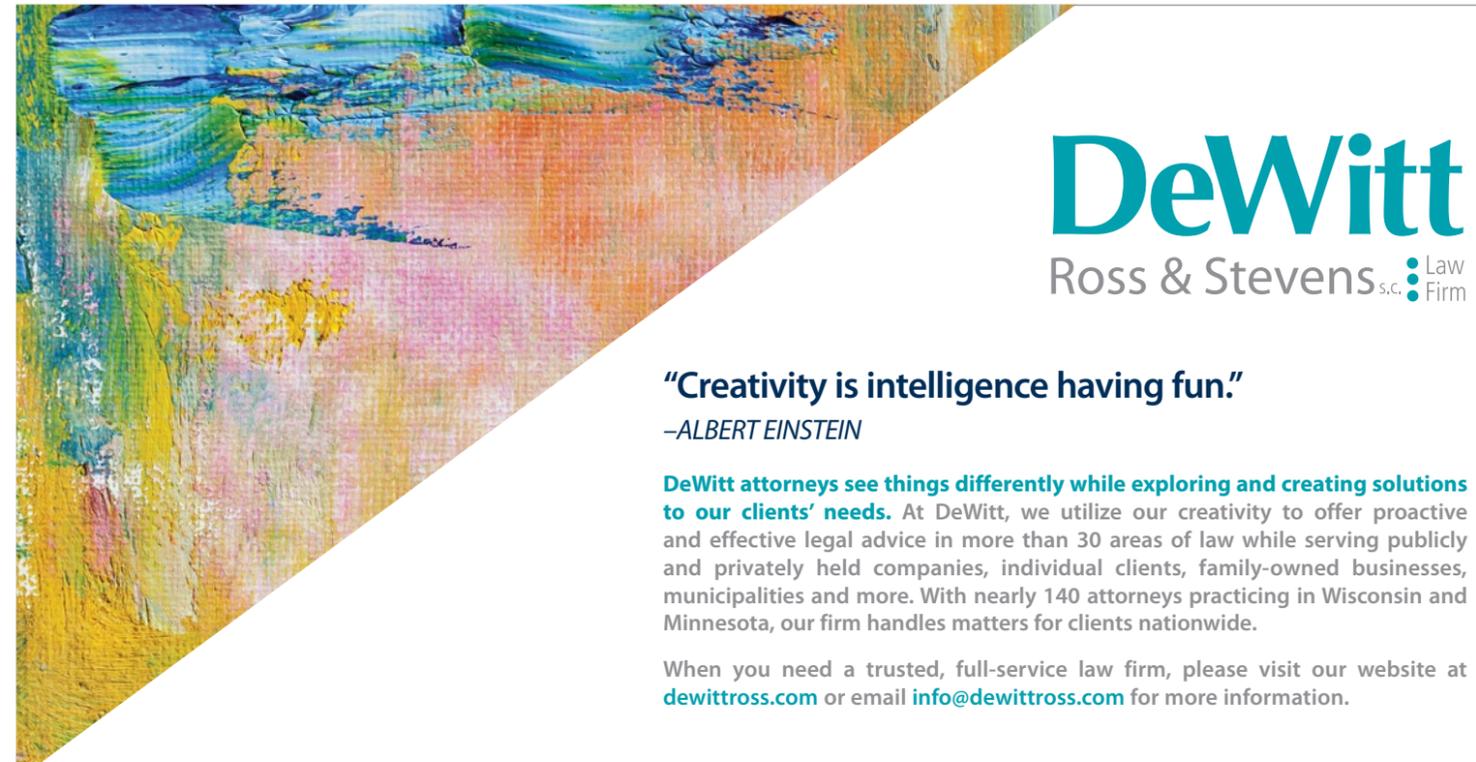
The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals recently decided a Wisconsin case out of Kenosha County. In *Whitaker v. Kenosha Unified School District*, Ashton (Ash) Whitaker sued the Kenosha School District, asserting that the school district's enforcement of an unwritten policy restricting restroom access violates Title IX. Ash began publicly transitioning when he started high school in 2013. In 2016, he was granted a legal name change court order. He submitted a request to use the boys' restrooms

while at school, and the administration informed him he would need to use either the girls' restrooms or the gender-neutral restroom. Both the lower court and the 7th Circuit found for Ash. On August 25, 2017, the school district filed a petition for review with the U.S. Supreme Court.

TAKEAWAYS

Restricting access to public accommodations has a long and troubling history in the United States, and the transgender community is the most recent group affected. There have been many efforts to curb this increase in restrictions impacting the transgender community. Laws protecting the community from discrimination, such as Wisconsin's 2017 bill, are examples of these efforts. Other efforts are taking place on a micro level, such as businesses modifying their spaces to eradicate sex-segregated facilities.

This is a rapidly developing area of the law, and we will continue to witness these developments with the continuation of the two aforementioned cases and with the Wisconsin bill. Many people are watching these cases and hoping for a positive outcome from the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the possibility of a negative outcome is frightening, it is critical that we continue to do what we can to effect positive change. ■



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Intentional Families

Chelsea O'Neil Karcher reflects on the often arduous but ultimately rewarding journey faced by LGBTQ people who wish to start families and offers perspective and hope for the road ahead.

IT'S LONELY ON THE ROAD to queer parenting. The world reminds us every day why we are not okay, how hard it is going to be, and how much we have to lose at a moment's notice. As we think about what it means to parent and expand our capacity for love in this seemingly normal and customary rite of passage, it becomes glaringly apparent that this, too, will be hard.

For straight people it's often as simple as deciding to try. It happens on a whim, it happens by mistake, it happens without pause as if jumping off a cliff and crashing down into the waves of being parents. For queer and trans people it can feel like more of a long and steady uphill climb. We stumble over bumps in the road, we must buy expensive equipment or supplies to complete the journey, we never know what kind of obstacle or predator will be lurking around the next bend to destroy our chance at happiness. The risk for injuries is great and the emotional and spiritual weight of the burdens involved can be crushing. For some it's enough to opt out altogether. For those who choose to persist, it often comes down to one thing and one thing alone: hope. There must be a great deal of faith and hope for what is possible.

SETBACKS AND RESILIENCE

The hope must overshadow the doubt and fear—and the discouraging reality that building a family is not automatically a birthright for queer and trans people. Success requires envisioning a life that exists beyond our own physical, emotional, familial, and financial limitations. It requires stamina and dedication and hours of conversation and planning and weighing of options. We find information and direction from our people, our therapists, and all those brave enough to reach back from the top of the mountain and say, "This is my story and what you want is real and if I can do it, you



The one time we tried, the feeling of failure and grief broke my heart so fully and cut so deep I couldn't bring myself to try again. That's how it is when the stakes are so high.

can do it, too."

Two years ago I sat at the dining room table of a couple I had only just met as they detailed their fertility journey and birthing stories. The whole way home I craved more. In the weeks after I dove deep into stories online and attempted to find resources. I read blogs and did research and still I would come up feeling discouraged and lost and wanting more. The books didn't reflect my relationship. I didn't see myself in the words on the page, and when I tried to speak about this with people who had never been through it, the conversation quickly ended with a hollow-yet-optimistic, "What's meant to be



CHELSEA O'NEIL KARCHER, MA, LPC-IT is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. To learn more visit arttherapymadison.com.

will be." If only it were that simple.

Two years later I am still on my own journey, planning and dreaming and pushing past obstacles. I am saving up for insemination and donors and clinging to hope that in the right time it will all be worth it. The one time we tried, the feeling of failure and grief broke my heart so fully and cut so deep I couldn't bring myself to try again. That's how it is when the stakes are so high.

QUEER COMMUNITY TO THE RESCUE

Thankfully, I found solace and encouragement in my community. The doctors and experts and midwives had no answers or reassuring anecdotes, shrugging their shoulders and wishing they had more to offer me. That is when other queer people in my community stepped in with what I needed. They gave me recommendations, invaluable information, their stories, and they reminded me of my worthiness and endless possibilities. Together we nurtured our shared hope around campfires and kitchen tables and meeting room tables. We shared our truths.

This has always been the way of the underground, the misfits, the fringe of our communities, and even as LGBTQ people find more and more acceptance and belonging it is often in the solace of our sacred communities that we can be fully seen and

It is our love and our commitment to building something where there was once nothing that makes us family. Chosen and blood, partners, and solo, and poly-everything. We deserve it all.

supported.

The creativity and conscious planning required for most queer parents is exceptional. As a queer-identified person, and as a practicing art therapist and counselor, I sit with queer and trans clients in the midst of healing old family wounds and deep transformations. I am reminded every day of the resilience and beauty of our people. We overcome. We beautifully and expertly exist beyond the margins and we prove over and over again that there are so many ways to be authentically joyful and full. It is our love and our commitment to building something where there was once nothing that makes us family. Chosen and blood, partners, and solo, and poly-everything. We deserve it all. We must root ourselves in the strength and power of our communities and continue to show up and share our stories, offer support, and ask for help when we need it. We are hardwired for connection, and it's lonely on the road to queer parenting. ■

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Violence Hits Home

Kathy Flores gives an update on the murder trial of Andrew Nesbitt and offers insight and tips for how we can work to prevent such tragedies, and why hookup-related violence in the LGBTQ community is both an issue of intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

ON MARCH 27, 2017, Andrew (Drew) Nesbitt was murdered in his home after a night out celebrating his birthday.

During the weeks of October 2 and 9, a trial was held to bring a case against Darrick Anderson, the man who caused his death. On Friday night, October 6, Mr. Anderson was found guilty of first degree intentional homicide. On Wednesday, October 11 (also National Coming Out Day), the final phase of the trial was completed to determine if Mr. Anderson was mentally responsible at the time of Drew's homicide. The jury came back to deliver the news that Mr. Anderson is indeed responsible and will proceed to prison.

As an advocate and friend, I sat with Drew's family for six of the eight days of trial. We viewed evidence and listened to a case that brought out graphic and brutal details about the last night of Drew's life. Day in and day out for eight agonizing days, Drew's family remained quiet in the midst of the most heart-wrenching details of this case out of respect for the jury because they did not want to distract the jury or cause bias. Drew's family showed remarkable courage and strength through it all. Drew's family included family of birth, chosen family, dearest of friends, and a partner. All were there as family and were united and bonded together forever because of a unifying love for Drew.

The verdict that has been handed down is one the will help this family start to move on. However, nobody feels "good" after this trial because the life of a loved one was taken



ANDREW (DREW) NESBITT was murdered on March 27 at his downtown Madison apartment, after a night out celebrating his 46th birthday at Five Nightclub. Darrick Anderson, a 24-year-old man from Columbus, was found guilty by a jury for stabbing Drew to death after what is thought to have been a hook-up gone wrong.

The jury also found Anderson guilty of three counts of bail jumping, two counts of retail theft, and one count of obstructing police. Dane County Circuit Judge John Hyland sentenced Anderson to life in prison. Hyland will determine at a later date when, if ever, Anderson would be eligible for release from prison on extended supervision.

from us and another life will spend decades, perhaps the rest of his life, in prison. Justice for Drew involved making sure the person who killed him is held responsible and that he is not out in the community causing more harm. And now we move on to healing for Drew.

So, where does this leave healing? Some of the healing is found in our memories of Drew and in the work to put an end to violence.

Before leaving that final bar on the night of his death, Drew requested Beyonce's "Crazy in Love" for his birthday. Drew loved to dance and laugh. Let us continue to laugh and dance to honor Drew's memory. I have played "Crazy in Love" several times in the last few days.

We cannot spend our time second guessing about what could have been done differently on Drew's final night, but perhaps we can focus on how to help prevent this tragedy from happening to others.

Drew's death was caused by someone from within the LGBTQ community. We also know that if LGBTQ individuals can learn love and acceptance of themselves early in life, we can prevent more violence within our communities from others who identify as LGBTQ.

Because Drew was targeted after a night out and for a possible hook-up, it is important that we help spread the word about safety when we are going out, hooking up, or just moving about in our communities.

Please consider these tips for yourself or for anyone you love who may be at risk for violence. And always remember that even if you follow all these tips or don't follow any tips and violence still happens to you, it is never your fault.

General Tips

GOING OUT

- **TRUST YOUR GUT.** If you feel threatened or unsafe, trust your instincts and remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.
- **LEAVE A TRAIL.** Let someone you trust know your fabulous plans, including if you hook up with someone, where you're going and how long. If you decide to leave a note, make sure this trusted person knows where you've left it.
- **TAKE A BUDDY.** When heading to and leaving your destination or waiting for transportation.
- **LOOK ALERT.** If you don't have a travel buddy, stay alert, look alert, and stick near other people when walking or waiting for transportation.
- **WATCH YOUR DRINK.** Or buy your own, just make sure the only person mixing it is the bartender.



KATHY FLORES is the statewide coordinator addressing Intimate Partner and Community Violence with Diverse & Resilient. She also founded the Fox Valley LGBTQ Anti-Violence project.

- **KNOW YOUR LIMITS.** If you're planning on using substances, including alcohol, decide how much and try to stick to it.
- **BE AWARE OF SURROUNDINGS.** Locate 24-hour establishments to seek help if you feel unsafe. Move toward amore public space if you feel unsafe.

ASSERTING YOUR BOUNDARIES

- **YOUR BOUNDARIES ARE BEAUTIFUL.** You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. "No" is a complete sentence!
- **USE WORDS.** Alert bystanders and frighten (not anger) an assailant.
- **BE DIRECT.** Be assertive in your communication.
- **USE BODY LANGUAGE.** Show that you are serious, including eye contact.

HOOING UP

- **MAKE A SAFETY PLAN AND LET SOMEONE ELSE KNOW.** Tell at least one person about your plans, such as who you'll be with, a way to get in touch with the person/people that you are meeting, meeting place, and what you plan to do. Plan in advance what will happen if you feel unsafe, such as where they will meet you and whether you want police called.
- **USE YOUR TECH.** Text yourself or friends about where you'll be or where you are, the handle the person or persons use on the website or phone app. Include a picture of the person, and save messages when using websites and phone apps.

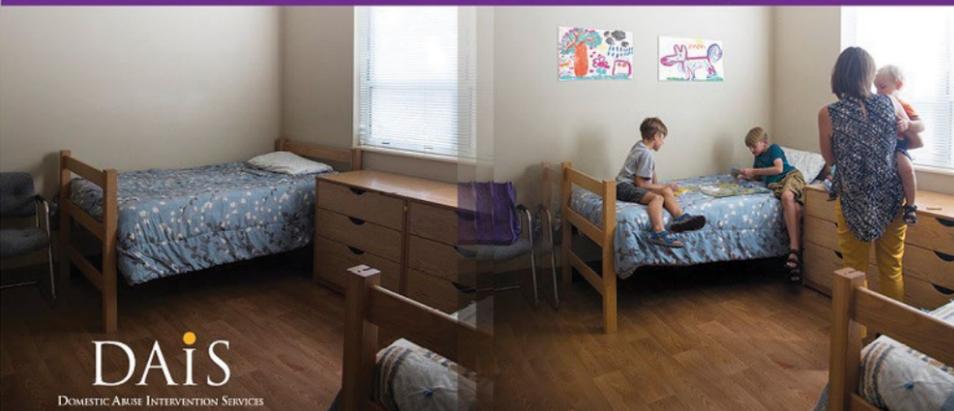
- **MEET IN PUBLIC.** Meeting in public allows for greater options for safety. If possible, bring friends with you, as they can watch your back and give you their impressions. If the person doesn't look like the picture, ask them about it. If they don't have an answer you feel comfortable with, leave.
- **KNOW YOUR LIMITS.** If you're going to use substances, including alcohol, consider deciding ahead of time when and how much you will use.
- **PRACTICE SAFER SEX.** If you think you may have sex, make it safer sex—bring safer sex supplies and use them. Diverse & Resilient has free safer sex supplies available at our table and can help you safety plan around how to ask your sex partner to engage in safer sex.
- **INCIDENTS OF HOOK-UP VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN IN PUBLIC SPACES SUCH AS BARS, SEX/PLAY PARTIES, ETC.** Let friends, other patrons, or bar/nightclub staff know if you leave temporarily and when you intend to return. When you are outside, scan the street for establishments (such as a restaurant or car service) where you can go to seek help if you feel unsafe. Don't leave any drinks or your belongings unattended. Discuss your interests and boundaries for sex, including BDSM before engaging.
- **TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.** If you feel threatened or unsafe at any point, if at all possible exit the situation.
- **YOU CAN SAY NO.** No matter who initiates or how far you've gone, you can stop for any reason.

GETTING SUPPORT IF VIOLENCE DOES OCCUR

- **IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.** Nobody has the right to violate your boundaries or commit violence against you, no matter where it happens or how you met.
- **DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT.** Take photos of any injuries; keep records of emails, texts, calls.
- **CONSIDER MEDICAL ATTENTION OR COUNSELING AFTER AN INCIDENT.** Violence can have many physical and emotional impacts.
- **CALL AN LGBTQ ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAM.** The Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program and National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs are here to support LGBTQI and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence, including hook-up, dating, sexual, intimate partner, hate, and police violence. If you have witnessed or experience violence: Contact Kathy Flores through Diverse & Resilient's Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program: roomtobesafe.org or call/text 414-856-LGBT (5428) (resource line, not a hotline) or the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 24-Hour English/Spanish Hotline at 212-714-1141.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.** Use the help of supportive friends, partners, and family.

These tips are suggestions for staying safer. If you experience violence, it is not your fault. The Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program and other members of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) brought these tips to you. ■

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Am I Welcome Here?

Finding little current information, OutReach's new LGBT Senior Advocate, **Michal Osier**, is hoping to create a reliable list of LGBTQ welcoming senior care centers.

SINCE I BEGAN my work as the LGBT Senior Advocate at OutReach, I've been getting calls that start like this: "Hi, my mom/dad is lesbian/gay/bi/trans, and I'm looking for an assisted living place/nursing home nearby where they'll be welcome and accepted. Are there any places you can recommend?"

I have to say no, I don't have recommen-

dations, because this kind of information has never been gathered. There are a few anecdotal reports, perhaps, but nothing I can stand behind. Independent living communities? Memory care facilities? Likewise.

I wasn't comfortable with this situation, so I started doing some research. I learned that responses to the growing need for wel-

coming senior living communities for aging LGBT baby boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964 (the largest age cohort in the U.S.) who are now between 53 and 71 years old—have branched in two distinct paths.

The first path has been the creation of senior living communities oriented and marketed primarily or specifically toward LGBT elders. At this writing, there are 21 of these scattered around the country: six in California, two in Florida, two in New York, two in New Mexico, and one each in Massachusetts, Oregon, Ohio, North Carolina, Washington, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Washington, D.C.

While this trend is heartening in some respects, it's clear that of the estimated 1.1 million LGBT adults 65 and older, very few will be able to access, let alone afford, such places. That leaves the other path: that of working toward creating welcoming environments in the hundreds of thousands of senior residences and care facilities in the U.S.

Several national-level LGBT organizations have taken on this challenge. SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders; sageusa.org), MAP (Movement

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHAL DUGGAN.

Advancement Project; lgbtmap.org), the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging (lgbtagingcenter.org), and others, are hard at work doing research, publishing findings, creating policy, and training LGBTQ activist presenters around the country. Here in Dane County, I'm working with our many allies and community members within and outside of senior residence and care facilities who can help advance the goal of affirming environments for LGBT elders.

Over 1/3 of LGBT baby boomers identified fear of discrimination, compromised care, and bullying in senior housing as one of their biggest fears about aging.

In response to the growing need, to the newly available research on LGBT aging, and to the energy in the larger Dane County communities that I believe is waiting to be engaged toward this goal, OutReach's Am I Welcome Here? Project is newly underway.

Initially, my hope was to reach all of the senior residences and care facilities in Dane County. I realized I'd have to backpedal when I learned there are over 300 of them! I decided to focus on assisted living and memory care residences, because of what going into assisted living means: that the aging person can no longer care for her/him/theirself in the self-sufficient and independent way that characterizes adult life. To need assistance in the tasks of daily living is to be dependent on other people whom you do not know, in a way that you have never needed before. This represents a huge loss to anyone; but for LGBT people, this may well mean dependency on individuals who may disapprove of, dislike, or even be hostile to you, just because you are LGBT.

It's for this reason that over 1/3 of LGBT baby boomers identified fear of discrimination, compromised care, and bullying in senior housing as one of their biggest fears about aging. In fact, a 2014 study by the Equal Rights Center found that 48% of LGBT-identified seniors "experienced unfavorable differential treatment in terms of availability of housing, pricing, financial incentives, amenities or application requirements" just in applying for senior housing. The Am I Welcome Here? Project has



MICHAL OSIER, MA, LPC, is the LGBT Senior Advocate for OutReach. She's a newly retired psychotherapist and a lifelong writer who lives with her beloved wife, Nancy Hutson, and their excellent dog, Rosie.

three main parts. The first is a survey—with a cover letter explaining the Project's purpose and goals—which has been sent out to almost 90 locations. The survey asks each facility's director to self-assess LGBT cultural competence in three areas: overall knowledge about LGBT elders' histories and how lifelong discrimination has affected many of us; LGBT terminology and culture; and specific action steps to make their facility LGBT-affirming, from adding additional options to gender and marital-status questions on forms, to putting LGBT images and information into their décor and libraries.

Staff trainings in each of these areas are being offered, and participating organizations are given an incentive: a free listing in OutReach's annual directory, indicating they have engaged in building their LGBT cultural competence.

Cultural shifts take place steadily but gradually. In addition to the trainings themselves, my further goal is to bring the discussion about LGBT elders' needs, wants, and realities to the larger community. We LGBT older adults have made uncountable contributions, large and small, to our communities throughout our lives. When we're no longer able to fully care for ourselves, we too deserve to be able to call the place we move to, not our new closet, but our new home. ■

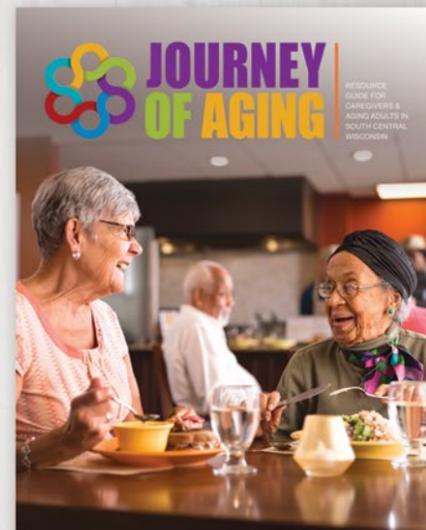
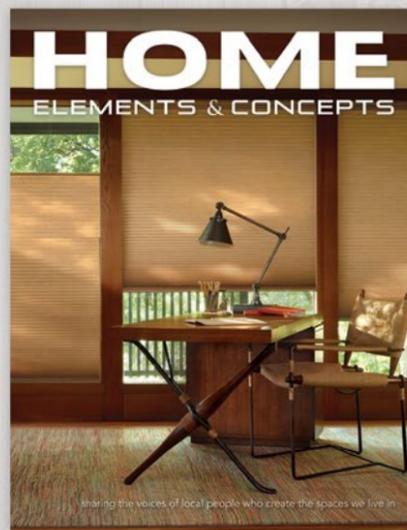


"I want to support my LGBT friends. I'm just not sure how or where to do it."



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All Together Now

Vivienne Andersen gives us a glimpse of a new culinary collective aimed at giving women and nonbinary people in the business a place to commiserate, collaborate, and grow.

IMAGINE A GROUP OF 60 or so women in Madison. They are strong, empowered women, women who don't mince words, women who are respected. They are small business owners, and they have high expectations of their staff. These women are getting things done, and they are all a part of the tapestry of Madison's vibrant food scene. They are chefs, restaurant owners, suppliers, food cart owners, producers, farmers, baristas, bartenders, and so on.

The group you're imagining is real, and it has a name: The Culinary Ladies Collective (CLC).

The collective started in the spring of 2016 as a humble Facebook page. In the 18 months since its inception, the group has grown dramatically. While the collective was not a direct result of the 2016 election outcome, one of the co-founders, Harvest Restaurant owner Tami Lax, said it wasn't totally unrelated, either.

"It was imagined as a way to join forces with other women, and to give back to the community," Tami explained.

These two aspects of the collective seem to be intertwined and inseparable. First, the need for a forum for female food producers where they can support one another outside of the male-dominated spaces that already exist, and second, a means to collectively interact with other organizations for fundraising and charity events.

Francesca Hong of Morris Ramen explained it simply: "What we do is nourish other people."

While the CLC isn't an exclusively women's group (men and those who identify outside of the gender binary are allowed to join), it is a group for women to share their stories, to celebrate their achievements, and to support and nurture one another in a very intentionally feminine space.

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"As a small business owner it is easy to feel isolated," Tami said. "It is easy to feel like this is just happening to you, so it is nice to have a space where we can be in camaraderie with other women business owners. It's nice to be able to get advice on how to manage being a mom with being a business owner, to be able to talk to other



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owners about how to best keep up with regulations, or about what dishwasher to lease. It is also wonderful to just be able to celebrate victories with other women."

Francesca added, "That is the biggest part, after our first meeting, after getting to talk in the group and just be heard. It was so cathartic. I felt so relieved afterward."

Looking toward the future, members of the CLC are looking forward to incorporating formal mentoring for female food business owners who are just starting out in the industry. They are also planning to do more fundraising and activities in concert with other organizations around town.

I look forward to seeing how they blossom. One thing is sure: This group of capable, well-respected women will continue to nourish patrons, each other, and the community for a long time to come. ■



Want to support these women-owned businesses? Some of the currently active members of the CLC are:

- 1 Jennie Capellaro of The Green Owl Café
- 2 Molly Maciejewski of Madison Sourdough
- 3 Shanna Pacifico of Graduate Madison
- 4 Lauren Montelbano of Surya Café inside Perennial Yoga
- 5 Anna Thomas Bates of Landmark Creamery
- 6 Kathy Brozyna of Madison Sourdough
- 7 Laurel Burleson of Ugly Apple Food Cart
- 8 Clare Stoner Fehsenfeld of Quince & Apple



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.

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Well Versed

East High student **Daniel Gengenbach** discovered a new self-confidence and a community of support through the world of slam poetry, Proud Theater, and an accepting environment.

I AM A NINTH GRADER at East High School. I was born north of Madison, but Madison is where I grew up. I love participating in clubs, specifically GSA. I got involved in poetry because of the way my eighth grade poetry class was taught. It showed me this new side, where a poem doesn't have to just be rhyming words with no deeper meaning. Acting was something that I had no great interest in until I heard about Proud Theater. It was a place where I could act while still being accepted for who I am.

Both poetry and theater allow me to become different people, at least for a little while. They let me escape when I need to. It's not just an escape, though. They challenge me to become better at what I love doing. They are an important part of my life.

School, friends, family, and my identity are important to me. My identity has completely changed over the course of the past two years, as I started to figure out who I am. Sometimes I still don't know who I am, but I still have time to figure it all out. After all, I am just a freshman in high school.

My teacher, my friends, and my family have all supported me and stood by me, while Proud Theater and participating in poetry slams have made me a more confident person. I am who I am today because of these things and these people.

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Slam poetry was not something I was aware of until my teacher showed videos of people slamming in class for our poetry unit. It inspired me to write poems that I would want to perform for other people.

My first poems were rough but they got better over time. I'm always improving on the things I write, trying to make them the best I've written yet. The first time I slammed, it was the most nerve-racking thing I had done. In the end, I ended up tying for third place and getting a spot on the City Slam team.

Poetry let me express myself in a way that nothing else could. It



lets me be honest about everything, to be understood, and it let me relate to other people who went through similar things. It forced me to be creative while still being true to me.

I didn't know it at the time but these slams were hosted by an organization called the JVN Project. I was at the City Slams that I first really learned about the group. They were the ones who put together the event and were the ones taking the top six poets to California for the Brave New Voices showcase and competition. They are the ones who hosted the events here and are the ones who let us spit our truth.

Poetry has forced me to think in different ways, especially when writing. I have to figure out how to make things flow together and how it should sound. It's always a challenge, which I love.

When working with other poets, you have to work together to make it

all fit. I worked with one of my friends to create a two-person poem, which was later performed at a school poetry event. Working together isn't always easy: we argued about what should be included and what stuff we didn't think was important for the poem. But hearing everything come together is a wonderful experience. Creating a piece of art with another person is a shared success.

One thing that really stood out to me during my first poetry slam is that even if you don't place in the top three, top five, or even the top 10, the other people present will still support you. They snap their fingers when they hear something they like, cheer for you when you finish, and boo the judges for giving you a score they don't think is high enough.

The slam community is there to support anyone and everyone who gets up on the stage—because you're letting yourself be vulnerable to strangers and you are letting your poems be judged as well. Even if you mess up, even if you stumble over your words or forget them, the people there will still be cheering for you.

Being a part of this has made me more confident, strengthened my friendships and, in a way, made me a better actor. Being an actor has made me a better poet. Poetry taught me how to get up on the stage and be present, while being an actor has taught me how to really bring the emotion and how to tie it into what I'm performing. I firmly believe that poetry has helped me change for the better and that it will continue to change me over time. ■



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*Samantha
assault survivor*

*Samantha
nurse and advocate*

*Anayeli
needed a
biopsy*

*Erin
found care
while uninsured*

