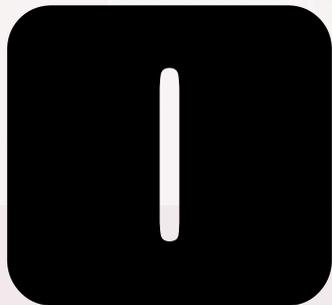


our lives



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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

FOOD & DINING

SPECIAL: Ways the pandemic is impacting our community

May /June
2020



Dino Maniaci,
of D'Vino,
which opened
in March



COVID-19

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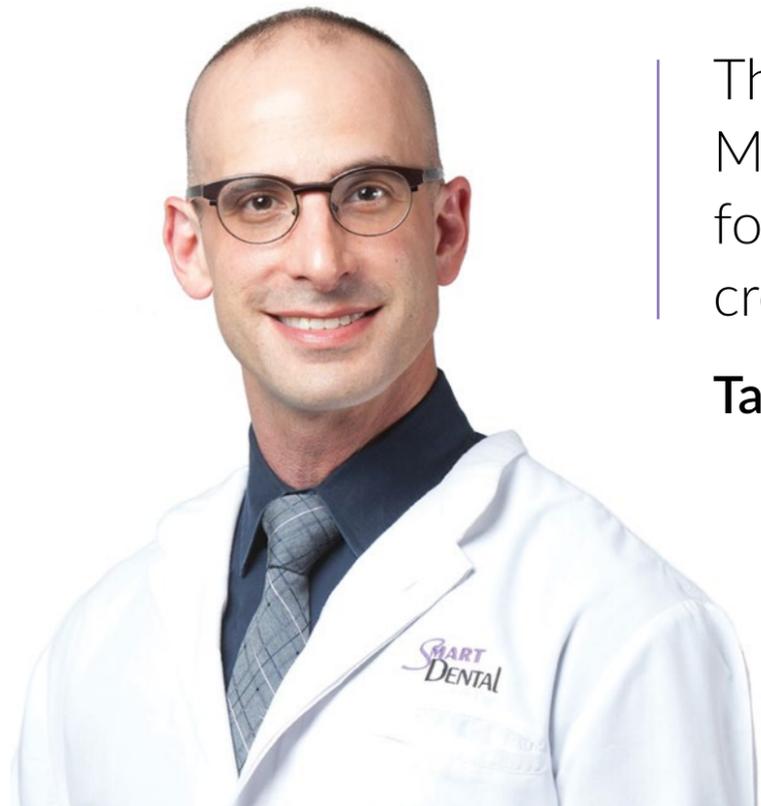
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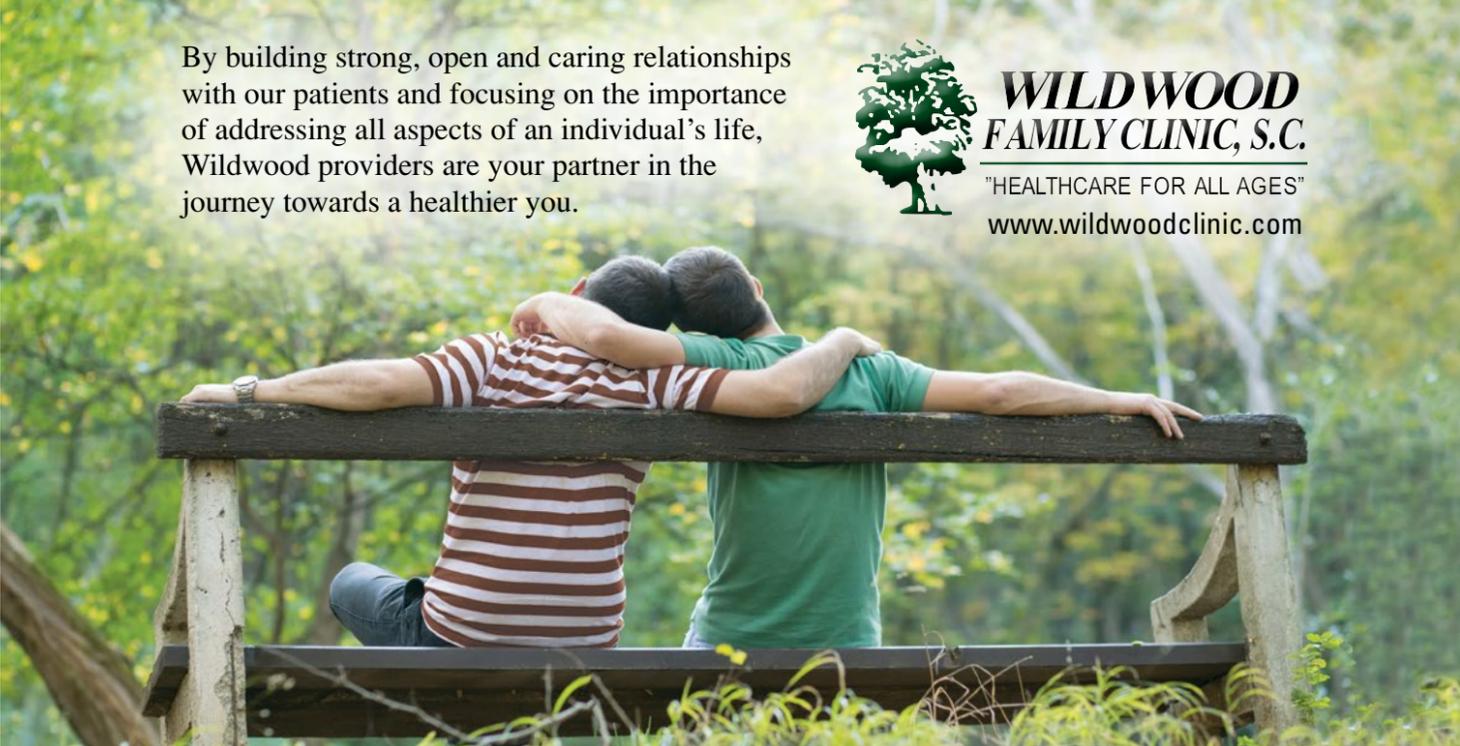
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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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Amidst the pandemic, and the extraordinary strain on small businesses, the advertisers you see in this issue helped to keep us publishing. If the opportunity arises, please join us in thanking them for helping to keep our community strong, informed, and connected.

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WHAT WE DO BEST

Queer people are no strangers to pandemics. Our continued resilience is already demonstrating innovative new opportunities to lead.

THIS IS QUITE AN UNUSUAL Food & Dining issue. Puns aside, I don't want to sugar coat this. Similar to the many stories you've been hearing about small business right now, the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to *Our Lives*. By early March we began getting messages from clients needing to suspend or cancel their campaigns. Two substantial bases that we've built our business model off of are community businesses and events. Unexpectedly, almost overnight, both of those were wiped out. Right as we began work on this issue, restaurants were ordered to close their dining rooms. At the time of this writing they remain closed, and without a date to resume normal operations again. We've yet to discover what normal will even



mean going forward. Overture Center has been shuttered to the public for months, along with all their resident companies. Milwaukee PrideFest, and other community events have been postponed, with hopes of rescheduling some time in the future if it is possible. Vulnerable to the same revenue loss, Madison's alt-weekly, *Isthmus*, announced it was going dark in March. Around the same, time I began receiving emails from other local publishers asking if we were planning to suspend our operations as well. To be frank, the thought hadn't crossed my mind. All I could think about was how important it was to provide support and distill this moment in time. The result of that decision may be a thinner magazine, but I assure you that our relevance is intact—if not stronger.

If there's one thing the LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities know well, it's navigating adversity and resilience. We've survived pandemics before, and through them

forged new ways of moving forward. We're already showing signs of leading through this again. I wanted this issue to demonstrate that, and I think it does. After being open for less than two weeks, *D'Vino* had to radically revise their business model to accommodate the times, and they have. We're honored to share **Dino Maniaci & Jason Hoke's** vision for melding tradition and community. We're also grateful for the chance to check in on **local LGBTQ-owned and -operated third spaces**—places where we socialize that are not work or home—to see how they're coping and learn how to best support them now. Former *Our Lives* Editor **Emily Mills** does the same for community organizations. Therapist **Alex Einsman** offers self-care strategies for the impacts and isolation that come from social distancing. We've tried to tailor this entire issue around this moment, to be something that both captures it and provides a chance to exhale.

STATEWIDE EXPANSION UPDATE

I also wanted to update you on our statewide expansion efforts. They are still moving forward, but as you can imagine, the pandemic has decimated our timeline. We've

had to dip into funds that were earmarked for the development of our new website and our nonprofit foundation to sustain regular business operations. So work on the expansion is still happening, but will be stretching through the summer months. If you want to help us recover some of the funds we're losing, we're hoping to launch a couple fundraising campaigns for this more sustainable model. By the time you get this, at least one should be live. You can access it via our Facebook page, or through our newsletter. Since the magazine was founded, my priority has always been anchored in accessibility. It's why we've never charged for the magazine or for a subscription. If you feel compelled, these fundraisers could be an opportunity to help ensure that we'll be around for years to come.

As always, I'm forever grateful that you're a part of *Our Lives*. ■

OP-ED

GRIEVING THE LOSS OF GRIEVING

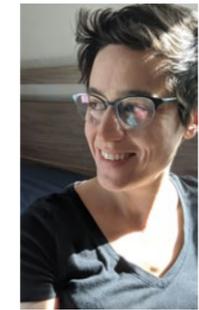
I AM FORTUNATE. I have had limited times in my life I have needed to grieve and go through the private and public ceremony of loss. My younger brother died by suicide when I was 21. My mother died last year from complications of substance abuse. My grandparents died after longer lives. In each of those instances, I remember so vividly who was there. I remember distinctly a few words that were so perfect and comforting.

Three weeks ago, a dear friend's daughter died of an overdose. Impulsively, I wanted to drive to Minnesota and cook something—and just show up. Even if I left some home-cooked food at her doorstep, and even if it spoiled before she could get it in the refrigerator, I wanted to try. But I could not. The following week, the mother of one of my best friends died unexpectedly. I just wanted to show up and tell the family that I love them. Again—I could not.

Less than two weeks ago, a beloved colleague and her husband were murdered within blocks of their home, leaving three young adult children. There was a video-broadcast service, and though it was a herculean effort by so many, I left it more bereft that I was before.

I am a person of great privilege who has the economic ability to socially distance. I have not lost multiple people to this horrid virus. Like all of us, though, I have lost the ability to show up and grieve. That is an enormous loss.

DR. KATHY ORIEL, Oriel Medicine



STACY HARBAUGH puts words and photos together for a living including work in marketing, journalism, and activism. Originally from Indiana, she moved to Madison in 2004 for the green spaces, progressive politics, and Packer bars. Professional connections can find her on LinkedIn, and followers are welcome on Twitter @stacyharbaugh.

LUCY HODGMAN is an editor at a nonprofit in Madison, having settled here after several stints in the Midwest and California. Her career path has woven happily through kitchens and offices; she realizes the geographical and career trajectories might both be expressions of a desire to fit several dreamed lives into one. She is queer, polyamorous, and a huge fan of learning about and discussing human nature, relationships of all kinds, and how best to be good to one another.

EMILY MILLS is the former editor of *Our Lives* and current/longtime freelance writer, photographer, and editor. She currently works for a major conservation NGO as a communications and marketing professional, sharing stories of and connecting people to essential work to protect land and water for current and future generations in Wisconsin. Emily is also a skater and announcer with Madison Roller Derby, an all-volunteer, non-profit sports organization for which she's also served as General Manager for the past three years. In better, less socially distant times, she's one half of the irreverent punk duo, Damsel Trash, and can be frequently found traipsing through Wisconsin's various natural areas with her camera. Find her on Twitter @millbot or online at emilymills.org.

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Community in the Time of COVID-19

LGBTQ organizations and businesses are all struggling—and getting creative—during the unprecedented pandemic.

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A MONTH CAN MAKE. Nearly half of all businesses in the U.S. are currently shuttered or working at minimum capacity. People are either sheltering in their homes or working jobs deemed essential and risking exposure to a virus that's wreaking havoc on bodies, lives, and the fabric of society as we know it.

Already serious disparities in health outcomes and access to care are taking an even more deadly toll on minority communities. All the worst features of our society seem to be heightened by the situation, laid painfully bare in the statistics and heart-wrenching personal stories.

Still, there are glimmers of hope; stories and signs that, at least on the personal and more local levels, people are doing their best to help each other out in this scary and strange time. Many of our crucial LGBTQ non-profits and businesses are finding (socially distant) ways to continue operating and offering their vital services to the community. These already often small, grassroots operations are delicate, though, and so are the people they serve and/or employ. Now more than ever, if you find yourself in a relatively comfortable position, consider lending whatever support you can



Barbara's Story



directly to the people on the front lines.

We spoke with several area nonprofits and businesses to find out exactly what obstacles they're now facing and how they're working to adapt. They also offered suggestions for how you can help (or access help as needed). The LGBTQ community is perhaps one of the most well-versed in how, even in the middle of such seemingly overwhelming challenges, the smallest acts can have big impacts.

OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
STEVE STARKEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 OUTREACHMADISONLGBT.ORG



MADISON'S LGBTQ community center is doing its best to weather the storm. Steve Starkey, Executive Director, notes that while the office itself is closed for walk-ins and groups, staff are working to provide virtual meetings and emergency assistance to those in need.

"We are considered an essential business," notes Starkey. "We are communicating regularly with Dane County, City of Madison, State of Wisconsin, and many other nonprofit organizations and businesses. Because of new,

large grants from UW Health, Unity & Quartz, and Boys & Girls Club of Dane County we are continuing to offer grants to Willma's Fund homeless clients and are now able to help people that have been laid off because of the virus. Our board and committees continue to meet by Zoom. We've suspended our strategic planning process until things return to normal."

The biggest struggle, Starkey says, is planning for the six fundraising events the organization holds each year. Right now there's uncertainty about which will still happen and which will need to be cancelled or postponed.

"The June and July events will probably have to be cancelled and events from August through the end of the year we're hoping to hold," Starkey says. "The Magic Pride Festival planning has started and we have a park permit, stage and sound, beer distributor and some sponsors for the event. The banquet is scheduled at Monona Terrace and some plans for it are also underway."

If Outreach isn't able to hold some or all of its planned events this year, it will leave a \$50,000+ hole in the budget. Starkey asks that anyone looking to help can consider making a direct donation to the non-profit (outreachmadisonlgbt.org/donate).

The good news, however, is that two large grants are allowing OutReach to provide emergency relief to LGBTQ people who are homeless (generally) or laid off due to the pandemic. Anyone in need of assistance should call the office (608-255-8582) between Noon and 7:00 p.m. weekdays and "we'll set them up with what help we can," Starkey adds.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT
KATHY FLORES, STATEWIDE ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
 DIVERSEANDRESILIENT.ORG



THE MILWAUKEE-BASED health organization has closed its doors to the public but continues to operate, with staff mostly working from home.

D&R does still have "advocates on hand and able to help the QTBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, POC, GNC) and the larger LGBTQ+ community connect to care during these times of increased isolation and illness," says Kathy Flores, D&R's Statewide Anti-Violence Program Coordinator. "And remember, if you are living in an abusive home — whether that be with a partner, family, or roommates — we are here to help you get through. We can talk, safety plan, help you be less lonely, connect to resources and more."

Flores adds that the organization is hosting weekly Zoom "Queer-antine" gatherings (Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.), which employ queer artists as co-hosts and provide conversation, connection, and resources for anyone interested. ASL interpreters will be on hand to ensure access. Find out more at facebook.com/room-tobesafe. Anyone seeking help may call or text: Milwaukee/SE WI Advocate-Jennifer: (414) 242-0730; Appleton/NE WI Advocate-Nick: (920) 840-2040; Statewide line: 414-856-5428; or email kflores@diverseandresilient.org.

D&R is also assisting HIV+ individuals impacted by COVID-19 with Emergency Financial Assistance and around-the-clock emotional support for all HIV+ people. They are currently scheduling online support groups and those interested should contact Justin Roby at jroby@diverseandresilient.org.

The Intersectionality Among Men program continues its work online, with special focus on sexual health during the pandemic. Contact Kofi at kshort@diverseandresilient.org for more information. SHEBA also continues to hold online meetings and will soon publish a Trans Needs Assessment focused on the needs of trans people of color. Trans youth support

groups continue online via Google lines. D&R is providing free condoms throughout sites in Milwaukee, including outside of the D&R offices. To learn more about D&R's Youth, Trans, or condom services, please email Osha Towers at otowers@diverseandresilient.org.

GSAFE
BRIAN JUCHEMS, CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 GSAFE-WI.ORG



WISCONSIN'S LGBTQ YOUTH and school-focused organization is also adapting to a new, more virtual reality, with staff working from home while continuing to engage with the work.

"We are encouraging each other to prioritize personal and family safety and well-being, which is a privilege, we recognize," says Brian Juchems, Co-Executive Director of GSAFE.

GSAFE had to immediately cancel face-to-face work with youth and educators, including their "Safe Schools, Safe Communities" statewide conference. The event, which was to be hosted by and at Madison College, has been postponed at least until at least late 2020. They've refunded all registrations which, Juchems notes, "resulted in a financial hit similar to what many other organizations are experiencing." The silver lining is that GSAFE's sponsors have continued to support them and are helping to keep the (virtual) doors open and they hope to present at least some of the conference's planned content using a Zoom webinar in the near future.

The stay-at-home order has also meant shifting the annual Celebration of Leadership Scholarship and Awards banquet to an online format, to be held on Saturday, May 30. "Because it will be virtual we'll be able to accommodate more people than our regular venue," Juchems says. "Folks from around the state (and beyond!) can sign up for a free virtual ticket so that they can join us in celebrating the brilliance and courage of our four youth scholarship recipients, along with three educators and community leaders. Again, our sponsors are sticking with us as we pivot to an online format, although this will likely be another financial hit for us."

As the organization tries to plan in the middle of so much uncertainty, they're also focused on the day-to-day work of making one-on-one connections with students, educators, and families. "We are reaching out, sharing resources, and being a listening ear," says Juchems. "We're connecting with student leaders to support and amplify their efforts to provide each other with support. We're connecting with GSA advisors and club leaders to encourage and sup-

port them in creating online spaces for students to connect and be in community. As you know, sometimes school or GSAs are the only place where students can be themselves. We want our young people to know that 'you are still you' even if home makes it hard for them to be their authentic self right now."

Another adaptation has been to move GSAFE's Foundation of Leadership class, taught in conjunction with the Madison school district, to online. "The students continue to be creative and resilient, but obviously are impacted by this new normal," Juchems adds.

There are plenty of concerns and challenges to navigate, too. Juchems says they're particularly concerned about students who don't have access to adequate food, safe shelter, and supportive families, including young people experiencing incarceration. He encourages donations and/or direct support for organizations that "are on the front lines of providing and advocating for those critical supports. We also encourage you to reach out in safe ways to trans and queer youth you know to let them know that you are thinking about them."

As a final note, GSAFE is looking for quilters and other crafty people to help with an end-of-the-year fundraiser. Contact them at info@gsafe-wi.org if you might be interested!

VIVENT HEALTH
 (FORMERLY ARCW/AIDS NETWORK)
 VIVENTHEALTH.ORG

THE HIV/AIDS HEALTH ORGANIZATION announced on March 17 that all of its offices would close for walk-ins. Instead, Vivent is asking patients, clients, and consumers to call their Vivent Health provider before their visit or if they have any health concerns. All volunteer opportunities are currently suspended.

"Vivent Health staff will continue to work and will contact every person we serve to ensure all our patients have the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus epidemic, changes to our programs and services and to check on their health and well-being," an online update reads. "This contact will be an important way to help combat the isolation our patients may experience during a time of social distancing and limited social interaction."

Vivent's food pantry is providing one-month supplies of pre-boxed food, delivered upon request to your local provider. The pharmacy is utilizing a courier service to deliver medications to patients. PrEP services are no longer available at the clinics but patients should call their local Vivent Health location for anything related to ongoing care and pharmacy needs. A full list of changes is available at viventhealth.org/coronavirus.



Dear Friends, we know that COVID-19 is top of mind for every entrepreneur and supporter in our state. We've created a page to provide you with financial, operational, and healthcare resources to help you through this difficult time.

The Chamber is here to support you all through this. -Jason Rae, President & CEO

Find resources to support you online at WisLGBTChamber.com/covid19

Upcoming Events

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May 20 - 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
 Online at Zoom

Free to attend. All welcome. Register on website

Virtual Chamber on Tap Happy Hour

May 28 - 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
 Online at Zoom

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"OUR TASTING ROOM, like all taverns, had to close," says Erika Jones, co-owner of Giant Jones Brewing. "All our special events have either been cancelled or modified if possible to be virtual. All our restaurant and bar partners have also had to close so there's virtually no draft beer out there."

Instead, the wife-and-wife-owned micro-brewery is turning its efforts to bottling their "big" beers, holding no-touch, to-go sales through their tasting room's garage door, and modifying their pairing events to be virtual.

The best way to support their small business, Erika adds, is to "buy our products at grocery stores, liquor stores, and through our to-go sales. Share about local businesses that you love on social media to keep spreading that local love. Every time anyone chooses to support any local business it supports us; we need a vibrant local economy!"

Still, the duo feels the same uncertainty and worry as everyone else, especially those operating small, independent businesses. "We're trying to take things one day at a time and give ourselves space to feel the stress and anxiety, and find ways that enrich and pull us out of it," says Erika. "We're worried for our friends in the service industry—about who's not going to make it and how this will have a long-term effect on our whole community and amazing food and beverage scene."

They're taking a longer view on the situation, hoping there's a silver lining. "This crisis is revealing the cracks in our business and our economic system," Erika notes, "and I hope that we come to demand better and realize that minimum wage essential workers deserve better. We all deserve better than what was considered 'normal.' We have to do better."

COW & QUINCE
LORI STERN, OWNER
COWANDQUINCE.COM



THE FARM-TO-TABLE restaurant in New Glarus was just emerging from what owner Lori Stern called a "long, slow winter" when the full force of the pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home order came crashing down. The dining room is now closed to the public, but

the crew is fighting hard to weather the storm. "All of us are living in the midst of uncertainty," Stern wrote in an update to loyal patrons. "Those of us who farm and feed people are part of an industry that is always vulnerable to changes in the weather and economy. In this current situation, more so than ever, with no end in sight, we are going to continue to cook for you until they tell us to stop. We are a very small, familial staff who takes great care in preparing the quality ingredients we purchase from our local farmers and cheesemakers. Food safety is always a priority for us."

The downtime has apparently resulted in some interesting research and development for Lori and crew. A recent batch of New York-style bagels sold out quickly, along with cupcakes and other desserts. A takeout menu is also available and Stern, like many small business owners, is encouraging people to buy digital gift cards to help get the business through the pandemic.

Updates about what's available and when are found on the restaurant's Facebook page (facebook.com/pg/cowandquince) or by calling (608) 527-2900 to place an order and pay over the phone, with curbside pickup available.

"Food is medicine," Stern muses. "We will continue to provide you with quality, from scratch, wholesome food, prepared with love to feed your body and soul."

NORTH PAW DOGS & TAPROOT DOG TRAINING
LAURA STRIMPEL, OWNER/OPERATOR
NORTHPAWDOGS.COM &
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THE FURRY FRIENDS are still frolicking at North Paw doggy daycare on Madison's east side. Owner and trainer Laura Strimpel is proud to continue to offer the service, especially

for people in essential lines of work who need their canine companions looked after while they're out keeping the rest of us safe.

Taproot, however, is closed for the stay-at-home order. Strimpel stresses that her business will strictly abide by all city orders, "even if that means limiting the number of humans who can accompany their dogs to class," she notes.

Strimpel already prided herself on having "extremely high expectations and protocols in place for cleanliness," and adds that the business has since ramped those up to include wiping down dogs and leashes as they come in and before they go home, restricting lobby access to one person at a time, offering parking

lot check in/check out, and waiving expirations on their packages, among other safety efforts.

Still, North Paw has seen a large decrease in boarding clients due to so many people staying home and not traveling. The daycare is just two years old and so, Strimpel admits, "the financial hit has been tough." She's glad to note that the situation has also highlighted the types of relationships they have with clients, with pet parents stepping forward to buy packages they don't yet need or donating the cost of their dogs' daycare days "even though they've chosen to not bring their dogs for the time being."

In terms of support the community can offer a small business like hers in this difficult time, Strimpel says, "Please help continue to spread the word that we are still very much open for daycare and boarding and are accepting new clients as always. We are the best place in the city for smaller dogs."

DELTA BEER LAB
TIM "PIO" PIOTROWSKI, OWNER
DELTA.BEER



OUR LIVES FEATURED DELTA in our March issue for their first-year anniversary. To say change came quickly after that would be an understatement. Owner/brewer Tim "Pio"

Piotrowski notes that the brewery's taproom is the "heart" of the business and, with that now closed, adjustment has been challenging.

"Our mission is all about building community without barriers to gender, race, or sexual orientation," Pio says. "I didn't factor the very real barrier of social distancing. Unfortunately, we are unable to hang out with our guests for more than the time it takes to buy some 4-Packs and frozen pizza, our beertenders are laid off, and we don't get to enjoy the life they bring to The Lab. Revenue is also down 70 percent."

With restaurants closed and not buying kegs, the Delta crew have shifted focus to off-prem-

ise retailers like liquor and grocery stores, which Pio says has been fairly successful. "We have added 12 off-premise accounts that are carrying a wide variety of our canned beer," he notes. "The downside is that we have a tiny, two-head canning machine, wrap labels around the cans on a separate small machine, hand-apply each product-specific sticker, and then hand-apply the four-pack carrier. The machine was perfect for our startup phase... Now we're running it in overdrive with a skeleton crew."

Pio adds that while off-premise sales have been adding much needed revenue, their small scale means that the cost of packaging, labor, and transportation eats away at those gains.

Right now, fans of Delta Beer Lab and those who just want to support small local businesses can pitch in by stopping into the taproom (167 E. Badger Rd. in Madison) for four-packs, frozen pizzas from Pep's Drafthaus, merchandise, and gift certificates. Pio also encourages folks to "patronize the wonderful liquor stores and markets that we work with...they are also small businesses worried about these uncertain times." If you haven't already, Pio urges people to form "buy local" habits now and then keep them when the pandemic is over.

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities, and small businesses keep money in their local economies," he says. "We're all inefficient (in a good way); we don't have corporate offices with professionals that serve hundreds or thousands of retailers across the country or world. Each small business needs bookkeepers, accountants, attorneys, marketing support, human resources talent, and sales people, in addition to the staff that produce products and a team that interacts with guests/users/customers/patrons. Revenue comes into small businesses, and then we send it right back out into the local economy. We appreciate the support when you have the choice between a small and independent craft beer or an internationally owned macro beer. It truly makes a difference." ■

LGBTQ Organizations Update

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

Reported by Stacy Harbaugh

WHILE OUR FAMILIES ADJUST to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, LGBTQ+ organizations and companies have radically shifted the way they serve the community and how they do business. Here are some updates on how they have adapted and shown their resilience.

NEWS
Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT Offices in Milwaukee and Appleton closed to the public and HIV and



Out Professional Engagement Network

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OPEN provides education and information resources regarding issues of gender and sexual diversity and other issues of professional concern to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBTQ) individuals who live in the Madison and Dane County, Wisconsin area.

MISSION

OPEN welcomes diverse LGBTQ+ and allied professionals to share perspectives and experiences in connecting, developing, and building a vibrant community.

VISION

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SPRING ELECTION RESULTS: LGBTQ-IDENTIFIED CANDIDATES AMONG THOSE RUNNING



JoCasta Zamarripa will replace Bob Donovan on the Milwaukee Common Council and is both the first Latina and the first out member of the LGBT community to serve on the city council. She was endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign. Zamarripa currently serves state Assembly District 8 and is the first Latina and bisexual to serve in the state legislature.

José Rea ran as the first openly out trans non-binary candidate for the Dane County Board District 5 covering the south side of Madison. They previously ran for office in 2016 for a seat on the Madison Common Council and would have been the first Latinx person on the county board. The race, however, was won by Elena Haasl.

Max Prestigiacomo will serve as the youngest member ever elected to the Madison Common Council. Elected while a freshman at UW-Madison, 18-year old Prestigiacomo will serve as the District 8 alder. He has been active in state and local politics, was selected as a delegate to the United Nations Climate Summit, and was a leader in the youth climate strike movement.

Brett Blomme won the race for Circuit Court Judge, Branch 5 in Milwaukee. Blomme is the President and CEO of Milwaukee's Cream City Foundation, has worked with the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (now Vivent Health), and has been an attorney with the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office. He replaces Judge Paul C. Dedinsky who was appointed to office by former Governor Scott Walker. ■

ISTHMUS GOES DARK

Madison's weekly arts and entertainment newspaper, *Isthmus*, announced on March 19 it would go dark and stop publishing. The announcement came only a week after Governor Tony Evers declared a public health emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis. With the combination of tight budget margins in publishing, cancellations of events, the widespread closure of many restaurants and other businesses, and the sharp decline of advertising revenue, the independent weekly furloughed employees and stopped production.

The announcement sparked an outpouring of support from community leaders including Mayor **Satya Rhodes-Conway** and former *Isthmus* staff writers like **Kenneth Burns**. Though the print editions ended, writers continued to post articles online about local issues including the contentious April 7 election and presidential primary.

Editor **Judith Davidoff**, who had been featured on the cover of *Our Lives* magazine, and staff writer **Dylan Brogan** are coordinating a reader-sponsorship program to support editorial content during the shutdown. Before there was *Our Lives* magazine, *Isthmus* was a space for queer voices in Madison. ■

sexual health services shifted to Planned Parenthood, though HIV prevention and support services continued virtually, including coordination of emergency financial assistance for HIV+ people. Diverse & Resilient's anti-violence program, Room to be Safe, transformed into a virtual support network through hosting "Queer-antines!" or online discussion forums offering support on the topics of gender identity and expression, dating and intimacy, domestic and family violence or family homophobia or

transphobia, and dealing with emotional distress during the COVID-19 shutdown and isolation.

FAIR WISCONSIN The LGBTQ+ rights advocacy organization raised the most money in Community Shares of Wisconsin's Big Share campaign in early March. The Fair Wisconsin Education Fund's efforts raised over \$30,000. During the COVID-19 shutdown, Fair Wisconsin focused on advocacy for voting rights in the contentious spring elections and endorsements



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

of LGBTQ+friendly candidates.

FAMILY EQUALITY To support parents who are managing both work and family at home during the COVID-19 shutdown, Family Equality created The Neighborhood: A Virtual Hub for LGBTQ+ Families. The Neighborhood offered a calendar of activities from toddler dance parties to creative writing workshops for teens. The goal is to provide connections among families and decrease social isolation and uncertainty. Contact Family Equality to sign up for email updates, find future event announcements on Facebook, or watch activities on YouTube.

FREEDOM, INC. In early March, the group raised over \$24,000 in Community Shares of Wisconsin's Big Share fundraising campaign and was in the top five fundraising leaders. During the COVID-19 shutdown they advocated for safety and voting rights during the spring election, encouraged people to participate in the U.S. Census, and hosted virtual hangouts for youth. Virtual support through the Freedom Youth Helpline for Black, Southeast Asian, and LGBTQI youth is available via phone and text at (608) 716-3842 or through Facebook Messenger at Freedom Youth Squad.

FORGE FORGE held on-line events and set up a mutual-aid system for southeast Wisconsin's trans community where people could make requests for help or volunteer and donate. Their full-time staff advocates addressed an increase in requests for assistance to apply for public benefits and unemployment, housing, and other basic needs. You can find information about trans-specific emotional regulation skills for dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 on their blog, trans-survivors.com/blog.

GSAFE GSAFE's Celebration of Leadership dinner and fundraiser has been canceled, but the group is planning a virtual banquet and online silent auction on May 30. Supporters can contribute by buying a ticket and bidding on auction items at col2020.givesmart.com.

LGBT BOOKS TO PRISONERS A wishlist for books is available through A Room of One's Own Bookstore in Madison. The organization hosted an online webinar on writing letters to LGBTQ people who are incarcerated and continued to advocate for prison abolition, especially in light of the spread of the coronavirus and the vulnerability of the prison population.

THE LGBT CENTER OF SE WISCONSIN The center postponed events and shifted support groups online, but was considered an essential service and held open hours for those who needed peer sup-

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LOUD 'N UNCHAINED BLACK THEATER FESTIVAL POSTPONED



Madison's Loud 'N Unchained Black Theater Festival, originally scheduled for June, was postponed. Festival organizers are communicating with Broom Street Theater on new dates as they monitor public health guidance.

"Black people are being disproportionately impacted by this virus, so we need to be especially cautious about the health and safety of our community," said submissions coordinator Dana Pellebon. "Black artists need access, funding, and relevant education from teachers who look like them. That's why the festival is just postponed until it's safe to move forward. It's an important festival for our community, and we're not going to stop it from happening."

The festival received an even more diverse and intersectional range of submissions this year including LGBTQ+ voices, men and women, and church voices. While the festival is on hold, coordinators are staying in touch with each other and with submitters. Founder T. Banks continues to get support as an artist by continuing to do Loud n' Unchained poetry and workshops online and Pellebon is scheduled to be a presenter at the Infamous Mothers 2020 Talk Back virtual conference. ■

BRENT KYZER-MCHENRY NAMED NEXT ALLIANT ENERGY CENTER DIRECTOR



In early April, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi named Brent Kyzer-McHenry as a new director of the Alliant Energy Center. Kyzer-McHenry steps in to replace interim director and former Dane County board president Sharon Corrigan. He brings a corporate background, most recently having served as the communications director for the Dane County Regional Airport. ■

port, referrals or who were in crisis. The Center launched an Ace group in April and continued regular discussion meetings online.

PROUD THEATER Proud Theater canceled its 2020 season work with youth programs in Wausau, Green Bay, and Madison. Its parent organization, Art & Soul Innovations, is looking for volunteers to serve on its board. The group's goal is to raise \$20,000 in honor of their 20th anniversary. To contribute to Proud Theater's 20 for 20 Fund visit tinyurl.com/proud20for20.

TRANS LAW HELP WISCONSIN Though their April Name & Gender Change clinic was canceled, Trans Law Help's talk can be available as a video by contacting abby@translawhelp.com.

VIVENT HEALTH While Vivent Health offices closed for volunteers and walk-in appointments, their services shifted to a Radical Response mode. The Vivent food pantry offered one-month supply boxes for delivery or curbside pickup. The pharmacy made 30-day and 90-day prescriptions available for delivery and

QTPOC PRIDE

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

OUR LIVES is once again working to compile a celebratory list of queer people of color from across Wisconsin for our PRIDE issue, and we need your help!

For the past three years we've been proud of the growth of our QTPOC Pride List. We're proud to again have the help of a group of QTPOC leaders to compile and organize our 2020 QTPOC Pride feature this year. This group will help to further expand the reach of the list and they will again organize the QTPOC Pride space at OutReach's MAGIC Pride Festival on August 16.

If you are an LGBTQ person of color living in Wisconsin, we encourage you to participate in this feature! To do so, please complete the submission form at ourlivesmadison.com/qpocpride. We will be leaving the form open indefinitely, but for this year's list, please submit by June 1. Thank you! ■

packages of prevention products including PrEP prescriptions, condoms, or clean needles were made available in 30-day supplies. Though case managers could not provide home visits, many services shifted to online or phone support for legal, housing, or behavioral health counseling.

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER The Chamber shifted its focus to supporting member businesses' needs during the COVID-19 shutdown. Their regular Chamber On Tap and Coffee Connection events shifted online and educational webinars continued. For updates on their May and June events, visit wislgbtchamber.com.

AWARDS / RECOGNITION / GRANTS

Special thanks for those who do good.

COURAGE MKE Executive Director Brad Schlakowski received the Young Nonprofit Professionals' Network Greater Milwaukee Chapter's 2020 Distinguished Leader Award.

OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER Grants from the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, UW Health, Unity & Quartz will allow OutReach to give assistance to LGBTQ+ people facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis. For those who've been laid off or are facing food or housing insecurity, Willma's Fund can help. Contact OutReach weekdays from Noon to 7:00 p.m. to learn more.

STAFF / BOARD CHANGES

Who's moving on or moving into org leadership.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT D&R welcomes Willie Brown as a new Counseling, Testing and Referral Coordinator on the HIV prevention and care team. A resident of Racine, Willie has done prior prevention work at Vivent Health and 16th Street Community Health Center.

OUTREACH LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER OutReach welcomed Program Director Mark Hargrove, Jr., MSW. Mark previously was the Assistant Director of Racine's LGBT Center of SE WI. He has worked as a therapist, family case worker, and residence hall director in Milwaukee and Kenosha. He created an initiative called Colorful and Connected, a network to bring support professionals together for LGBTQ+ people of color in southeast Wisconsin.

OutReach also welcomed LGBTQ+ AODA Advocate Linda Lenzke. Linda has an educational background in journalism, communication arts and business, a long history of LGBTQ+ activism and involvement in the arts in Madison, and extensive experience in recovery work.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plan ahead to join in.

COURAGE MKE The Courage MKE Pageant: Indigo Ball, scheduled for March 21, was canceled. Courage MKE is working with contestants and the venue to reschedule. If you would like your ticket refunded until a date is determined, please email brad@couragemke.org.

OPEN The OPEN annual dinner and fundraiser, scheduled for March 13, was postponed. Members will be updated via email and social media when a new date is set.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN'S CHORUS The "Heroes & Villains" Cabaret fundraiser, scheduled for March 14, was postponed. If you purchased a ticket, your ticket will automatically be transferred to the new date once scheduled.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact PHMC at development_chair@perfectharmonychorus.org or (608) 571-7462 (PHMC).

MILWAUKEE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER The Center's programs have moved to virtual group support services. Contact a staff via email.

- **TGNC Support Group** – Mondays at 6:00 p.m., acorona@mkelgbt.org.
- **TGNCNB Youth Support Group and Mental Health Youth Support Group** – alternating Wednesdays 4:00 p.m., sborden@mkelgbt.org
- **Project Q** – Mondays and Thursdays 3:00 p.m., dwilliams@mkelgbt.org
- **FAB Support Group** – Wednesdays 6:00 p.m., ccarter@mkelgbt.org
- **LGBTQ+ Disability Support Group in partnership with IndependenceFirst** – Mondays from 2:30 p.m., ccarter@mkelgbt.org
- **Latinx LGBTQIA+ Support Group/ Creative Healing Series** – Thursdays 5:30 p.m., szapata@mkelgbt.org
- **Circles of Recovery (AODA) Support Group** – Tuesdays 5:00 p.m., tdelagarza@mkelgbt.org

MILWAUKEE PRIDE PrideFest, originally scheduled for June 4-7 is postponed. Alternative dates could be considered for later in the summer, possibly on Summerfest grounds.

TRANS LAW HELP WISCONSIN Barring future cancellations, Trans Law Help will host Name & Gender Change clinics on July 18 and October 24. Their April clinic is available as a video by contacting abby@translawhelp.com.

VIVENT HEALTH Vivent's Camp Bingo scheduled for March 22 was postponed. Anyone who purchased tickets can contact development@viventhealth.org for a refund. ■



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DISABILITY RIGHTS | POLITICS | WISCONSIN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Making Space for “Invisible People”

Gay disability rights advocate **Adam Brabender** chats with OutReach Board President **Jill Nagler** about his work founding the the Wisconsin Democratic Party's first Disability Caucus, and his own invisible disabilities.

YOU'VE BEEN POLITICALLY ACTIVE FOR A FEW DECADES NOW, INCLUDING BIDS FOR DANE COUNTY BOARD AND DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE, AND YOU FOUNDED THE DISABILITY CAUCUS THROUGH THE WISCONSIN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (WDP) LAST JUNE. WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT POLITICAL GOALS, AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO SEE IN 2020?

A great goal for the Democratic Party would be to elect more people with disabilities and diverse backgrounds to reflect the reality of the population in Wisconsin and throughout the U.S. About 25 percent of us are people with disabilities, both visible and invisible. Relatively few are in public office. I would say that we want more disabled voices heard everywhere, and to see the policies of ADA, the American Disabilities Act, fully implemented. As for myself, I would love to run for political office again so I could be a voice for disabled LGBTQ people who might also want to run. I would model my campaign and goals after Senator Tammy Baldwin and Danica Roem, Virginia state representative, who I consider among my role models. Rep. Anderson, a state representative from Wisconsin, would be one of these people, too.



people with mental illness, advocates to the Wisconsin legislature to reduce the stigma of mental illness. The Autism Society of Wisconsin helps advocate for people on the spectrum, and UW-White-water is well known for helping people with disabilities who want to earn a college degree and better their lives.

CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE IDEAS OR PROJECTS THE DISABILITY CAUCUS HAS BEEN WORKING ON IN TERMS OF ACCESS AND INCLUSION?

Because this is the first-ever Disability Caucus for the State of Wisconsin, we are still under construction. However, our leaders and members work actively to make access and inclusion bigger parts of every community discussion. Our team consists of advocates who have been fighting for access and inclusion in their daily lives and careers for most of their lives. We are all disabled, which makes it easy to recruit people who are passionate. We have been working hard to assist voters to register, get to the polls, and have a voice in their community.

We are also working hard with committees of the Democratic National Committee to make sure the 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee is as inclusive as we can make it.

YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT HOW ASPECTS OF YOUR IDENTITY HAVE MADE YOU “INVISIBLE” OR MADE PEOPLE TREAT YOU DIFFERENTLY IN A WAY THAT MINIMIZED YOUR LIVED EXPERIENCES. CAN YOU TALK MORE ABOUT THAT AND ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY TO VISIBILITY?

By invisible disabilities, I mean illnesses such as autism, bipolar, and schizophrenia that are not readily visible to other people. We're not using a white cane, a special

WHAT ARE YOUR IDENTITIES, AND WHAT DOES REPRESENTATION OF THOSE IDENTITIES MEAN TO YOU—BOTH IN GRASSROOTS POLITICAL ORGANIZING AND WITHIN DIFFERENT GRASSROOTS GROUPS THAT ADVOCATE FOR FOLKS WHO SHARE YOUR IDENTITIES?

I identify as a gay man with a mental illness, autism, and an undefined genetic disorder. I don't find many people organizing specifically to all my identities. I can name a few organizations that advocate for different identities, including the Victory Fund Institute, which advocates for people in the LGBTQ community to run for public office. The Yahara House, a Madison clubhouse for

walker, or a wheelchair like those with visible disabilities. Just to look at us you probably would not know that we are disabled, so it is easy to overlook us because our disabilities are not obvious. I am one of those with invisible disabilities because I have autism and a mental illness. I think that people with invisible disabilities have to fight and advocate harder for their accommodations and services, which is what I have been doing by forming this caucus and by encouraging others to fight for their rights, too.

AND IN RECOGNIZING THE ASPECTS OF YOUR IDENTITY THAT HAVE GIVEN YOU ACCESS TO MORE VISIBILITY, BEING WHITE AND A MAN, HOW HAVE YOU USED YOUR VISIBILITY TO GIVE VOICE TO THOSE WHO ARE STILL FIGHTING FOR VISIBILITY (E.G., DISABLED PEOPLE OF COLOR, DISABLED LGBTQ+ PEOPLE OF COLOR)?

I know I'm a white cis male; however, with invisible disabilities I understand what it is like to feel disenfranchised and disposable, which is why I advocate. It is what drives me to amplify the voices of all people who face adversity every day of their lives.

We put an article in our constitution for a Diversity Officer when we were creating our caucus. Our Diversity Officer is a woman of color, single mother, daughter of an immigrant parent, disabled woman who works very hard to bring intersectionality education to her local schools and community, as well as to the Democratic Party. I have tried to be an ally to the Diversity Officer in as many ways as I can since we have been working together. I have also used my position to lift up her voice and others on the executive committee. We truly have a special team ready to make the changes we want to see.

IN WHAT OTHER WAYS HAVE YOU INCORPORATED INTERSECTIONALITY IN YOUR ORGANIZING?

Our caucus and its members reflect such a wide group of “invisible people” that even in our unity we make a statement about diversity. Our goal is to be seen, heard, and united.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU WHO WANTS TO GET INVOLVED AND BE MORE VISIBLE?

Never give up fighting for what you believe. You have to fight for yourself because no one else is going to do your fighting for you. Our caucus is giving us each group support so we don't have to fight alone.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL/DID YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF WHO WAS TOLD THAT THEY COULDN'T ACCOMPLISH WHAT YOU HAVE AND ARE ACCOMPLISHING?

Professionals told me when I was young that I would not be able to live on my own and that I would not amount to anything. But my parents did not give up on me. They advocated for me every step of the way. And, I never gave up on myself and kept making progress. I soon realized that I was very independent, resourceful, and resilient. I've progressed much farther than anyone thought I would, including myself. I just get up every day and keep plugging away, one day at a time. That's all anyone can do.

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH READERS OF OUR LIVES MAGAZINE?

It is difficult for me daily to live with my disabilities, and I realize it will be difficult the rest of my life. I still dream about having a partner, a family, a house, and a great job, but I also realize that may not come true because of my disabilities. ■



JILL NAGLER is white, queer, trans, non-binary, disabled, and working class. They spend their time gaining education on the issues of systemic violence toward marginalized persons, while serving as President of the Board of Directors at OutReach, Madison's LGBTQ Community Center. They're also a member of Disability Pride and Groundwork.



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SPORTS HOCKEY TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

Bringing Their Whole Self to Every Game

After struggling with impostor syndrome in other leagues, **Avery Cordingley** has found a home in the **Madison Gay Hockey Association**, where their inclusion is authentically celebrated.



I AM A TRANSGENDER HOCKEY PLAYER.

I am trans and a hockey player. I am a hockey player who happens to be trans?

My gender identity shouldn't matter when I tell people I'm a hockey player, but so often in sports, it becomes the only thing that matters. People fixate on an athlete's genitals and fail to see the athlete as a whole person who just wants to play the game they love. USA hockey may have a trans-inclusive policy on the books, but players are still required to select between the two binary genders when registering. How do you pick when both feel like a lie?

As a nonbinary transgender athlete, sports can be a difficult setting. In a sport like hockey, "difficult" can easily morph into a heap of conflicting emotions. The gendered nature of the sport often leads to me feeling like an unwelcome impostor wherever I play.

When I play with men, I pull my gear

I don't rush through changing in the locker room; if anything, I linger, relishing a feeling of comfort I've so rarely felt before in locker room settings.

on rapidly, shoving down fear that one of them may notice there is no bulge in my underwear. The likelihood that I mention my pronouns, much less enforce them, is miniscule at best. I spend those games trying to reassure myself that I belong. *Your voice is low enough to blend in. That stubble coating your chin will quell any suspicions. Cis people don't question others' assumed cis-ness unless given good reason.*

When I play with women, my trans-ness shoves itself to the forefront, demanding it be noticed and addressed. As I grow more comfortable in my body, I grow less comfortable

among the teammates I am happiest playing with. Walking into rink after rink, my anxiety treads a well-worn path, summoning my equally well-worn defensive mantra to the surface. *You've met some of these people before. They want you here. You shaved last night. No one will scrutinize your chest under this baggy hoodie. The other team isn't going to question your hormone levels on sight. Just play the damn game.*

When I came out in college and began contemplating medical transition, I also began wondering how such steps would impact hockey. The spring before I came out, I had stepped into a captain role on my college team. I spent that summer with a D3 girls hockey program, practicing among some of the most stereotypical cisgender girls I'd met to date in Minnesota. It was over this summer that I began to unpack and analyze my unhappiness and discomfort. I bought my first binder. I let my housemate buzz my hair. I googled "top surgery" for the first time.

I didn't want to jeopardize the joy I found in hockey, nor did I want to let my team down, but fighting tears or rage every time I was reminded of what lay beneath my clothing wasn't a sustainable way to live. I needed to act.

Fast forward a year and a half, and a very different person arrived in Madison, WI. I was finally seeing a body I thought I could love in the mirror, and my confidence had grown along with muscle and facial hair. But in graduating college, I left behind a team that had accepted me as me without a care for how I looked or sounded, and for the first time in recent memory, I didn't have a place to play hockey. I spent a lonely summer coaxing myself into the gym and googling ice rinks around Madison, waiting for fall and the chance to join a league a friend from college had told me about.

The MGHA has changed my entire perspective on Madison. Immersing myself into a community of passionate and welcoming people has given me reason to begin

thinking of Madison as a home. I've found people who, even after only a single season knowing them, I think could be friends for life. Playing hockey here, I don't feel the old urge to tailor my underwear selections or color of stick tape based on how accepting the league seems to be. Here, there is no question. My teammates would be disappointed if I didn't bring my whole self to every game.

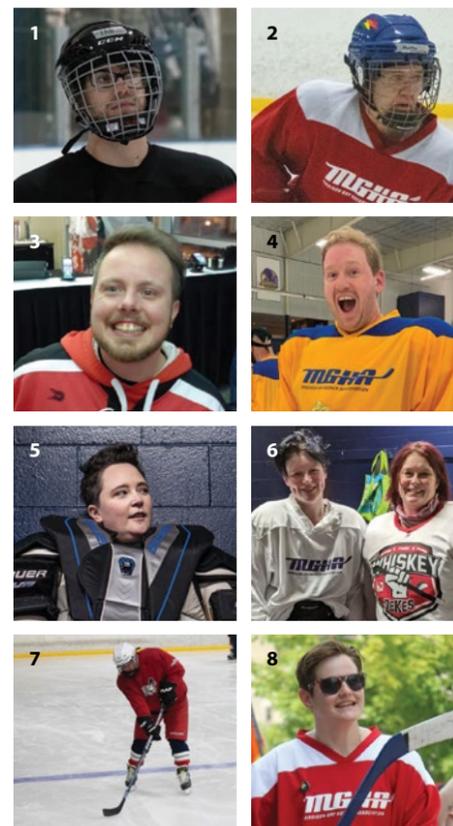
The MGHA has changed my entire perspective on Madison. Immersing myself into a community of passionate and welcoming people has given me reason to begin thinking of Madison as a home.

Hockey has always brought me joy, but with the MGHA, I get that and so much more. I'm vocal on the ice, communicating with my teammates in earshot of the ref. I don't rush through changing in the locker room; if anything, I linger, relishing a feeling of comfort I've so rarely felt before in locker room settings. It isn't unusual for me to be among the last to leave as the rink staff shut the lights off around us.

MGHA hockey means a place where I can shed the usual cloak of trepidation I feel walking into a hockey rink. I know that there, I'll see people who know that I am transgender who simply file that fact away in the same file as my wild-pattereded shorts — as a fact about me that bears knowing if only so they can support me when the world would beat me down.



2020 ESSAY WRITERS ON WHAT THE MADISON GAY HOCKEY ASSOCIATION MEANS TO THEM



1 IAN LEACH "It seemed a daunting task to show that I wasn't 'good enough' at something to anyone. It became much easier when my group of never-skaters were so supportive of one another."

2 MARTHA HANSEN "Now age 57, I was feeling like the world's oldest rookie, but as I began the preseason beginner clinics for the second time, I found myself welcomed back into the league with open arms."

3 ANDREW "ALPHA" BRAUSEN "It's not just about being LGBTQ+, it's not just about hockey, it's about creating a place that's safe for all."

4 BRYAN ZARAMBA "While my friendships in the league were still forming, it was my progress as an athlete that surprised and sustained me."

5 GRAYSON SCHULTZ "I have a world of support within arm's reach."

6 JULIE ANDERSON "I look around and see an amazing community that I know my child will be safe in."

7 KAROLIINA BURSIAIN "I thought about it and decided: Why not? A new life calls for doing new things."

8 NAT CARLSTON "Playing with the MGHA was the first time on a team that I felt so accepted and a part of something bigger."

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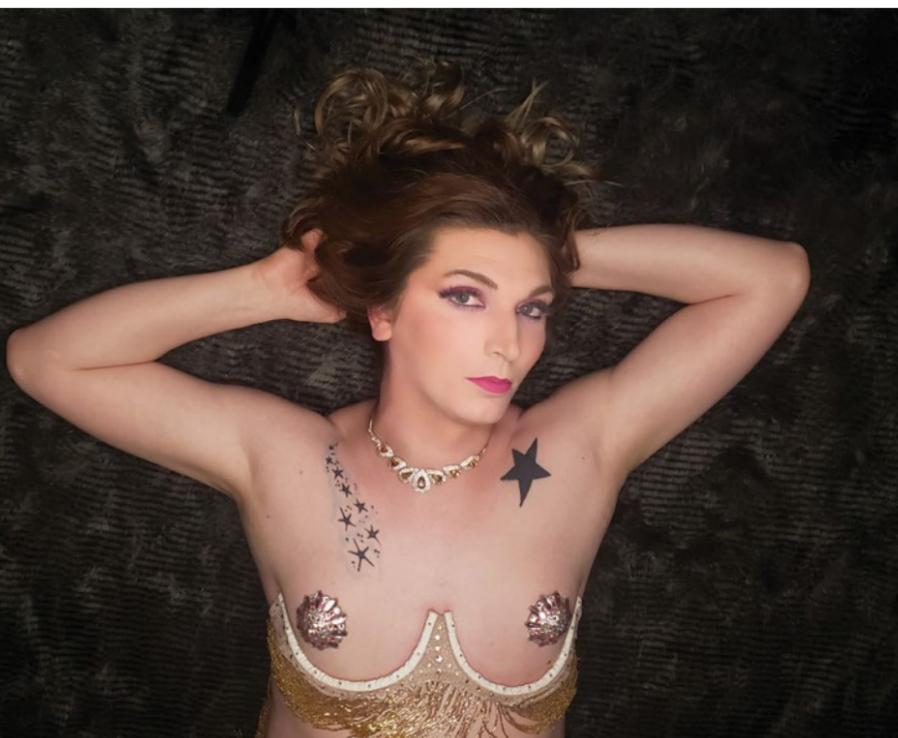
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BURLESQUE TRANSGENDER NIGHTLIFE THIRD SPACES

Finding Trans-ness through the Art of Tease

Mercury Stardust unpacks transitioning through burlesque—an art form centered on body awareness—and the significance of having queer spaces to explore it in.



AS I SIT HERE AND WRITE, it's hard to focus on anything other than the seemingly collapsing world around us. Every minute of every hour of the day seems to have a looming sense of dread attached to it. So much of what we knew to be true has changed, the certainty around us that provided some form of safety has in many ways revealed itself to be flawed and full of holes. When you aren't worried about when or if your basic needs will be met, you are freed to think internally about yourself. There is no time left in the day to question gender, when all the time is spent on surviving in our new normal.

If we weren't saturated with this current experience, I would suggest this feels like a parable of sorts. One that is a small piece of what it feels like to be trans in America every day. The constant turmoil, the ground pulled out from underneath you, the severe isolation. All of that are traits so many trans humans face on a seemingly daily basis. For many of us, dealing with that trauma can manifest in various ways.

A CONFUSING WAY TO TRANSITION

From a bird's eye view, the idea of a transwoman in the middle of her transition performing burlesque may be confusing. Trust me when I say, it has been much more confusing for me. I was a well-established performer before I announced to the world that I am a woman. Burlesque has been both a way to come to terms with my identity and a way to hide that identity. Somewhere in the midst

of all that the truth is, I didn't find burlesque, burlesque found me.

Long before I was known as the Ambassador of Cheese and Tease, I lived the life of a young man who was lost in a world populated with strict gender roles. I stumbled into burlesque through the guidance of strong, progressive, fierce women who performed all around the world. They encouraged everyone around them to be themselves, get naked, and have a good time. Unbannounced to me this was the beginning of my transition; it was this slow incline of expression led by the need for affirmation. I needed other people to tell me that I was okay to do traditionally feminine things. As a transwoman, seeking validation feels less like an ego-driven pursuit and more of a necessity.

Within the neo-burlesque world, the uniqueness of one's self is rewarded with praise and approval. The more in-tune with your authentic self, the more likely the audience will connect and support you. In pursuit of this, I slowly unlocked buried truths of my own, concealed by the veil of masculinity I wore since childhood. I first changed

my hair color to blue as a way to move forward from my theater background. Then wore flamboyant costumes to fit with the rest of the burlesque community, this was a departure from my random and sloppy costumes I had worn in the past. I covered my face in make-up to feel more otherworldly alongside my drag performers. I got tattoos of stars to go along with my new celestial name. With

All of the trials and tribulations that littered my journey made me keen on helping others on theirs.

each step, I peeled back a piece of the mask. I was not only revealing parts of my body to the audience, I was slowly revealing my trans-ness.

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

The support and acknowledgement of this was overwhelming at times. People would use phrases such as, "I'm seeing you for the first time," or "You look like you're in your own element," and, "You've grown into yourself," all things I would later hear again after I would come out. However, at this time, I continued to feel uncomfortable in my own surroundings. I referred to myself as a guest in the art form, as a cis-perceived male who was operating in a field predominantly run by women.

I constantly acknowledged how I wasn't comfortable, and when I taught burlesque classes there was always an air of apologeticness. "I'm sorry that I'm the one who is teaching" was never uttered but always in the back of my mind. Teaching women to accept themselves when I myself could not acknowledge the proverbial elephant in the room, was hard to grapple with. I would utter the phrase, "You are enough," to students to help make them see that they didn't need all the glitz and glam, that being proudly them was all that they needed. This hypocrisy ate at me, it drove itself into my mind and grew into a self loathing.

WHEN DID I KNOW?

Everyone always wants to know when I first knew I was trans. I could use the trans trope and say I tried my mother's clothes on as a kid. Or that my favorite toys were barbies. Or I could say I watched that episode of *The Jeffersons* where a transwoman appeared on screen. There isn't a singular moment, it was all the moments. Including every time I got up on stage, I would hear emcees talk about my male-ness. They would say, "Oh ladies, don't worry we have something for you, too," or "Did you know boys did burlesque?" all these things were how the world perceived me. I was the "guy" who got naked and was funny. That was the identity others had for me, it was comfortable, it was safe, and it was acceptable. IT WAS NOT ME.

This feeling crept up into my brain over the course of 30 years. I was that kid who wore my mother's clothes, who loved barbies, and saw that episode of *The Jeffersons*. None of that was the dawning of my trans-ness. It's all certainly a part of me coming to terms with who I am. But there is not a Disney moment, there are no violins playing or confetti popping. When I first uttered the words, "I think I am trans" to my spouse, I was full of anxiety. It was a conversation full of anger, and confusion, none of which came from my spouse, it was all from me. I was shouting about not wanting to be trans, and about how I just wanted to be "normal." I was the villain in my own fairytale. My spouse accepted me and loved me from the very first moment I spoke the words. My friends, all of whom are accomplished burlesque performers, accepted me without a question. I wasn't interrogated to prove I was a woman, they just knew it to be true. Burlesque was a way for me to surround myself with people who all wanted to be authentic.

CONTRADICTION

The true contradiction though, is that I was a renowned "Boylesque" performer (The male equivalent to burlesque performer, and no, I do not like the term). I won regional, national, and international awards, and even had the honor to compete for the "Best of Boylesque" at the Burlesque Hall of Fame weekender in Las Vegas. It is the most prestigious burlesque competition in the world. I was one of only five people competing in the category and was from the smallest city among 60 performers from around the globe. I ultimately lost, but ironically I lost to the very first AFAB performer ever to compete in the category and win. I was there on stage when history was made, and gender roles were being broken down right in front of me.

I built my career around blue hair, with a pompadour, goatee, and male comic antics. I attached myself so strongly to my "maleness" that trying to navigate how to move forward was extremely difficult. When you are in the middle of a career defined by gender, how do you navigate that if you are trans? What was once a way for me to explore my gender, was now a way to keep me from accepting my gender.

This battle waged on for over a year. I tried various methods to join my stage persona with my authentic self. I went as far as trying

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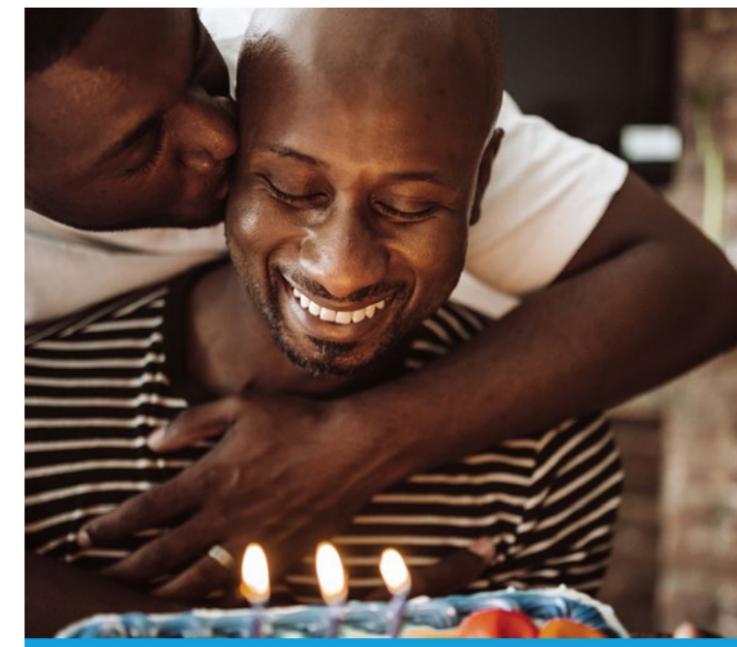
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Patrons got to see me take my estrogen tablets on stage every week, where I went over the changes my body was experiencing and finished by raising the question, "If all of that changes from this little blue pill, doesn't that mean that gender isn't binary?"

to view myself as a Drag King, even donning a full face of drag make-up. None of that felt right, it was as if I was leaning into a lie I built for myself. I had the support of all my friends, but I still lacked a safe and consistent space to call home. I needed physical walls to help support the emotional ones I had built.

ANNOUNCING I'M TRANS

This space developed through a weekly burlesque show. No matter what was occurring in my world, this consistency of a place to communicate my thoughts became crucial. We ran the show in a venue that was a traditional Madison college bar. We were most definitely the queerest event in that space every week. Three months into that adventure, I wore my first dress on stage and announced to a room full of strangers I was trans.

We had effectively outgrown that space and needed one that represented our goals as a company but also allowed us to feel safe in our skin. This led us to a venue I knew very well, FIVE Nightclub. Much like I was beginning to rebrand my stage persona, we rebranded our weekly show as FIVE STAR TEASE, where every



body is a burlesque body. It's rare for transwomen to have a powerful platform to speak their minds on a consistent basis. I finally had mine. All of the trials and tribulations that littered my journey made me keen on helping others on theirs.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Every single performance became a way to express to others that they were not alone. We had performers of all sizes, ages, colors, and gender identities represented on a weekly basis on our stage. Representation matters, and in turn it cultivated a space filled with audience members who were all invested in our authentic selves.

We didn't lie to them, and in return they felt comfortable enough to explore themselves with us.

We saw trans humans coming out as themselves for the first time. I developed a portion of the show we called "pronoun check" where I went around on the mic to a few people in the audience and asked for their pronouns. Patrons got to see me take my estrogen tablets on stage every week, where I went over the changes my body was experiencing and finished by raising the question, "If all of that changes from this little blue pill, doesn't that mean that gender isn't binary?" Over 60 of these shows were done at FIVE up until the pandemic.

QUARAN-TEASE

Where many performers and owners felt the need to slow down, something inside was triggered by the lack of control. This personal-ity of resilience I forged for my own survival honed in on a new endeavor. We took what made our live shows special and then brought it to an even more vulnerable place, inside our own spaces, inside our homes. This was an online burlesque show called Quaran-Tease. Without missing a single week's performance, we produced an 80-minute show with performers from all around the world contributing a pre-recorded performance set to royalty-free music.

Just as so much of this story has shown, we evolved that quick response into something more than just a substitute of what were all missing. We gave it its own identity, called Cinema Vertitease. With this version, we have chosen to be more cinematic and embrace the new medium rather than be an imitation of a live event. The correlation to this entire story with my own trans journey is an eye opener. There seems to be a pattern of evolution, acceptance, and growth.

However I am able, I choose to be the most vulnerable. A lot of talk and work has gone into explaining safe spaces, but I believe more now than ever, the safest space is whatever we choose to create. Be it our chosen family, the artistic community, the physical queer spaces we inhabit, or even the comfort of our own homes. The one common denominator is the seeking vulnerability. It's in that effort that has led me to be a burlesque performer who happens to be a transwoman. Naked, loud, and proud for all the strangers to see. ■

Brief Tease of Burlesque History

FOR THOSE UNINITIATED with burlesque performance, otherwise known as the art of striptease, it is an art form that has been in the background of American culture for well over a century. Flourishing in the 20s, soared well into the 40s and 50s with famous pin-up models, such as Bettie Page, Tempest Storm, and Gypsy Rose Lee leading the way. So much of fashion and what was trendy back during the early part of the 20th century was established through these women.

By the early 70s, burlesque was an aging art form that was getting pushed out of the cultural lexicon. The contributions made by these women were largely forgotten, and burlesque was dormant for decades. The early Internet days of the 90s saw a resurgence of the art performed in dive bars all across America, slowly gaining speed until the neo-burlesque movement was in full swing by the middle of the 2000s.

When you think burlesque, you may imagine feather fans, boas, and corsets. This is still a staple in any performer's wardrobe, but the art form has shifted dramatically from one that was focused on titillating the audience with slow stripteases to one focused on self empowerment and embracing one's unique beauty on stage. It has evolved into an art form saturated with progressive humans all looking to get sassy while being a little naked.

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Lawyering Up

QLaw has been increasing the presence and visibility of LGBTQ+ people in UW-Madison's law school and legal profession for more than 40 years. We chat with **Matthew Giguere**, QLaw's current Vice President.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF QLaw?

QLaw strives to make the law school and legal profession a more open, hospitable, and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students and allies. QLaw has been at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School, in some form, since the 1970s. QLaw was officially recognized in 2008 and has worked unrelentingly to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in the law school. Since that time, our organization has grown exponentially with more than 70 LGBTQ+ persons and allies who are a part of our organization.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE LGBTQ-IDENTIFIED LAWYERS?

While American acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals has grown, only 2.99% of practicing attorneys openly identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender according to NALP statistics. The majority of these attorneys are summer associates, highlighting the fact that LGBTQ+ presence in law firms is growing. While encouraging, we have further to go in being truly equitable and visible in the legal profession.

Having more LGBTQ+ lawyers openly identify provides a beacon for those considering law school and law students entering the legal profession. For those considering law school, it boosts their confidence to know there is someone who has gone through a similar journey. Similarly, openly identifying lawyers can serve as mentors for LGBTQ+ persons beginning their careers. Many law students still question whether or not it's safe to be "out" on their resume, and many lawyers continue to hide their identities in the workplace. Having visibility in firms helps ease the tension for LGBTQ+ individuals, whose identity is always in the back of their mind.

HOW DOES QLaw SUPPORT LGBTQ LAW STUDENTS?

This year, our organizational mission focused on collaboration, inclusion, and community building. We spoke truth to Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers by challenging their discriminatory hiring practices, updated our law school bathroom signage, held a Transgender Legal Issues Panel, and added self-determined pronouns to our law school profiles as part of our inclusion initiatives. We collaborated with multiple organizations across campus and in the community to establish our Distinguished Lecture series, for which we welcomed an attorney from Kenya who is working to decriminalize homosexuality, and held a panel on employment discrimination. We continue to grow and serve our membership through social events and final review sessions, including our annual QLaw GAYla in February with guest Mario White.

WHAT DREW YOU TO BECOME AN ORGANIZER FOR QLaw?

Like many in our community, I struggled with actualizing my identity. After coming to terms with my identity, I realized there were others who are on an even more complex identity journey. It is our job as future lawyers to advocate for and empower the voiceless in our LGBTQ+ community.

There have been many recent stories that illustrate the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ+ folks in our community, such as an immigrant youth who was forced to "work the gay away" in their family's construction business, a child who was dragged from the back of their family's vehicle, and a young man left toothless after being beaten. These stories propelled me to join law school and QLaw. I realized my queer identity could provide an empathetic lens from which to view the legal system, and to serve those who may feel they are voiceless.

As someone who has worked for much of my life in the hospitality industry, I began by serving QLaw the best way I knew how, by hosting our annual GAYla. I met our speaker, Hon. Ron Albers, a U.W. Law Alum ('71) who shared stories of what law school was like for LGBTQ+ folks in the 1970s. This inspired me to attend the LGBT Bar LEAD Academy, where I received a crash course on LGBTQ+ legal history. Working alongside our executive board, we expanded our annual programming from two events to 10 the following year. We established our QLaw Distinguished Lecture Series and grew our annual QLaw GAYla, raising funds for our organization and for LGBTQ+ law student scholarships.

WHAT AREA OF LAW ARE YOU STUDYING?

As the grandson of a dairy farmer, and someone who has worked in the restaurant industry for many years, I have focused my research interests on food and agriculture law. Last summer, I had the pleasure of researching a range of food systems for the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. This has motivated me to seek innovative solutions in making our food system more economically and environmentally sustainable. I believe our food system should represent those who grow, produce, and serve our food. Often those who grow our world's food supply are disproportionately going hungry or getting paid the least. Our own dairy crisis in Wisconsin is an example of the challenge we face in creating an equitable system for the nation's smallholder farmers. Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, we are witnessing those in food service, our nation's restaurant owners and workers, facing a test of their economic sustainability. I hope that my work in the legal profession will continue to provide empowerment for those working in the food system, from farmers to small business owners to service personnel.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A QUEER PERSON INTERESTED IN LAW?

You have a home at the law school and in the legal profession. Contrary to the statistics, we are here, and we are queer. If you are questioning whether law is the right career for you, it probably is. You may want to work on LGBTQ+ issues, or you may want to focus on a different area entirely. Either way, your queer identity will be an asset from which to view our legal system. As a minority group within the legal profession, you will be able to provide a sense

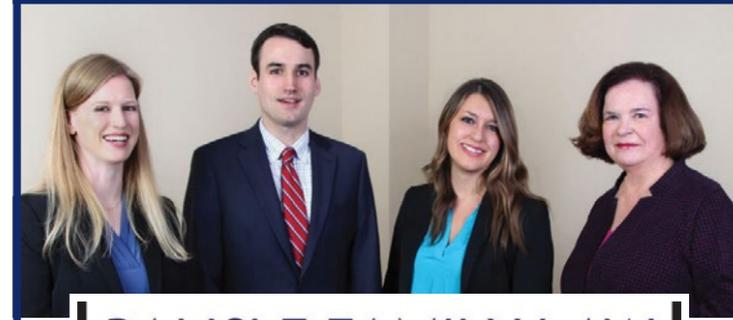


FEBRUARY 28 QLaw GAYla at Best Western Park Hotel



of empathy to your clients simply because of your lived experience. Your identity should never stop you from applying to law school. If considering law school, email us at mgiguere@wisc.edu. Please also attend the QLaw GAYla next February to learn more. ■

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Dino Maniaci and Jason Hoke inside D'Vino on King St.



Treasured Heritage

Dino Maniaci shares the family traditions and culinary inspirations behind D'Vino.

RESTAURANTS | FAMILY TRADITIONS | IMMIGRANT HERITAGE

GROWING UP IN MILWAUKEE as a blond-haired, blue-eyed boy with a big Italian name wasn't easy. My father's family was Sicilian with dark hair and olive complexion, about as distant as possible from the strong German features that I inherited from my mother's side. I grew up Lutheran in a very Catholic world rich with tradition, both religious and familial. Holidays were feasts that began with preparations of special dishes and desserts, often accompanied by stories of the old days and "remember when" scenarios that included bootlegging and running moonshine under the guise of delivering Linco bleach to Chicago during the Capone era. While my German heritage supplied sauerkraut, beer, and wurst; it was my Italian family that impressed me with the important role of food, wine, and tradition in our daily lives.

The synergy of my Italian heritage met Jason's classic French training, and we developed a culinary language that is the basis of D'Vino today.

St. Joseph's Day was a feast celebrated in my paternal grandmother's family, especially since Joseph was the patron saint of their village, Casteldaccia, Sicily. This event marked the beginning of spring and an elaborate altar of food—presented as an offering to the saint, blessed by the local priest, and shared with the community—all to honor St. Joseph. Marked by a special meat-free pasta with sardines in tomato sauce, this dish was topped with toasted bread crumbs, the bread having been blessed by the priest and saved to be scattered throughout the year during stormy weather. This offering was a call to the birds that surrounded St. Joseph, imploring him to stop the storm and bring sunshine.

These traditions—the food, the elaborate presentations, the stories and history—took root deep in my soul as I embraced each colorful mo-

ment, taste, and smell. Spending the weekend at my Nana's meant the aroma of onions cooking early Sunday morning before the sugo rosso (red sauce) was made. If we timed it right, we could enter the kitchen just as the meatballs were being added to the sauce, and Nana would give a sample to each of us grandkids. Sunday dinners brought spaghetti, meatballs, bread, roast chicken, vegetables, pies, cakes, cream puffs, and cookies to the table. Holidays meant octopus, squid, and cannoli—feasts that would go on for days, marked by dishes that signified not only special times of the year, but also momentous occasions and family pride.

My mother, a young, blond German girl, married my dad in 1957 when she was 17. She found herself surrounded by a strong, matriarchal society that included my Nana and her mother, Nana Peppina, along with two aunts (my grandmother's sisters). They all kept these traditions, these dishes, these foods and stories alive—and on the table for family and friends. While her non-Italian presence was, at first, an uneasy one, my mother soon became part of the preparation and continuation of the Italian-American heritage as she learned to cook for my dad. My great-grandmother told her: "If you're going to be married to Nunzio, you must know how to cook the things he likes."

EARLY CULINARY INTEREST

Fast forward to the mid 1960s: my grandfather's Milwaukee pizza place was called "Rudy's Pizzeria." I was given a ball of dough and the freedom of the tiny kitchen to make whatever I wanted. My culinary streak was activated. Throughout the next decades that included a first job at 15 (working in a pizza place in a bowling alley); an early partnership in a restaurant; employment in a deli and catering business in Green Bay; and ownership for 20+ of a graphic design, marketing, and advertising firm, cooking was always a hobby I shared with family and friends.

SYNERGY WITH JASON

During the 1980s, I spent half my time in Manhattan, running the design business, while often traveling back to Madison. In 2005, I met

Top, from left to right: Augie Maniaci (Dino's grandfather) outside of Rudy's Pizzeria circa 1960s. Drink tokens from Pop Maniaci's Canadian Club circa 1940 (wallpaper in bathroom at D'Vino). Nano Nunzio Maniaci. Nano Nunzio, Nana Rose, and sons.



Jason Hoke who was then living in Washington, D. C. After studying at L'École de Cuisine, Jason worked as executive chef for a catering firm specializing in embassy events, and then apprenticed under Patrick O'Connell whose "Inn at Little Washington" (in Virginia's hunt country) contains the restaurant that is one of the world's best, with a three-star Michelin rating. Here Jason was part of the team that perfected an innovative approach to classic French cuisine. We shared many interests, embarking on travel filled with food and wine adventures. Within a month of meeting, we spent a few weeks in Spain, staying in an old farmhouse, shopping at local markets, and cooking for friends. The synergy of my Italian heritage met Jason's classic French training, and we developed a culinary language that is the basis of D'Vino today.

While the "wine" of my youth was either red or beer, we've gotten to know our way around a wine list after traveling throughout the U.S., as well as trips to Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. On a recent visit to Italy to see the famous truffle-hunting Italian lagotto dogs at work, we were lucky enough to spend time in some small, family-owned wineries in Piemonte (the Piedmont), a region known for its sophisticated wines and food.

Jason's culinary career stood alongside his lifelong passion for breeding and handling pure-bred dogs. After moving to Madison in 2006, Jason and I opened "SPAWOOF," one of the first doggy daycare centers in the area. Jason also began pursuing his dream of becoming a professional judge for the American Kennel Club, and quickly became officially registered to serve as an AKC judge for close to 100 distinct breeds. He is now one of the most widely qualified (and youngest) of the AKC judges.

WORLD TRAVEL

The combination of worldwide travel to dog shows, with visits to vineyards and Michelin-starred restaurants—exploring, tasting, and absorbing culinary cultures—fed my desire to open a restaurant of my own. During a trip to Sicily with my family, we spent time in the villages where my great-grandparents were born and lived. Experiencing the rich, culinary history that my ancestors knew, and enjoying numerous wine tastings in the countryside, the idea for "Dino Vino" took shape.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

In 2007, Jason and I opened WOOF'S, a frolicking, neighborhood gay bar on King Street in Madison. When we had an opportunity to take over an adjacent space, we thought it a perfect time to create a wine bar with a "cichetti" concept. Patterned after the "bacari" we'd visited in Venice, D'Vino emulates these neighborhood spots that serve small plates of local fare with meat, cheeses, olives, and specialties from the kitchen. In true Venetian fashion, we offer an "ombra" of wine—perfect for tasting. "Ombra" is Venetian slang for a small glass of wine, actually meaning "a shadow." This expression dates from the days when merchants in Piazza San Marco sold their wines by the glass; they would follow the shadow of the famous campanile to keep their wares cool.

WINE OFFERINGS

We began working with Jeremy, the friend who had introduced us to the Italian vineyards; we'd previously collaborated with him on some pop-up dinners that we'd hosted in Madison as charity events. D'Vino's wine offerings come exclusively from Swiss Cellars distributors and feature a wide range, with many wines from small family-owned and operated vineyards throughout Italy. The concept was easy: pair wines with food we'd perfected through the years. Remove any pretense about the wine, and make it an accessible and fun place that embodied my family heritage, our travels, and our shared taste and experience in food preparation and presentation.

PIAZZA MURAL & FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS

During renovation of the new space, we installed a photographic mural, the image of the Sicilian piazza in the town where my great-grandfather was born; this was the same piazza that I had visited with my family a few years ago. We sat there in a café, drinking the local wine, and heard stories about my ancestors, about the Fascist occupation of Sicily, about Mussolini, and we listened to the church bells ring as we waited to dine in the restaurant owned and operated by my Italian cousins. This experience, along with the view of the seaside acres of lemon fields once owned by my family, provided ample inspiration for D'Vino.

As the plans for D'Vino progressed, we wanted to include some pieces of art made by artist and longtime friend Martha Glowacki. These are a series of sculptures commissioned to illustrate arboricultural examples of grape-vine growth and pruning. The handsome pieces are set into D'Vino's entry wall—showing our connection to terroir, climate, grape varietals, and winemaking.

Next came our plans for the bar area, the "altar of the grape," a perfect spot to install a large portrait of my other great-grandfather, Nano Nunzio. A Sicilian immigrant from Palermo, he was the father of 10 boys and patriarch of a succession of bars, nightclubs, and restaurants in the Milwaukee area during the first half of the 20th century. As children, we heard stories of the "Canadian Club" and "Pop Maniaci's Club Midnight," a couple of the establishments that our family ran. Many of the traditions I learned as a youth started with this man, including the naming of the first-born son after his grandfather. Each of his ten sons married and had sons, five of whom were named Nunzio, creating a caste of Nunzios. This inspired us to create a signature cocktail for D'Vino—the "Cinque Nunzio." With Canadian Club whiskey, amaretto, and bourbon, this hand-crafted drink is already a great success.

Patterned after the "bacari" we'd visited in Venice, D'Vino emulates these neighborhood spots that serve small plates of local fare with meat, cheeses, olives, and specialties from the kitchen.

The other photos that surround the bar and flank the kitchen area are my family portraits as well, including the memorable image of my great-grandmother Rose, standing (very pregnant with son number seven) as her husband sits nearby with their first six sons. In another photo, my great-grandfather and aunt (on my grandmother's side) stand watch in their Chicago dry-goods store near our small kitchen. All seem to be watching as I carry out the family traditions that they taught me.

MENU OFFERINGS

Jason began to shape the menu offerings as we took family classics and updated them with new and exciting preparations and ingredients. Octopus, a long-time holiday favorite, appears on the menu twice. One is a dish we discovered in Rome, a carpaccio of octopus served with a citrus vinaigrette, a small arugula salad, blood orange segments, and pistachio nuts. Our updated traditional fare includes arancini (rice balls). Nana's were as big around as a softball and stuffed with a red sauce of beef and pea ragu. Our risotto is made the day before being served and cooled overnight, formed into balls, stuffed and dipped in flour, eggs, and bread crumbs before being fried to a golden brown. Jason brings saffron to the traditional risotto recipe; this innovation approach continues as Jason stuffs arancini with a smoky Gouda cheese. Another special offering, along with my Nana's traditional ragu, is the rustic porcini mushroom risotto filled with mushroom duxelles.



From left to right: Nano Bocci -Guseppi Gutilla and Dominica (Lilly) at their dry goods store on Taylor St., in Chicago, Illinois circa 1920's. Gloria Maniaci (Dino's mom) 1956.

CLASSIC DESSERTS

Visitors to D'Vino can enhance their dining experience with an array of classic desserts. Many of these are my Nana's specialties, including her cannoli that are traditional crispy-fried pastry tubes filled with a ricotta cream and studded with tiny chocolate chips dipped in pistachio and garnished with a cherry and a dusting of powdered sugar.

D'Vino's "affogato" (a coffee-based dessert) melds crumbled amaretti cookies, hazelnut or vanilla gelato, and espresso for a delicious creamy treat. Italian cookies can be served with fried ricotta balls, a family favorite. These are a zeppoli-like donuts served with chocolate and raspberry dipping sauces, or with a slice of my take on classic Sicilian "cassata" cake, an almond-sponge layer cake filled with apricots, chocolate hazelnut spread, cannoli cream, and pistachio. Aperitifs, grappas, signature cocktails, and Italian beers complete the bar fare.

The family portraits displayed throughout D'Vino remind me of a shared theme that resonates in the 21st century. Family, friends, and neighbors faced with adversity, the challenges of surviving the Great Depression, the war years, or the current viral pandemic all rely on their traditions—creating excellent, simple food with available ingredients and celebrating together their treasured heritage.

CORONAVIRUS CLOSURE AND ADAPTATION

After being open less than two weeks, we faced the governor's order of either closing or limiting our approach to service. We quickly revised our menu, falling back on traditional dishes that sustained our families through tough times: pasta, meatballs, and sausages. These form the basis for the specific dishes we began offering as daily, lunch-time specials for customer pick-up. Revising our menu and our kitchen and pantry; creating and implementing an online ordering system; and developing a way to prepare, package, and serve food while maintaining strict safety measures meant reacting quickly and efficiently. Happily, we were able to expand the "to-go" menu to include cookies and cannoli, house-made limoncello, and bottled wines. We are proud to have created a popular weekly, virtual wine tasting. Another innovation was the paired packages that customers purchase for curbside pick-up having logged on to our podcasts from home for a virtual D'Vino connection.

Heritage sustains us, one inspiration connects the past to the present and allows us to thrive. No different than the drive and courage of my immigrant great-grandparents, their desire to survive in a country that was so different from their homeland yet that allowed them a place to take root while maintaining their heritage and traditions through food, family, and perseverance.

D'Vino is ready to meet the future as it unfolds: a traditional, Sunday family meal of pasta will most likely be added to our monthly offerings as one more way to stay connected to community. D'Vino keeps the tradition of breaking bread and sharing a meal of simple, quality fare with friends and loved ones to mark another era of survival and perseverance. ■



Queer Third Spaces

(IN THE TIME OF COVID-19)

We present our round-up of **queer-owned and -operated “third spaces”**—places other than home and work where we gather.

This year, the update includes who is currently open for business during the “Safer at Home” shut down.

RESTAURANTS | BARS | THIRD SPACE | COVID-19

A **“THIRD SPACE”** is somewhere to go other than work and home, free of the constraints of either of those two spaces. For anyone, particularly those who are marginalized, third spaces can be a vital and important part of life. For many queer folks, they’re essential to much-needed belonging, safety, and community. As food and drinks (of varying types) are a part of everyone’s day, and natural activities around which to center a social life, LGBTQ-owned/operated food and beverage businesses are a cornerstone of queer culture in Madison. As COVID-19 and physical distancing have quickly shaken us out of all of our usual—and meaningful—rhythms and routines, we’ve seen a temporary loss of many of our third spaces—in the sense of having somewhere to gather. Under these unexpected and difficult circumstances, many are seeking unconventional ways to be there for one another, such as by gathering virtually. Meanwhile, many of the businesses that we have supported with our dollars and that have supported us as individuals and a community in return are, if still operating, needing to do so under careful, responsible constraints. While the individual, cultural, and economic effects of the virus are still playing out, one thing is certain: We want the spaces we love to be there when we come through the other side of this.

A gay bar was, for many, an entrypoint into a world where we could be ourselves. Although third spaces go beyond bars and clubs, they are often one of the first places someone who is new to town,

newly out, or still closeted will look for a social home. Even for non-drinkers, the events and shows they host offer a space for queer folks to find their people—and to shine as producers and performers.

Restaurants, cafes, farms, and caterers—which might not be outwardly signaling like some bars and clubs do—can fly a little further under the radar as known queer gathering spaces. But that is part of the purpose of this guide: to highlight those run by LGBTQ folks so you’ll know some local spots that are queer-friendly.

This is a non-exhaustive list, of course; but it can provide a starting point. The people behind Madison’s thriving food scene have no shortage of talent and perseverance. Many of these businesses, if not able to do business as usual, have offerings during the COVID-19 crisis such as curbside pickup, delivery, or gift cards. Read on to find out the details as available at the time of writing; these may be subject to change due to the nature of the pandemic and related regulations. And for those businesses currently closed, make sure you put them at the top of your list to visit as soon as they, and life as usual, start up again.

I know we’re all going to be eager to go out when that time comes. Queer mental health and well-being depend on community, and while we can seek other supports to buoy us in the meantime, we will need third spaces going forward. Though the future may be uncertain, it is certain that these spots are vital. Let’s support them and advocate for them in whatever ways we can.



Lynn Lee, Cargo Coffee & Ground Zero coffeehouses



Anna Alberici, Greenbush Bar



Andrea Hillsey, Square Wine Co.



Tommy Hanna, Mediterranean Hookah Lounge & Cafe



Oscar Villarreal, Migrants

EDITOR’S NOTE: The listing is roughly organized by location, Northeast to Southwest

ROOTS CHOCOLATES **Currently:** Participating in food delivery events—see their Facebook page (facebook.com/RootsChocolates) for details. **In general:** Lisa Nelson is a fourth-generation farm owner, and with Roots Chocolates, she sources from the farm to create fabulous flavors in confectionery form. Based in Wisconsin Dells, Roots Chocolates are available at Metcalfe’s Hilldale as well as several other spots and online. While there’s no hurry to get through summer, with favorites like chocolate mint basil, it’s also hard not to look forward to their unique fall seasonals—including aronia (starting in September) and squash with Wisconsin maple syrup (starting in October).

NAUTIGAL, CAPTAIN BILL’S, MARINER’S INN, & BETTY LOU CRUISES **Currently:** The three restaurants are selling gift certificates at vrv-madison.com—and for every \$100 you buy in gift certificates, you’ll get a \$30 bonus certificate that is valid for one year. As for Betty Lou Cruises, the start of the cruise season was rescheduled. **In general:** Robert von Rutenberg joined brothers Jack and Bill in the family business in 2000, and the three co-own the waterfront restaurant icons NauTiGal, Captain Bill’s, and the Mariner’s Inn. The three restaurants have got the north and west side of Mendota covered. But if you’re looking for something more like a getaway (no hotel required), try a Betty Lou Cruise; the public cruises, which run from April through October, will whisk you away on a yacht for a couple of hours (food and drinks included), with options on both Mendota and Monona—so pick your favorite lake or try both.

LUNA CIRCLE FARM **Currently:** No update. **In general:** Luna Circle Farm’s memorable purple awning welcomes regulars and visitors alike to the Dane County Farmers’ Market on both Saturdays and Wednesdays, to which owner Tricia Bross brings more than a quarter-century of experience growing organic vegetables. Luna Circle also offers community-supported agriculture (CSA) market shares (two sizes available), where you pay upfront as with a traditional CSA, but you come to the farmers’ market and get to choose your own veggies from the stand each week.

THE VENUE ON WINNEBAGO STREET **Currently:** Shows are being cancelled or rescheduled; check their Facebook page (facebook.com/2262winnebago) for details on when you will be able to come in to see a show. **In general:** The Venue on Winnebago Street has successfully entered the scene as a new spot that feels like it’s always been here and always been a part of your life: open but warm and welcoming, with a broad bar adjacent to the performance space accessible after you come in through the front door to the cafe. Check out a show sometime or consider hosting your own event here—weddings, fundraisers, corporate events, and more are all welcome.

JAVA CAT **Currently:** Open 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for drive-thru business. **In general:** Located on Monona Drive and owned by Renee Raspiller, Java Cat sits right on the cusp of Monona and Madison. In general: The cafe strives to be a part of and give back to the community in a multitude of ways, from participating in fundraisers to featuring a house guitar customers can play. Come check out the art and live music—along with coffee, breakfast, lunch, and a rotation of more than 125 flavors of house-made gelato that customers rave about. Making good on the animal-loving implication of their name, they’ve also got a dog-friendly patio.

DAISY CAFE & CUPCAKERY **Currently:** As of the time of writing, they are planning to start offering a full takeout menu for pickup as well as delivery by EatStreet. Check their Facebook page or their website (daisycafeandcupcakery.com/) for information. In the meantime, they sent their perishable goods to the Goodman Community Center so they could be used by those in need. **In general:** Co-owned by Kathy Brooks, Daisy may lure you in with the promise of that last word in its name, and it won’t disappoint on that front. But plan to be there longer and have a meal, too. They have a full vegan menu if that’s your jam. And their general brunch offerings include some uncommon and tasty options, like their specialty stratas—these “egg casseroles” include a wide range of flavor options from french toast to chorizo pepper jack. Also open for lunch and (seasonally) dinner, including fish fry on Fridays. Just make sure you saved room for that cupcake, after all.

WILLALBY’S CAFE **Currently:** Closed. Please support them when they reopen! **In general:** Owner Nate Prince took over Willalby’s Cafe in 2010 after working there for a decade. A long-term player in the evolving dining and retail scene of Willy Street, this cash-only breakfast joint is an east side favorite. Willalby’s is known for its charm, its gigantic chocolate chip pancakes, and its vegan biscuits and gravy. Formerly open late nights, Willalby’s hours are now a little more standard—until 3:00 p.m. on weekends and 2:00 p.m. on weekdays, so plan accordingly and get your fix.

STUBBORN MULE CATERING **Currently:** No update. **In general:** Co-owned by Ryan Mueller, Stubborn Mule Catering runs on the belief in creating something unique: Menus are different for each and every event, so get ready to design something totally fresh with them. Got a big event? They’re on it. But they also cater for as few as two with their personal chef services, so go ahead—think big or small. If you’re wondering about the name, it’s the good kind of persistence; as they put it, “Quality is what we’re stubborn about.” When possible, they source from the farmers’ market and create their menus around local and seasonal food.



Robert, Bill and Jack von Rutenberg, NauTIGal, Captain Bill's, Mariner's Inn, & Betty Lou Cruises



Lisa Nelson, Roots Chocolates



Tricia Bross, Luna Circle Farm



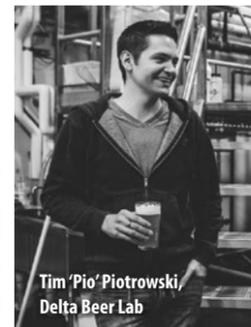
Dino Maniaci, D'Vino & WOOFs



Katie Miller, The Good Table



Michael Dix, Michael's Frozen Custard



Tim 'Pio' Piotrowski, Delta Beer Lab

GIANT JONES BREWING COMPANY **Currently:** Open once a week for bottle and case sales; case sales also available by appointment. Also find their beer in bottles at other retailers that remain open. E-gift cards are available (squareup.com/gift/A5GRK-JM91YM9/order). The brewery has been hosting virtual events like happy hours; check their Facebook page (facebook.com/giantjonesbeer) for details. **In general:** Owned by Jessica and Erika Jones, Giant Jones Brewing Company has been bringing you craft brews since 2018, with a particular focus on the strong stuff. Their weizenbock is a specialty and customer favorite. Some of their values: All Giant Jones beers are certified organic, and the brewery prioritizes paying their staff a livable wage. Check out their tasting room (carry-in food welcome), or grab a bottle or a pint at a bar or liquor stores.

THE GOOD TABLE **Currently:** Events are cancelled, but they are sharing recipes on their Facebook page (facebook.com/TheGoodTableMSN)—check them out. **In general:** The Good Table, a pop-up dinner for the Madison LGBTQIA+ community, began its events in 2019. Creator Katie Miller brings culinary experience and a master's degree in nutrition and dietetics to their creative endeavour, following a food philosophy of "snack, refresh, comfort, savor, and indulge." For a unique dining experience, come hang out with folks and enjoy an original menu. Find out when the next event is and get more information on their Facebook page.

D'VINO **Currently:** Takeout options are available on certain days (check their Facebook page at facebook.com/dvinomadisonwi), carry-out wine is available for pickup, and gift cards are available (toasttab.com/d-vino-116-king-st/giftcards) **In general:** Brought to you by the owners of WOOF's, and right next door to it on King Street, D'Vino is an entirely different but equally intriguing spot: This wine bar and small-plate Italian restaurant just opened in March with a seasonal menu, featuring chicchetti, appetizers of a style served in Venice. Have a sip and a bite; make sure you also leave room for dessert.

WOOF'S **Currently:** Closed. Please support them when they reopen! **In general:** In a prime downtown location since opening in 2008, Dino Maniaci's

WOOF'S on King Street is a different variety of gay bar: one that features sports, synthesizing two cultures for those who would seek a home in both types of venues. A variety of events, including fetish-related and otherwise themed (who's up for darts or pool?), populate their weekly calendar. While a sports-themed gay bar may seem slanted toward men, all are welcome at WOOF'S.

HARVEST & THE OLD FASHIONED **Currently:** Check out harvest-go.com to order delivery from Harvest within five miles of the restaurant. This is available 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Curbside pickup is also available. For The Old Fashioned, takeout with curbside pickup is available 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday (closed Sundays); call 608-310-4545. You can also order for delivery from EatStreet. **In general:** Tami Lax owns Harvest and The Old Fashioned, Pinckney Street neighbors to one another, which offer between them the gamut of great downtown dining. The Old Fashioned, managed by Tami's partner Jennifer DeBolt, boasts a Wisconsin-forward menu with tap beers aplenty; definitely try the cheese curds, but also don't miss the addictive haystack onion strings. Harvest's farm-to-table menu and upscale-yet-approachable ambiance make for fine dining indeed. The restaurants each offer something different enough to fill diverse dining desires—but are tied together by their devotion to excellent Wisconsin food.

FROMAGINATION **Currently:** Carry-out and curbside pickup available 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday (closed Monday). Call ahead with your order (608-255-2430). They offer local delivery to Madison and Dane County and free shipping to Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Send a loved one a Social Distancing Cheese Kit or buy a gift card. You can also order delivery via EatStreet. **In general:** A downtown paradise for cheese lovers, Ken Monteleone's Fromagination specialty shop on the Capitol Square showcases the finest of this state's offerings—and since this is Wisconsin, that's saying a lot. You will not go wrong any direction you turn, from one cheese to the next, and then on to delights to pair them with—crackers, of course; and meats, jams, and sweets. Don't stop there; try a sandwich, send a cheese-of-the-month gift to someone lucky out of town, attend a cheese class, or pick up some accessories for the next time you'd like to feel fancy eating cheese at your own home.

SHAMROCK BAR & GRILLE **Currently:** Check their Facebook page (facebook.com/ShamrockBG) for information about days they are open and items they are offering for curbside pickup. Food and alcohol are both available. **In general:** The bar resprouted in 2013 in the same spot where the original Shamrock Bar had been rooted since 1985, making it Madison's oldest gay bar. Under the new ownership of Robert Mahr, who had been an employee of the original business, the new lease on life has come with an expanded seven-day-a-week food menu. Come by any day or night for a bite or a drink; at brunch time, catch a classic mimosa or turbo-charge your morning with their specialty "Shamosa."

SQUARE WINE CO. **Currently:** Open with curbside pickup available. They are also running specials on six-packs and offering other discounts; check their Facebook page (facebook.com/SquareWineCo) for details. **In general:** This is the perfect place to drop in for a bottle for Concerts on the Square, but visit any day of the week. Wine tastings are offered every Friday evening (6:00–8:00 p.m.) and Saturday afternoon (12:00–3:00 p.m.), along with special-event tastings sprinkled throughout other days. Andrea Hillsey, who owns Square with her partner Ashley Parr, brings on-the-ground experience in a vineyard and graduate-level hospitality studies to the table; rest assured you'll get expert-level advice, no matter your budget.

CARACAS EMPANADAS **Currently:** Open for pickup and for delivery via EatStreet. You can still order directly from their food trucks, but please maintain a six-foot distance. Hours are Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They are also participating in food delivery events—see their Facebook page (facebook.com/caracasespanadas) for details. **In general:** Caracas Empanadas will fuel you on your Saturday farmers' market tour; during the week, you can find the food truck on the Library Mall. A common thread amongst their plethora of five-star



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Daisy Cafe & Cupcakery



Nate Prince, Willalby's Cafe



Doug Swenson & Omar Lopez, Cafe Social



Bob Mahr, Shamrock Bar & Grille



Mary Celley, Bee Charmer

Yelp reviews is the urging to try, in particular, the Guasacaca (green cilantro) sauce. Owner Luis Dompablo's passion for Venezuelan cuisine comes through in the quality of the food and the devotion of Caracas Empanadas fans.

FAIR TRADE COFFEE HOUSE **Currently:** They are open for takeout and for delivery from EatStreet. **In general:** Coffee houses open at night hold a dear spot in the hearts of many a student; but they can also be a respite for folks looking for somewhere to go and be among others without alcohol. Fair Trade Coffee House is one that can fill this niche. As their name suggests, 100% of their coffee beans (including espresso) are fair trade certified, critical to those invested in the well-being of farmers and producers around the world. Owners Casey Thompson and Thomas Beckwith-Thompson purchased Fair Trade Coffee House in 2017 and have been bringing you coffee, tea, and food ever since.

CAFE SOCIAL **Currently:** You can order coffee beans and gift cards from them online at www.cafesocial.us. **In general:** Cafe Social is about quality. Omar Lopez, who co-owns the cafe with his partner Doug Swenson, is from Colombia and envisioned a Madison with the kind of coffee he knew and loved. The cafe sources all its coffee, grown without chemicals, from family farms in Colombia—following the Colombian Coffee Growers Federation's guidelines for quality. Breakfast, lunch, pizza, tea, and specialty drinks round out the menu at their Bedford Street location. You can also buy whole beans—including green, unroasted beans, if you are curious to try your hand at roasting at home.

GREENBUSH BAR **Currently:** Closed. Please support them when they reopen! **In general:** Starting more than 100 years ago, Italian immigrants made a home in Madison in the Greenbush addition. Since 1993, Anna Alberici has brought her memories of growing up in the neighborhood to life in culinary form (channelling her mother's love of cooking) through Sicilian food at the Greenbush Bar. Come here for pizza (bring your creativity! the menu is all choose-your-own toppings), pasta, and wine or spirits—and taste a bite of Madison history.

CARGO COFFEE & GROUND ZERO COFFEEHOUSES **Currently:** Cargo Coffee on Park Street has its drive-thru open 6:00 a.m. weekdays and 7:00 a.m. weekends to 5:00 p.m., and food and bulk coffee are also available for pickup. Cargo Coffee East and Ground Zero are currently closed. **In general:** Lynn Lee co-owns both Cargo Coffee locations and Ground Zero coffeehouse with his twin brother, Lindsey; the three spots stretch from the near-east to near-west side of Madison, with the newer Cargo spot nestled among the new living, business, and entertainment development sprouting up along East Washington. As you sip your coffee or enjoy a house-made pastry or sandwich, sit back and appreciate the worldliness of the coffee trade and culture brought to mind by the world-map decor that ties the three locations together.

MICHAEL'S FROZEN CUSTARD **Currently:** Drive-thru and takeout service available at Atwood Avenue and Schroeder Road locations 12:00 to 8:00 p.m. daily. Monroe Street location hoping to reopen in May because owner Michael Dix learned his husband may be issued an emergency visa to return to the states and help run the Monroe Street location. **In general:** Burgers, dogs, fries, cones, sundaes, and shakes making Madison smile since 1986.

SIMPLY SERVED PERSONAL CHEF **Currently:** Closed. Please support them when they reopen! Meanwhile, if you are looking for recipes, feel free to email Chef Jeanne through her website at simplyservedpersonalchef.com/contact-me **In general:** Jeanne Moe—serving Madison, Middleton, Sun Prairie, and McFarland—offers meals and more through Simply Served Personal Chef. Cooking lessons one-on-one or for groups, special event food preparation, and a simple pricing structure may entice you. Her menus are seasonal and flexible to omnivorous, gluten-free, and vegan diets. What does a personal chef do? Not just cooking; as she describes, "A personal chef will shop for the ingredients, prepare the meals in your home, clean up your kitchen, and store the meals in your refrigerator or freezer." Sold.

DELTA BEER LAB **Currently:** Open daily 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for to-go purchases of beer, frozen pizzas, and online merch orders. **In general:** The brewery opened in 2019 following owner Tim "Pio" Piotrowski's return from hiking the Appalachian Trail. As Pio told *Our Lives* in 2018 about the choice of name, "Delta is the chemical and mathematical symbol for change, and Delta Beer Lab will tirelessly work toward forward change in our communities." Pledging not only to offer high-quality beer but also to pay employees above a living wage and "work to stop sexism, bigotry, and racism in whatever ways we can," they have a taproom on Badger Road, and you can buy their beer around town, too.

MEDITERRANEAN HOOKAH LOUNGE & CAFE **Currently:** Open for takeout and delivery through online order Monday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. **In general:** Mediterranean Hookah Lounge & Cafe offers a chill environment with couches, low lighting, hookah in an assortment of flavors, and food and drink menus. Belly dancers perform weekly on Saturdays; karaoke is on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights with more than 15,000 songs to choose from. Tommy Hanna co-owns the lounge with his brother, Simon. Together, they've brought the culture of their family's native Lebanon to Madison for a unique nightlife experience.

MIGRANTS **Currently:** Delivery is available via EatStreet. The restaurant may also be available to do direct delivery for larger family-style menu orders that are now available. Advance notice may be required for some orders; check their Facebook page (facebook.com/migrantsmadison) for details, or contact the chef at 608-630-8194. **In general:** Migrants brings Fuegos' Oscar Villarreal and his creative leadership to a new spot just off the Beltline where you'll find a considerable array of tacos (including many vegetarian options), burritos, nachos, a breakfast menu, and a well-stocked salsa bar. This is a quick spot



Jessica & Erika Jones, Giant Jones Brewing



Dave Eick, FIVE Nightclub



Ken Monteleone, Fromagination



Tami Lax, Harvest & The Old Fashioned



Lori Stern, Cow & Quince

where you can pop in, pick the fillings you want, and be right on your way if that's your need. If you're planning on cooking at home, pick up some of their tortillas by the dozen (corn or flour).

FIVE NIGHTCLUB **Currently:** FIVE is offering many online events. Check their Facebook page for more information (facebook.com/FiveNightclub). **In general:** Dave Eick's club, more than 20 years old now, remains a pivotal center for LGBTQ celebration following a community-supported revival in 2015. Check out their gigantic dance floor if that's your jam—but there's also plenty else to do. Programming includes burlesque and drag, Latin night, karaoke, sand volleyball, and even ZUMBA.

BEE CHARMER **Currently:** Place an order for pickup at the drive-thru Dane County Farmers' Market. See their Facebook page (facebook.com/Bee-Charmer-Bee-Keeper-126067050911316) for product listings. Also pick up products directly from the farm; call ahead: 608-575-2449. **In general:** Bee Charmer offers not just honey and beeswax products but also the source itself: bees! Consulting services are also on offer if you're wondering just how to keep your bees or how to solve a sticky problem. Owner Mary Celley brings to the

table experience at the U.S.D.A. Honey Bee Research Lab, decades of Wisconsin beekeeping, and a horticulture degree with a focus on entomology. If beekeeping's not for you, but you're a fan of honey? Stop by the Bee Charmer booth at the Dane County Farmers' Market for a sweet treat or buy online.

COW & QUINCE **Currently:** Open Friday through Monday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., for takeout with curbside pickup available. Call 608-527-2900 to order. You can also buy a digital gift card at squareup.com/gift/B2JT243KQ4541/order **In general:** You've heard of CSAs; now get excited for CSRs (community-supported restaurants). Cow & Quince in New Glarus, owned by Lori Stern, is open to the public—no membership required. But if you want to participate CSR-style, you can become a member at one of two levels, with invitations to member-only events, discounts, and other benefits. The restaurant offers a regular menu as well as several annual prix fixe dinner events. If you like what you eat, check out their market. You can buy many of the same ingredients. Also of note: the restaurant is currently for sale, with the option to purchase the mixed-use, historic building. Interested? Contact info@cowandquince.com. ■



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Farm to [Everyone's] Table

FL Morris hopes the pandemic's exposure of the fragility of our food system will bring about change and give more people access to healthy food, something that she has been working toward for years on her Grassroots Farm.

FARMING | HEMP | FOOD INSECURITY | COOPERATIVES

EVEN BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, farmer FL Morris of Grassroots Farm in Monroe thought a lot about food security. For many years she's been committed to participating in and leading a more equitable and just way of growing and sharing food.

Since she purchased land with her mother just over a decade ago, FL has grown just about everything, from her first garlic crops to squash to peppers, and most recently, hemp for CBD production. Whether it's packing vegetables in boxes for community supported agriculture members or driving crops to restaurants or farmers' markets, she's always wondered how she could help to tighten up the connections between farmers, laborers, and customers.

And then came COVID-19. For all of us, among the many socio-economic disparities exposed by the pandemic in the United States, our nation's food supply and how our food is grown, transported, processed, sold, and served to us is one that is touching everyone.

The nation is struggling with the panic buying that leaves empty shelves where potatoes, onions, chicken, and toilet paper were once well-stocked. Grocery stores are hiring the workers who once waited tables at now-shuttered restaurants. Without the convenience of restaurants, we have to remember how to cook, plan meals, and adjust to unpredictability at grocery stores. For those who face more economic challenges, stretching WIC funds to feed kids meals they would have eaten at school is making food insecurity a starker reality for parents.

FL says the flaws in our food system are revealing themselves.

"We're all feeling it. There's anxiety, there's unease and pain, there's a fear of uncertainty and fragility. I also think (when I talk to other farmers) that there is so much optimism and a silver lining in having our systems unravel. What's coming out of this is an opportunity to rebuild those systems. It's clear one of the greatest inequities to address is how people don't have access to fresh food."

EARLY LESSONS IN FOOD INSECURITY

FL's empathy with those who experience food and economic insecurity is deeply personal. After her parents divorced, her mother moved the family to northern Wisconsin.

"We had a comfortable life in California," she explained, "but in Wisconsin we experienced pretty severe poverty when my mother had to start over and raise two kids on a minimum wage job. It was a shock, and I experienced food insecurity for the first time."

FL said southern California had more diversity and northern Wisconsin had little culture and few-to-no out queer role models.

"Even when I was a very young person, when I was allowed to dress myself ... maybe age three or four? ... I gravitated toward more masculine clothes and toys," she said. "I loved playing with matchbox cars and ninja turtles. I was a classic 80s tomboy."

FL eventually came out in her second semester of high school. As a masculine-presenting lesbian, she experienced bullying and what it felt like to be on the margins. Anti-gay sentiments spoken by politicians were

echoed in the violence, harassment, and rejection she experienced.

"I had to take on the challenges of queerness and being different in my discovery of the world and different types of thought and religion. I didn't do well in my classes, and I turned to drugs, skipped school, committed petty crime, and struggled to make healthy choices."

Farmers like FL took tremendous risks in growing plants with little-to-no institutional knowledge or support, crops that could fail, exceed the legal THC content limit, or not have a guaranteed market for the end product.

Fortunately she was able to get help through an individualized education plan that allowed her to make up for skipped classes, graduate early, and go to an all-women's art school. She had always had an interest in art which she describes as a kind of a shield from bullying. Once people saw her using her artistic talent, they left her alone.

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“By the time I went to college, I found my power,” she said. “Since I got out of high school early, no one knew I was 16, and I lied to my peers about my age. College was an incredibly important social experience. But even though I loved art, it wasn’t challenging me, and I didn’t see a career path in it. My school mates worked a lot of service jobs and maybe got a gallery position. I didn’t want to always be chomping at the bit to make money or be a starving artist.”

PRACTICAL CREATIVITY

While she had the urge to create, she also craved doing something practical. She started looking into woodworking jobs, explored cabinet or furniture making, and wanted to find an apprenticeship with a female woodworker. In this search, she turned her attention back to the Midwest and found an advertisement in Madison’s alt-weekly, *Isthmus*, for a farming apprenticeship which became the springboard for her farming career.

Through networking around hemp, growers are finding each other, including women and people from marginalized groups, and we’re starting a Madison-based worker-owned, certified organic CBD/hemp processing and manufacturing cooperative to be the next component in the supply chain.”

“It wasn’t much money, but I took the job and it changed my life. That’s where I got to experience the romance of farming and the seasons changing,” said FL. “I discovered the thing that happens when you spend all day outside and you get to feel that connection with the earth. In the morning it feels like the earth is taking a breath in and you can feel it exhale at night. I’d never really had that exposure before to the creativity of farming, the colors, the textures. I enjoyed getting dirty. It seemed like the dirtier I got, the more fun I was having.”

FL started eating better. She felt the satisfaction of packing a box of vegetables for friends and customers. The apprenticeship led to other jobs, more education on farming, increased responsibilities, managing more crops, and selling at farmers’ markets.

Spending a lot of time in the field and on the road gave FL time to think about our food system.

“Then I got to spend some time managing an urban farm in Chicago that had a job training program for formerly incarcerated people, and that was a formative experience for me,” she said. “I learned a lot about inequality in food access, what creates a food desert, and what it’s like to live in one. It’s complicated. It’s about money but it’s also about storing food, having access to kitchens with tools, knowing how to prepare food so it’s delicious, how to eat it and have a palate for veggies. No one has the time to invest in cooking healthy, whole foods. Time is something that keeps people from eating healthy. It’s about money, education, and time.”

A LAND OF HER OWN

In 2007 she worked with her mother to purchase land in Green County. FL describes her mother as a life-long gardener who worked for years to build up her career as a legal secretary to the point where she could help to invest in farmland. Once FL had her own land to grow food and establish Grassroots Farm, she joined a farmers cooperative network to supply vegetables to grocery cooperatives and restaurants in the region, including high-end restaurants in the queer-friendly Andersonville, Chicago.

“I got in on the ground floor of a newly forming farmers market in Andersonville, and that helped me grow my farm over seven seasons,” she said. “I started developing relationships with people, people joined my CSA, and I had a market stand where I wasn’t the highest priced vendor. I couldn’t watch people walk away from my stand if my prices were too high.”

Through her stand at the farmers’ market, she learned how capricious markets can be. Sales depended on many factors that are out of a supplier’s control. The position of your stand, changing culinary tastes, and the weather can vary from season to season and from week to week.

“It was a difficult experience when food didn’t sell at a market and a lot of labor was wasted,” said FL. “After we’ve seeded it, potted it in the greenhouse, watered it every day for a month, brought it to the field, irrigated it, cultivated the land to remove weeds or mulched it, then harvested it, washed it, packed it, brought it however many miles to the market, and then stood out in whatever kind of weather... To not be able to sell it was disappointing.”

Those early years of starting her own farm were satisfying in terms

IAN DEGRAFF, FL MORRIS

of her relationships with customers, but the invisible hand of the market wore her out. She tried to keep her prices down and balance the costs of her labor and time, but she was not only competing with other farmers’ market vendors, but also with an international market that put vegetables from around the world on supermarket shelves.

“By the fall of 2016, I was standing alone in my greenhouse and felt like a hamster in a wheel,” she said. “I was seeding my fall crops, and I just thought, ‘Who am I trying to impress? I’m alone, I work all the time and I can’t seem to break the poverty line.’ My expenses to live were low—I covered expenses, and I had help from family, but I was essentially being paid around \$2.00 per hour with no benefits. No matter how hard I worked, it didn’t translate to serving my mission in getting more food to people.”

It was like she hit a wall. Fellow organic farmers were facing the same stress of the market and climate change. She saw couples in farming break up. She questioned how she could keep going on her own. She needed a hiatus from the work on the farm and the model of business she had been pursuing.

A trip to Oregon gave her both the break she needed and also the inspiration to do something different. There she took on different jobs where she learned new skills from driving a semi to felling trees for timber. The time away also gave her time to think about more collaborative models of food production and how to bring more people together in organic farming in support of broader health of the community.

THE PROMISE OF HEMP AND A KITCHEN FOR THE COMMUNITY

By the end of 2018 Congress approved the Farm Bill. Among the usual provisions of the national law that encompasses everything from crop insurance to nutritional assistance for low-income Americans, this federal bill allowed farmers across the country to grow cannabis plants for industrial hemp.

The law has some restrictions and definitions of what distinguishes hemp from marijuana. For growers in Wisconsin, hemp has a promise of a sturdy crop that could be organically cultivated, easier to grow than many fussy vegetables, and used for a dizzyingly wide array of products.

FL was one of the 247 Wisconsin farmers to apply to the state to grow hemp in the first year. She jumped into it with not only the hopes of growing a profitable crop, but also as a way to ignite South Central Hemp, a cooperative that connects other local Wisconsin hemp farmers growing for the first time, too.

“I’d worked for several farming coops over the years, but this was my first time being a member of one and starting a nonprofit cooperative from scratch. Now I’m such a cooperative nerd,” she said. “I can see the power of a cooperative, especially when coops work with other coops. Through networking around hemp, growers are finding each other, including women and people from marginalized groups, and we’re starting a Madison-based worker-owned, certified organic CBD/hemp processing and manufacturing cooperative to be the next component in the supply chain.”

Growing hemp in Wisconsin, however, has some ups and downs. First-time farmers like FL took tremendous risks in growing plants with little-to-no institutional knowledge or support, crops that could fail, exceed the legal THC content limit, or not have a guaranteed market for the end product. In the second year of growing, when over a thousand new growers jumped into hemp farming, the hemp market experienced a glut where there were too many plants, poor harvesting weather, back-ups at processing facilities, and plants that were “too hot” with THC content that was too high to legally sell.

Still, FL is hopeful that the hemp cooperative and the future for hemp in Wisconsin will be profitable for farmers and for her big vision: bringing more people together in a local, organic food system.

She’s developed a community-powered kitchen proposal with the help of a nurse that is built on a vision beyond CSA shares and embraces a more interconnected plan for community health.

“We had a realization that CSA shares can’t be it. If you really want to improve health through good quality food, we have to get food grown by our community to our community in a way that creates meals as well as jobs and job training opportunities, worker shares, and trades,” she said. “In order to pilot this program, we’re going to need an industrial kitchen to serve as a place to prepare, package, freeze, or dry food as well as have a place to store food year-round for my community.”

She also sees a more collaborative approach as a way to pull in talent in planning, management, technical support, and advertising so that farmers can focus on farming rather than the hustle of marketing and sales at farmers’ markets or food availability lists for restaurants. When farmers grow what they are good at and at a scale that makes sense for their labor and their land, those working at the kitchen can prepare the growers’ fresh harvests or preserve the food for future meals.

PLANNING FOR THE TIMES AHEAD

The long-term impact of the pandemic on our local food system will take time to understand. Farmers still have to spend spring and early summer cultivating, seeding, and planting with their eye on the weather and the future, including FL, who is planning her next hemp crop.

She said she uses hemp biomass herself. “Hemp tea is amazing, and it has a calming effect. You can just add the flower and leaf trim to a tea ball and add it to hot water.”

But when asked about her favorite things to grow and eat, FL spoke glowingly about Grassroots Farm’s tomatoes and how you can drink a warm puree of tomatoes like a cup of coffee.

For information about Grassroots Farm, go to grassrootsfarmllc.com. ■

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HISTORY AIDS PANDEMIC LEADERSHIP RESPONSE

Here we go again!

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, historian **Richard Wagner** is reminded of the AIDS epidemic and hopes we can draw some lessons from then to apply to today.

I NEVER THOUGHT AT MY AGE (while a gentleman does not tell his age, let's ballpark it to the mid 70s), I would have to go through another pandemic, but so it is. Perhaps it is only in the LGBT community that we particularly recall that we've lost 700,000 Americans and 32 million worldwide from AIDS. For comparison, the now frequently mentioned 1918 influenza epidemic resulted in 50 million deaths worldwide with 675,000 American deaths.

Another pandemic is here and is proving to be brutal. We should hope less so than the aforementioned ones. Let's revisit the AIDS pandemic to find lessons useful to us as a society.

While I am thankful I survived the AIDS pandemic, the experience of losing so many friends during the late 20th Century retrovirus attack remains fresh. May their rest be perpetual and their memories

fight occurred in the early 1980s pandemic, too. An unfortunate early tag was GRID or Gay Related Immune Deficiency, which stigmatized an already much-despised and discriminated group. It encouraged further hate against homosexuals, even lesbians, though they were one of the lowest-risk groups. Sensible health professionals helped change the name to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS. Lesbians would come together with gay men to fight the disease on the front lines and help treat Persons with AIDS (PWAs).

We won't know the names of the heroes fighting COVID-19 for a while, but history indicates there will be many. I remember some of those fighting AIDS with fondness.

Wisconsin had early warning on AIDS because of a few dedicated individuals working in the field of public health for gay men. Dr. Rog-



Almost four decades ago, I recall a president who refused to take AIDS seriously, not mentioning it until 1985 when it had spread everywhere in the United States.

forever be a blessing. Still today it brings a heaviness back to my heart. Yet, we can draw life affirmation and hope from the history of confronting the AIDS crisis. It is not without a certain ruefulness that I contemplate the COVID-19 response recounting similarities and differences.

Almost four decades ago, I recall a president who refused to take AIDS seriously, not mentioning it until 1985 when it had spread everywhere in the United States. Now we have a president who talks about a pandemic and uses the term "hoax."

Today we have local leaders and governors taking the lead well in advance of federal responses. In mid-1983 Governor Anthony Earl's Council on Lesbian and Gay issues, which I co-chaired, called for increased funding for AIDS research to combat the disease. By May 1984, when AIDS deaths were already at 2,000, the Reagan administration was asking for only \$55 million. Advocates were pressing for at least \$58 million for the National Institutes of Health and \$23 million for the Centers for Disease Control.

A big difference today! There seems to be no problem with appropriating trillions to fight a pandemic.

Another similarity—what to call the pandemic. Today some nationalists insert the name "Chinese" or "Wuhan" before the virus. Naming

er Greminger with the Brady East STD (BESTD) Clinic in Milwaukee had been treating and researching gay public health issues for several years when AIDS arrived. Mark Behar, a physician's assistant, was a founding member (1979) and co-chair of the National Coalition of Gay STD Services. The group's newsletter was published from Milwaukee where Behar lived. A contributor to the newsletter was Tim Tillotson of Madison's Blue Bus Clinic for STDs. In 1983 the newsletter became an "official interim national communication device" for community responses to the disease that were being organized around the country.

One of the lessons of the AIDS pandemic was that in America we had to turn to all levels of our government, especially when the federal response was slow or iffy. In 1986 the Reagan Justice Department political appointees ruled that it was fine to fire those with AIDS. That same year, the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division (ERD) under Fran Tryon took a different position. She ruled that the Wisconsin Fair Employment Law non-discrimination provisions covered AIDS as a "legally protected handicap."

Arts with AIDS themes flourished in parts of the country. In Wisconsin, poets responded with the collection *Heartpieces* published as



DICK WAGNER (rrdickwagner@gmail.com), openly gay former Dane County Board Chair and co-chair of Governor Earl's Commission on Lesbian and Gay Issues, is the author of *We've Been Here All Along: Wisconsin's Early Gay History*.



Fran Tryon

a benefit for the Milwaukee AIDS Project. The AIDS quilt, which would be displayed in Milwaukee and Madison, was one manifestation of fabric arts used as magnificent expressions of grief.

The AIDS experience also showed that citizens had to take personal leadership in the face of a health system sometimes

In 1986 the Reagan Justice Department political appointees ruled that it was fine to fire those with AIDS. That same year, the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division (ERD) under Fran Tryon took a different position.

constrained in its responses. ACT-UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was the ultimate example. There were active chapters in Milwaukee and Madison in the 1990s. While some public officials were reluctant to talk about prevention and the role of condoms, ACT-UP knew silence kills. Milwaukee ACT-UP distributed AIDS information and condoms at several area high schools. Afterwards, while some pamphlets were found on the ground, none of the condoms were left around. ACT-UP also pushed Governor Tommy Thompson to improve conditions for PWAs in state prisons.

Tony Kushner's AIDS play *Angels in America* developed themes of survival in a crisis. While the play noted we all get to break our hearts on this one, the theme of angels harkened back to Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural. The president, on the eve of civil war tried to stir hope, then appealing to all citizens he said, "When touched as surely they will be by the better angels of our nature." Thus, from within ourselves those better instincts could be our angels. Kushner's second half of the play was titled "Perestroika" meaning restructuring pointing to a new reformed society as a possible outcome.

Will this pandemic bring out our better angels? Is there a chance for a perestroika when it dies down? Let us hope so.

Today, fashion designers in New York have turned their workshops and ateliers into producers of face masks. I was extremely pleased when my friend Scott Thornton showed up at my door with face masks that he had stitched himself and was distributing to friends' homes.

As Gloria Gaynor led us in singing, "[We] will survive." ■

LGBTQ+ Archives Request

As you read this, we may still be practicing "Safer-At-Home." Here at the Madison LGBTQ+ Archive, we want to encourage you to consider using this time at home as an opportunity to look for items you may want to donate to our collective archive. We hope that taking action to preserve and share the rich history of the Madison LGBTQ+ community may be a way to transform some of our feelings of anxiety, despair, or anger during this COVID-19 pandemic into action, and to build community and solidarity.

Various universities and archives are asking, "What do we want the future to know about how we acted, and in what ways we contributed, in the days of COVID-19?" Similarly, so many of you have contributed and small through the decades of LGBTQ+ life. We would be honored to preserve that history and make it accessible to future generations.

We are ready to communicate by phone, email, and other means about possible donations, and to arrange for pick-up of items. Your donation is an act of generosity benefiting others, now and into the future. Contact us at: uwarchiv@library.wisc.edu or 608-262-5629. ■

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ANXIETY DEPRESSION QUARANTINE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Pandemic Self-care

Are the impacts of COVID-19 causing a spike in your anxiety? Are you noticing signs of depression? **Alexander Einsman**, LMFT, shares a few strategies to help you cope.

THE COLLECTIVE TRAUMA of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolding in front of us is personal, widespread, and diverse. Anxiety has increased for many as the sense of safety and security has been upended by deep uncertainty for the future.

Anxiety is an integral part of our brain's defense system, meant to ensure survival when our life or safety is threatened. We do not want to ignore this protection entirely, but may need to modify it to learn when to pay attention to a real threat and when to silence a false alarm. Our current pandemic reveals a powerful example of when we should listen to anxiety in order to aid our safety and survival.

If you've had difficulty establishing a new routine, trouble being productive, or vacillated between extreme emotions of hope and despair, there is truly something right with you. You're experiencing some of our most primal survival responses.

When we perceive danger, our brain releases a cascade of automatic responses, activating the sympathetic nervous system commonly known as the "fight-or-flight response"—rapid heartbeat, tense body, and fast-paced thoughts. The other primal response is to physically immobilize, hide, which is commonly known as the "freeze response." While these mechanisms are meant to ensure our survival, they can also fuel anxiety and depressive symptoms, which contribute to a sense of distress.

TO ACCEPT OR DENY

When we feel distress within ourselves or our environment, we are faced with the task of accepting the threat fueling our distress and making changes to protect ourselves and others. Another option is denial—to deny or minimize the threat and actively resist change, often using blame to try to reassert a sense of control.

As a therapist, I discuss the impacts of the current global health crisis with almost every client. For many, the pandemic itself is not the source of distress. Instead, it stems from the denial of others around us who resist adopting the "new normal" needed to survive.

Many of us know family, friends, and politicians who actively deny our reality, thus putting our survival at risk. This introduces a new challenge of change, learning to take care of ourselves and our relationships within a physical separation from our community.

BREATHE AND MOVE

The most powerful way to shift out of distress mode is by regulating our physical body with simple breathing exercises or movement. A short (or long) walk outside can help us feel more balanced, even if nothing else has changed. Consider leaving your phone at home and truly engage your senses in the natural world (following all social-distancing rules, of course). You might also try yoga or stretching at home, if you'd prefer to stay

indoors.

Since you are already making changes in your life, consider what you can add to help yourself—even if it's just some deep breaths while doing your 20-second hand washing regimen.

SWITCH UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

If you are feeling restless spending so much time indoors, consider your relationship with your inside space and how it influences your mood. Look for ways you can engage with your living space differently—perhaps

Many of us know family, friends, and politicians who actively deny our reality, thus putting our survival at risk. This introduces a new challenge of change, learning to take care of ourselves and our relationships within a physical separation from our community.

changing your furniture or normal sitting position to an entirely different location of the room, or switch it up throughout the day. Even the simple, yet often challenging, act of making your bed or picking up around you can help you feel less anxious and more in control.

KEEP CONNECTING... THEN CONNECT SOME MORE

In his book, *Lost Connections*, Johann Hari presents a compelling idea that depression and anxiety have been fueled by an evolving disconnection from other humans and from meaningful values, both of which have left many feeling emotionally isolated. Human beings are hard-wired to be connected, but even before the pandemic hit our shores, we were more disconnected than we ever have been in human history. We are seeing this disconnection play out in real time with the refusal of many to accept this reality and make the difficult changes to keep us all safe. These pandemic changes to everyday life, while difficult, represent a powerful option of reconnection as a whole and the expression of true care for those around us.

Though we cannot be with each other physically, we can use this time to invest, deepen, or change the relationships we value from afar to create a sense of connectedness and safety,



ALEXANDER EINSMAN, MS LMFT is a licensed psychotherapist with Atlas Counseling, located in Downtown Madison. He specializes in working with adolescents, adults, intimate relationships, and the LGBTQ community.

offering a path to reducing anxiety or distress. It can be helpful to set boundaries around the pandemic conversation and engage in other topics that can allow a break from this chaos. It may also include sharing your concern with those who may be engaging more with denial than acceptance. Resist the temptation to blame or shame, appeal to them on a personal level from a place of deep compassion and concern.

If you want to invest in your relationships, consider making a list of people who have made a meaningful impact on your life and actually reach out to them via phone or technology. Keep in mind this time of isolation can be particularly difficult for people living alone or in abusive relationships—a simple shout out can be incredibly meaningful.

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Historically, times of unrest reveal existing fractures in society and can lead to monumental changes. Right now we are in a place of grief, both real and anticipated, but this storm will pass. Life won't be the same, but life as we knew it also had its own issues. With all that has changed, now is the time to refocus on the things we feel deep gratitude for in life and explore what truly creates our sense of a meaningful life.

While taking a walk yesterday, I noticed

a simple, but crucial truth scrawled in pink chalk on the sidewalk: "We are all in this together."

These words embody the acceptance of our changed world, along with commitment to get through this, together. We are all grieving our 2020 life plans, but this really isn't about you or me. There is a new opportunity to see humans as a connected "we," rather than a self-focused and isolated "me." To survive as a species, we must accept changes to our daily lives while getting creative on how we can take care of ourselves and our important relationships. ■

ALEXANDER EINSMAN
MS LMFT



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QTPOC COVID-19 RACISM

Neo-Colonialism in a Pandemic

Nibiwakamigkwe outlines ways that the emergency actions taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 exacerbate and further marginalize communities of color.



AANIIN, BOOZHOO NIINDINAWEMAGANIDOG.

Hello, my relatives! I'm a queer Native and Latine Two Spirit currently quarantined in Tee Jop/Madison. It's early April, and while most of these Dear Queer White People essays are meant to be general guidelines for queer intersectionality, the only topic I feel I can authentically cover in this moment is the current pandemic. Future columns will cover violence in healthcare, the Latine/Latinx/Latin@ nomenclature discussion, working in white spaces, and 2SQTIP erasure along with input from QTPOC in Madison and across Turtle Island. But for now those will need to wait. How are you? You doing ok?

Yeah, me neither. This is terrifying, and it's important that we acknowledge this fear and anxiety we are all experiencing. I've heard a lot of folks talk about how the COVID-19 pandemic is unifying us all.

But I'm gonna have to stop you there. Yes, we all are experiencing substantial loss, but while many are worried about their jobs and toilet paper supply, BIPOC, notably QTPOC, are seeing our humanity stripped away from us day by day.

SINOPHOBIA

Chinese and Chinese-American community members are increasingly targets for attack, blamed for the failed American response. So too are Korean, Phillipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Laoatian, Tawainese, Cambodian, and other East/Southeast Asian communities who are deemed guilty by regional association and similarly victimized. Even Inuit, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous Latine peoples have experienced mis-racialized attacks from people too bigoted to realize they got the whole continent wrong. Their safety isn't considered because the pandemic response takes full

priority. Businesses designate times for the elderly and immunocompromised to shop with less fear, but East Asian, Southeast Asian, and Asian-presenting people must shoulder this societal burden with no relief. Many have made the decision to uninterruptedly remain at home despite needing groceries and exercise. At this time, other people may be more dangerous to them than the virus.

Behind the safety of screens, anti-Blackness is co-opted to justify sinophobia. "Chinese virus" and "Wuhan virus" are as racist as West Nile virus, Guinea Worm, Ebola, Zika, Lassa, and others were before. While infectious diseases have received Euro-American names as well, they never overshadowed their original namesakes. German measles was



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even renamed Rubella after the virus itself. Toponyms rarely come from the people affected by them and who will carry the weight of the name. They are an "othering" device and a tool of white supremacy. Names that degrade the so-called "Global South" laterally convince remaining Western countries and inhabitants of their superiority and safety. And as the distance between ourselves and these locations widen, vigilance wanes. So please, just call it COVID-19 or coronavirus. Both names are more accurate and don't perpetuate the ongoing weaponization of viruses against non-white nations and citizens.

Racism continues to saturate our medical systems. COVID-19 deaths are disproportionately killing Black Americans. Comorbidities like diabetes and intergenerational housing (more common and often beneficial in communities of color) contribute, but these also are a result of surviving in a discriminatory system. Black and brown people are more likely to lack meaningful health insurance, sick leave, and job security, leaving us with the option of continuing to work, getting sick, and risking hospitalization, or staying home and losing our jobs, housing, and necessities. While this certainly affects white people as well (and white queer folks especially—I see you), BIPOC are most affected, and we are more likely to see our friends and family members in a similar situation. This doesn't even cover racism we experience once admitted to the hospital or the unsafe conditions currently in prisons. It is so much more than worrying about illness. We bear witness to the gutting of our communities.

Rather than widely seen messages of unification and support, people of color have experienced greed at their expense. Greed for feelings of control in anti-Asian attacks. Greed for feelings of safety in racist names and institutions. Greed is a monster that Native peoples have fought since colonization. Now we are facing centuries-old accumulation of greed and theft with the pandemic.

FIRST NATIONS

Our access to treatment is restricted. Treaties promising healthcare are unfulfilled. Indian Health Service is notoriously understaffed and underfunded. There are no IHS clinics with in-house COVID-19 testing. IHS structures rarely allow us access to long-term primary care physicians. Emergency funds are tied up in CDC bureaucracy. We are the last in line. During the H1N1 epidemic, when First Nations communities asked for medical supplies, the Canadian government sent them body bags. Even now, 61 First Nations reserves have long-term drinking and cleansing water advisories. Forty percent of the people who live on the Navajo Reservation, the largest in the United States, do not have running water in their homes. How are we supposed to fulfill basic health guidelines and wash our hands when we don't have clean water?

Water that we have been fighting to protect for years. Pipelines are still actively under construction while protectors are told they must stay at home. Arrested water and land protectors out on bail or probation are only

free if they follow all court orders—including refraining from wearing any mask or facial concealment. That includes personal protective equipment. The people fighting for clean water for us all now must choose between risking their health by forgoing masks or risking their health when they are reincarcerated in overcrowded jails. In November, Governor Evers signed a bill escalating penalties for protesting pipelines so these cases will be more common, even after it is safe to gather again.

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But we've survived a major health crisis or two in our histories (cholera, chickenpox, bubonic plague, smallpox, influenza, malaria, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, typhoid, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis epidemics all came from colonization); we can do this again. Without secured health care, and sometimes basic necessities, sovereign tribal nations are enforcing closed borders and travel restrictions to their members and outsiders. This is completely their right, and one of very few options they have to protect their communities. So, of course white people are mad about it. Saugnash in Canada protested their lack of access to cheaper cigarettes by posting "No Indians" signs in grocery stores. A settler couple from Quebec broke guidelines and flew to Vuntut Gwitchin-community Old Crow in Yukon. From Madison acquaintances alone, I have seen social media posts of recent travels with potential COVID-19 carriers to Níú-ágha-távú -pù (Ute), Diné (Navajo), Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiian), Seminole, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux) territories. Tourism dollars, many of which will never make it to Native groups, are the modern equivalent of smallpox blankets. Yes, that was a real thing.

We, as Native nations, have so much to lose. Our Elders, the people most vulnerable to coronavirus, are our knowledge keepers. They carry our ancestral teachings on medicine, language, and culture when such things were outlawed and the safest place was to carry it within ourselves. Now, we respect our ancestors by maintaining oral traditions, and the loss of Elders means the loss of parts of ourselves we've yet to learn.

As we worry for them, we wonder if we will be able to provide the medicines that can

best help them. Chaga and the birch it exclusively grows on are routinely overharvested for health-fad powders and winter decorations. Both these plants are vital to my people, but our access is restricted by keshagesh intervention. Folks will be able to pay a high price for chaga at the co-op while the people who originally gathered it will find decimated, empty trees.

In the places we are still able to gather, we are left questioning if there will be land to walk for medicines. In late March, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (who literally greeted the Pilgrims) learned they would be losing their reservation as ordered by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt. The tribe will still be federally recognized, but lose much of their sovereignty and rights. Massachusetts land is valuable and Mashpee's planned casino would interfere with Trump businesses: this case sets a terrifying precedent for the nation's 326 reservations. But with the COVID-19 pandemic dominating the news, the Mashpee Wampanoag have yet received little attention outside Indian Country.

QTPOC

In all of this, it can be easy to overlook queer and trans issues. For QTPOC, our queerness and transness is seen *after* our brownness and blackness. Our communities of color are our first homes, and in this pandemic many of us are sent back to families, neighborhoods, and reserves not always accepting of our identities. When historic and contemporary cisheterosexual conformity means survival, QTPOC and 2SQTIP are further marginalized in already struggling communities.

Even queer pop culture feels unsafe. Netflix's *Tiger King* documentary release elevated Joe Exotic into near-instant comedic gay meme worship despite his anti-Black slur usage and constant cultural appropriation of Native imagery. The series itself featured white bi-erasure but also misgendered and deadnamed a Kanaka Maoli kane throughout the series. This isn't must-watch television for QTPOC: it's further realization that queer white spaces don't care about our safety and comfort.

I had no idea what racism would look like in the time of pandemic. The very long arch of colonization, racialization, and bigotry feels as if it's been tightened by COVID-19, allowing each new attack to tumble and spiral into the next without interruption. We have learned that allyship is a non-essential function during a pandemic. Issues affecting BIPOC, coronavirus-related or not, are suddenly less relevant for the sake of supposed-unity.

This is unacceptable. Confronting bigotry won't prevent anyone from sewing masks, physically distancing, or washing their hands: it will save lives. Those simple actions aren't enough to keep our communities safe in this unfair system.

There's been a lot of rhetoric around "the new normal." For many, the coronavirus pandemic has brought constant concern for family members, worry about jobs and personal wellbeing, distrust in government response, a sense of isolation despite people all around, and generalized feelings of dread. This isn't a new normal for QTPOC and BIPOC generally. This is normal—extra spicy pandemic edition. For many of us, these feelings are baseline: they haven't been new to us for a while. And when the stay-at-home orders are lifted, when businesses reopen, when we can hug each other again, this will still be our normal.

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Early in the physical isolation order, my (white) partner and I were walking east along Williamson Street. A few blocks ahead, another pedestrian turned onto the street. As he approached, he adjusted his backpack, put his head down, and crossed the street. My partner laughed nervously, mentioning how weird it was to have people avoid you on the sidewalk.

I glanced back at him and raised my eyebrows. He caught the whiff of empathy, and corrected himself: "Oh, that's something you go through anyway."

Yeah, that's how it's always been. ■

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COVID-19 COOKING QUALITY TIME AT HOME

Bringing the Love

Some of our greatest bonds are built over food. **Jeanne Moe** suggests ways to nurture those connections in your own kitchen to help cope while in quarantine.

HOW ARE YOU FARING, my beautiful *Our Lives* family?

I've pondered this question (and others) over and over as I've sat down to write this piece. Are you able to find peace? What's holding you tethered to this moment in time? What's bringing you the soul-nourishment required to keep changing, as this world rolls by now, different, even hour-to-hour?

So many questions without tangible, definable answers. Great stretches of time spent thinking about what is truly important as our previous distractions are neatly folded up and put away

The bottom line answer that I come back to is bringing the love.

For me and mine, a great deal of that love (and my own herstory) has been built on the foundation of food and all of the feels that go with it. Reminiscing over my Gran (who has been gone for 25+ years), I'm so happy to find that her kitchen still pleasantly resides in my mind's eye like it was yesterday. The sweet smells of that kitchen when she was baking. The soft and low voices of my grandma, my mom, and all of my aunts discussing all of the business of country women and their daily comings and goings. The heady aroma of strong coffee. The early afternoon sunlight pouring through the big windows of her kitchen, and watching that light change and fade as our visiting stretched from one hour into the next. All of these happenings were gently woven into the fabric of what was truly important at that point in my young life—being deeply loved (and knowing it). Seeing the love in the eyes of every person around that well-worn kitchen table and being able to touch that love by simply putting out my hand. Understanding that each of these women carried a part of me with them, every day, wherever their travels took them, and inherently knowing my well-being was guarded by those fierce and quiet souls.

When I think about it today, not much has changed when it comes to love. Our families, our people need our love more than ever right now. Even if the kitchen may not be your go-to place to kindle that spark, I'm going to challenge you to try it on for size. Make a simple cookie recipe, and share them with your people. Recreate your Nana's amazing meatballs with red sauce. Pick up the grocery order for your elderly neighbor. Find a recipe online, email it to your friends, and host a Zoom cooking lesson (don't forget the wine). If you have a favorite recipe, maybe hand-write it (insert enormous gasp here) on a recipe card and mail it to someone you love with a sweet message inside. These things may seem so small (or not), but try doing them anyway. We never know when the smallest of gestures may just bring enormous joy to someone we love who desperately needs it.

And if you need recipe inspiration, you can always hit me back on Insta @jbenink or find me through my webpage: simplyservedpersonalchef.com.

And it goes without saying, gentle readers, stay safe, stay healthy, and be kind to yourselves as we all grow together toward our new best selves. ■



JEANNE MOE was raised by the best humans on the planet in a small, rural community in northern Wisconsin. Her heart still resides on the shores of Lake Wissota, but the rest of her put down roots just south of Madison, in the village of McFarland. She has owned Simply Served Personal Chef Service for nine years. Her family of three consists of herself and her two dogs (they are the best!) who are always up for the next great adventure.

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Learning & Leading

Randall Elementary School GSA Advisor **SJ Hemmerich** shares their joy at watching their Gender and Sexuality Alliance find its voice and flourish.

MY NAME IS SJ HEMMERICH and my pronouns are they/ them/theirs. I am a queer, nonbinary, elementary school art teacher and GSA Advisor at Randall Elementary School in Madison and a Welcoming Schools facilitator for the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD). My students call me Mx. (pronounced “mix”) Hemmerich. I have been teaching for eight years now, the most recent three years at Randall.



Welcoming Schools is a program being used in Madison schools to create safe and inclusive environments where all people are seen, valued, and respected. A friend who worked in a Madison school partnered with Welcoming Schools told me that her students discussed gender stereotypes and called out teachers for using incorrect pronouns. I knew then that MMSD would be a good match for me. Once I was hired by MMSD, I helped bring Welcoming Schools to Randall and Franklin Elementary Schools. Among many other positive and inclusive changes, I am no longer the only teacher sharing and inviting students to share their name/pronouns—it is a schoolwide practice.

This year a couple of my fifth grade students asked if we could start an “L...G...B...T...Q?” group. (LGBTQ+ now rolls off all their tongues.) I was delighted, honored, and excited! This began Randall’s first GSA, or Gender and Sexuality Alliance. A few fifth graders attended our first several meetings where we had fun making colorful, pun-filled posters to invite new members: “meet BI the art room” and “Les-bi honest, I’m gay. Join the GSA!”

Word spread and now roughly 20 students attend our weekly meetings. In one student’s words, the precious recess they miss is “a small price to pay.” At each meeting we share names and pronouns. Students are respectful and attentive, knowing this may be someone’s first time sharing such information, which often causes fear and anxiety. As an openly gender nonbinary educator, this is one of the few spaces that everyone around me uses my pronouns correctly. Students have built such a strong sense of community that one student proudly added their sexuality after their name and pronouns at every meeting. Slowly, more students started adding their sexuality, followed by cheers, claps, and high fives from other GSA members.

Together we crafted a mission statement, brainstormed discussion topics such as coming out and self esteem, read the book *George*, designed posters for local LGBTQ events and Black Lives Matter Action week, and created a video for “Words Matter Week.” Students researched, made presentations, and led discussions on topics such as Stonewall and LGBTQ Around the World.

Sometimes, students come to meetings with concerns: “Disney World doesn’t have ANY all-gender bathrooms.” “Did you know that movies are rated differently based on if there is a kiss between a boy/girl or a kiss between two people of the same gender?” “One of Randall’s buses was divided by binary gender, boys on one side of the bus and girls on the other.” We address these concerns with group discussions and develop an action plan. For example, GSA members created supportive cards that we handed out to students as they boarded the bus the next day. Messages included “Your gender is your gender no matter how you look,” and “Don’t let anybody tell you who you are.”

The fifth graders in Randall’s GSA are confident, articulate leaders who understand themselves and recognize injustices in this world better than most. They think critically and support each other as activists and allies. I can get on board with this future. ■



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