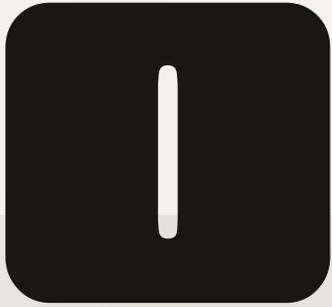


our lives



Queer DJs



Nature religions



Horseradish Kitchen + Market

ENTERTAINMENT

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

INSIDE: Our Annual Greater Madison LGBTQ Arts Directory

September/October 2022

STEPS FORWARD

Ja' Malik

Madison Ballet's new artistic director, plans to shake up conventional ballet and create space for underrepresented communities.

IF MARRIAGE EQUALITY IS OVERTURNED

Important steps to take to protect your spouse and family.

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LOCAL EFFORTS TO PREVENT MONKEYPOX

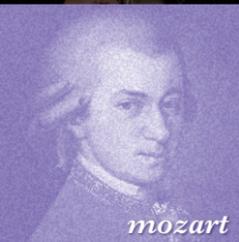
How to stay safe—and where and when to get your vaccine.

p.11



Marc Fink, Oboe

SYMPHONY SEASON PREMIERE
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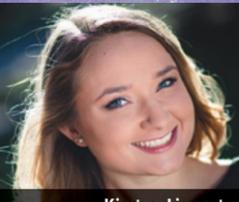
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Madison Symphony Chorus,
Beverly Taylor, Director



John DeMain, Conducting



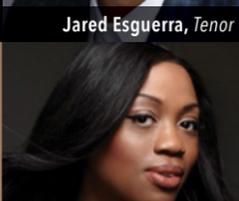
Kirsten Lippart,
Mezzo-soprano



Jared Esguerra, Tenor



Matt Boehler, Bass



Laquita Mitchell, Soprano

Ludwig van Beethoven
MOZART & BEETHOVEN 9

infinite joy

The sentiments expressed in the *Ode to Joy* are fundamental to our lives, and magnificently expressed by the dean of symphonic composers, Beethoven! His greatest influence, that of Mozart, frames the concert. – *John DeMain*

Discover more: madisonsymphony.org/joy

PROGRAM

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Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 9 in D minor*

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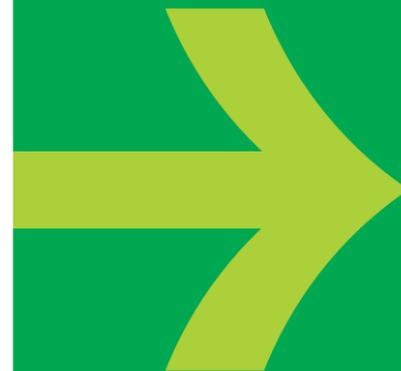
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We guarantee a refund for tickets to any program that cannot be performed for any reason. For information about health and safety, visit madisonsymphony.org/health.

Programs, dates, and artists subject to change.
Photos: (DeMain, Fink, Zelek, chorus): Peter Rodgers; (Boehler): Toni Suter/Tanua Dorendorf

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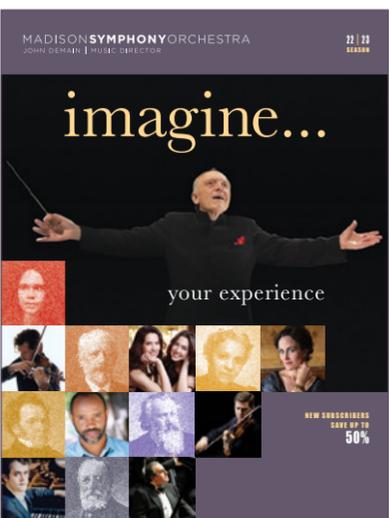


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Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway along with common council members and Friends of Madison Arts Commission at the ribbon cutting for Madison's first rainbow crosswalk.

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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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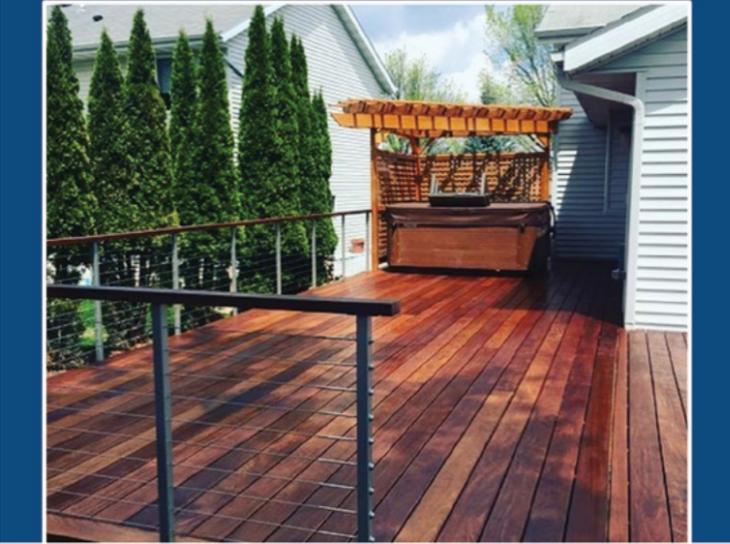
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PUBLISHER'S LETTER  PATRICK FARABAUGH



OVERFLOWING

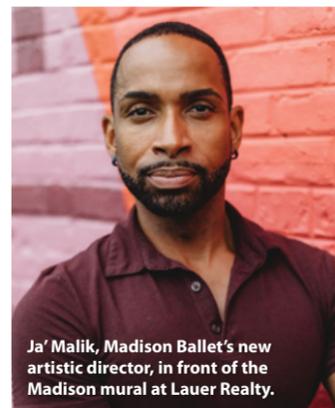
"One of my mantras is, 'Embrace what makes you unique, even if it makes others uncomfortable.' I keep that with me in my back pocket. Shoot, I keep it in my front pocket! I keep it in my hair."

—Janelle Monae

IT'S NOT BY COINCIDENCE that LGBTQ people thrive in the arts. The arts celebrate cultural differences, value thinking differently, and show us ways to expand our perspective. This year, for our annual LGBTQ arts directory, Features Curator **Doug Rowe** suggested moving beyond the representatives from the various art disciplines that we've relied on for the last few years to help build our database of local LGBTQ artists. Together we created a form and opened it up to the public via our newsletter and social media platforms—and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Our directory has nearly doubled in size! I was discovering so many new names while editing the list this year, I kept having to pause to look at their websites and portfolios. I think the magazine is at its best when it can be a tool that expands our networks and resources, and this year's list does that in ways that we've not achieved before. In fact, so much so that I had to forgo much of the space that I typically use for photos just to accommodate all the extra names! It already has



me excited for next year when I can more adequately budget space to make this as visual as it is extensive!



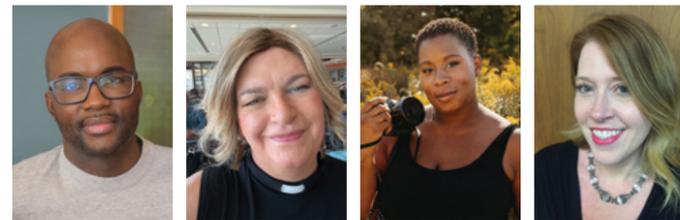
Ja' Malik, Madison Ballet's new artistic director, in front of the Madison mural at Lauer Realty.

I am also incredibly thrilled to introduce readers to **Ja' Malik**, Madison Ballet's new artistic director. **Karin Wolf**, Arts Program Administrator for the City of Madison, interviewed him for our cover days after he'd arrived in Wisconsin from New York to start the new job. Ja' Malik has a history of creating space for underrepresented communities in dance—particularly for Black and brown men—and I can't wait to see how that work manifests in his new role here.

On a more somber note, after the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*, I had multiple readers reach out to the magazine for advice on how to safeguard their families should marriage equality be targeted by the Supreme Court. Justice Clarence Thomas' concurring opinion is the most recent time he's expressed interest in revisiting the landmark *Obergefell v. Hodges*, and his and Justice Samuel Alito's comments in 2020 suggest that the risk of the court revisiting *Obergefell* may be more than hyperbole. I'm grateful that Balisle Family Law founding attorney, **Linda S. Balisle** was willing to outline some basic steps families can take to protect themselves should the worst occur.

Lastly, as we try to stifle the monkeypox outbreak, **Emily Mills** reports on the response in Wisconsin, from education to vaccination. Please, if you are in an at-risk group, please dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox to learn when you're eligible to be vaccinated. ■

CONTRIBUTORS 



FREDERICK HARRIS is the Founder and Clinical Director of New Beginnings Counseling Center. He began his career 19 years ago as a case manager in Toledo at a maximum-security prison providing services to incarcerated men of color and reunifying them with their families. His journey started working in the criminal justice system where he served a diverse population comprised of substance abuse, mental health, homelessness, transitions, family dynamics, and criminal behavior. He has had great opportunities to develop restorative and rehabilitation programs, manage in-patient and outpatient programs for co-occurring disorders, and provide clinical therapy to adolescents and adults from all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. His direct, warm, and honest approach has been effective in building and maintaining therapeutic relationships.

As an African American, Frederick brings a deep understanding of multicultural, sexuality, and other identity issues, where he offers a multidimensional perspective and insights from different populations and personal life experiences. His clinical training includes an array of treatment modalities, which he finds to be important because his belief is that a single approach does not work for every individual. His eclectic style allows his clients to feel as though they are not just another person on a list of many, but rather an individual with concerns and issues that he can help them work through.

VICA-ETTA STEEL is an openly queer, transgender woman. And she is still surprised that she is a faith leader! For most of her life, she only knew the way churches twisted words of faith into weapons—but stop to chat, and she'll tell you how beautifully queer faith is, and she will also tell you that all you need to know is that you are already beautiful, you are already wonderful. It is her joy to work with people across the spiritual spectrum who have returned to their queer family, Jewish, Pagan, Christian, to name a few, and the many atheist and agnostic people who taught her how to believe deeply in love, in community. Vica-Etta is a Vicar at St. John's Lutheran in Madison where she preaches and does outreach. She also serves as a public chaplain at the Farmers' Market on the Capitol square, at coffee shops, and on Tik-Tok.

When **GLEND MITCHELL** started a family it was important for her to capture memories and highlight the differences that make people shine. GM.CREATIVE Photo has given her an outlet to recognize the beauty of every "other" person and now, 10+ years in, she's still in love.

She serves the Greater Milwaukee area and the state as a whole, specializing in portrait and lifestyle photography. Her clients feel comfortable in front of the camera because they're not "shooting," they're having a conversation about their unique story and she just happens to be taking photos along the way. We all know it's not just about the pictures; it's about celebrating how living your authentic life every day is a victory. She's learned you can't wait for what you want; you have to create it. So she eats dessert often, values cheese like gold, and wears red lipstick as war paint.

KARIN WOLF is an arts administrator, freelance arts writer, and consultant. She likes to get deep and try to understand complex art, people, and ideas. Writing about them is her favorite way to do so. She has an M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction from UW-Madison and undergraduate degrees in History, History of Cultures, and Afro-American History. She is a long-time supporter of the arts and arts education, and is involved with many organizations in establishing exhibitions, film programs, temporary art, permanent public sculpture projects, and placemaking.

Last one off the water wins.





MADISON, WI

Jack Sanders

Photographed by Andy Quint.

I am an artist. I am disabled. In my experience, surviving this world as a queer disabled person is an art form all on its own. Most of the time my art lives in conversations, daily routines, in the ways I care for my body, my nest, my relationships, in the ways I slow down and tune in, over and over. It is an art to carve out space for yourself in a world that doesn't even realize you're missing from it.

There is a cycle I'm very familiar with—where the world (a building, an event, a process) is inaccessible, therefore disabled people can't show up, therefore we are thought to be rare and unimportant, and thus this inaccessibility feels justified—rinse and repeat. It's hard to not be able to go where I want to go. It's hard to watch queer communities gather in spaces I can't go in my wheelchair, to feel the way desirability politics drive so many opportunities for social connection. It's hard to watch queer communities throw COVID caution to the wind, leaving so many behind. It is an art to fight inaccessibility at every turn. It is an art to create meaning in so much isolation and precarity. Connecting with other queer and disabled people online in my twenties was the first time I ever felt a sense of home, of recognition.

I have had many layers of self discovery, coming to recognize myself more and more authentically. I was born physically disabled and started experiencing chronic illness in my teens. I was trapped in a very repressive environment for my first twenty years. Then, in my early twenties, I realized I am queer. Then I started to learn about disability as a political identity, and the ways in which all oppression is connected. I learned about how I've been shaped by white supremacy culture, what it means to be both oppressor and oppressed. Then I learned that I have ADHD. In my early thirties I realized I am nonbinary. And most impactful of all, I realized I am autistic. All of these layers have helped me find so much rich meaning after the chaos and powerlessness of my early years.

After living on both the East and West coasts, I moved to Madison several years ago, and have been excited to connect with other other queer, trans, neurodivergent, and disabled people here.

It is an art to create and maintain a sense of pride in a body like mine. To me, disability pride means externalizing the shame that ableism has often forced me to internalize in order to survive in this world. It means holding up a mirror to each other as disabled people, so that when you see my dignity, my worth, you realize that I am looking at you with the same admiration and affection. Offering each other this recognition of our shared humanity.

Disability has informed every minute of every day I have lived on this planet. Pride for me is about integrating this, claiming this as part of the many things that make me who I am. And inviting you to do the same. Pride is also about embracing what life has taught me, that we need each other. This feels so important that I will say it again and again, to everyone I meet. We need each other. We need each other. ■



JO FINLEY ELDER was born in Dayton, OH. After her parents divorced, she and her mother lived with her grandparents. Jo graduated high school in 1947, then went to Oberlin College. She met Joe (Joseph) Elder in her sophomore year. They were

married August 4, 1951, and just celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary.

Jo and Joe sailed for Madurai, India in 1951, on a Shansi teaching fellowship from Oberlin. Their daughter Shonti was born in India.

The Elders had three children; Shonti married to Bill Frey, with daughter, Kluonie and son Devin and wife Lily; John married to Leslie Kennedy Elder with daughters Anna married to Rodrigo Canedo-Gattegno, and Linden married to Daniel Thayer, parents of great granddaughters Lyra and Rowan; and Ed married to Danny Ashkenasi.

Jo and Joe joined the Society of Friends in the late fifties, inspired by Friends' peace testimony, and Friends' belief in human equality. Jo and Joe were active opponents of the Vietnam War, indeed every war, and demonstrated against them all. Jo was awarded the Woman of Distinction in 1993, and belonged to many progressive social causes.

Thanks to having a gay son, Ed, Jo and Joe were early members (1980s) of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Jo Elder was elected to the Madison School Board in 1998, and introduced more awareness of LGBT issues in the schools.

She treasured her lifetime with husband Joe. ■



G. STEVEN "STEVE" BEAVERS, age 62, passed away on August 3. He was born in Los Angeles on August 15, 1959 and graduated high school in 1977. After graduating, he spent a year at UC Santa Cruz. In 1978 he transferred to Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. He graduated in 1982.

He remained in Evanston after graduation. That is where he met his former wife and lifelong best friend, Elizabeth Faesi Beavers "Beth." They were married in Los Vegas in January, 1988. Steve juggled acting and bartending, receiving rave reviews for both!

Steve and Beth settled in Madison, WI when they decided to begin having a family. Steve was hired by the Madison Police Dept. in 1991. There he achieved the rank of sergeant. He impacted many lives thereby sharing his personal experience with mental health struggles. He helped to develop specific training on trauma, stress, and depression for officers in many departments. He retired in 2012. Then he became the Volunteer Coordinator for the AIDS Network in Madison.

The most important people in Steve's life were his sons, Jacob Beavers (Madison) and Noah Beavers (Los Angeles). Pride in his sons could be read on his face!

Karen Beavers (Pasadena, CA) is Steve's last relative. Steve also leaves behind Jason Harwood (Madison) his loving partner of many years. ■

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Monkeypox in Wisconsin

A new virus brings old stigma and fear to an already pandemic-weary population. What you need to know to protect yourself and your community, and how we can still prevent a larger outbreak, according to local experts and organizers.

HEALTH & WELLNESS | MONKEYPOX | STIGMA | PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, the first case of monkeypox was confirmed in the United States, in Boston. The virus, which had previously been endemic to parts of Central and West Africa, had already worked its way across Europe starting early in 2022, when outbreaks hit the UK, Spain, and other countries where it had never been seen before.

While that raised alarms for those on the front lines—largely within the LGBTQ community—the rest of the world was slow to react. Since then, the virus has spread to at least 50 countries, with more than 42,000 confirmed cases, mostly in Europe and the United States.

It is not a strictly sexually transmitted infection (STI), but since monkeypox is spread through close, sustained,

personal contact like sex, kissing, and kink play, sex plays a large role in its spread.

The largest pool of those infected have and continue to be queer people and their networks. The virus isn't limited to impacting LGBTQ people, of course. That hasn't stopped some of the old familiar stigmas and blame-games from rearing their heads. Misinformation began spreading almost as quickly as the virus itself. Coupled with a slow and often piecemeal initial response by governments and health organizations, that's resulted in yet another public health crisis where queer folks suffer disproportionately.

"We've seen so many attacks on Pride and drag story times, it feels like we're in a very precarious situation

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with this disease outbreak in particular,” says AJ Hardie, Program Director at OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center in Madison. “But I think a lot of the lessons that come out of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, for instance, are about how we as a community have to have each other’s backs, and inform ourselves. It’s an unfortunate reality that, for a lot of queer people and especially a lot of trans people, there’s already a lot of advocacy that we have to do in healthcare settings. This is just another thing that we’re going to have to self-advocate for testing and vaccination.”

Those lessons have been hard-won by the LGBTQ community and can benefit us—and the world—in this current crisis. Where mainstream health and government entities may not be consistently reaching the most impacted communities, Hardie and Outreach are using their platform to provide accurate and up-to-date information directly to LGBTQ people. Diverse & Resilient in Milwaukee has been hosting vaccine clinics. Individuals have been helping friends and loved ones get accurate information and seek out care.

Nationally, queer activists and experts have been advocating for better testing and vaccine distribution, especially in New York City, the epicenter of the outbreak in the U.S. And methods of risk reduction, similar to efforts around HIV/AIDS and Covid, are being developed and disseminated via queer networks.

“It’s safer sex practices that we should be doing anyway, because we’re worried about STIs, we’re worried about HIV, all these things, and that really comes into play with monkeypox,” adds Hardie.

Given that Wisconsin tends to see a lag time in infections compared to places with larger populations, too, it can provide an opening to prevent outbreaks from spreading exponentially, explains Dr. Ajay Sethi, professor of Population Health Sciences at UW-Madison.

“That lag time gives us a little room to educate people so that they can take the necessary precautions,” says Sethi, “and then we can monitor the situation to prevent a worse wave.” He cautions against only caring about the situation in Wisconsin; however, given that the problem is global. “[Monkeypox] can be reintroduced in Wisconsin later if it’s not contained in other places that are adjacent. We have to care about the whole.”

Sethi also emphasizes the importance of clear, honest discussions around sexuality and disease transmission, both in the LGBTQ community and at large. He notes that too many reporters and media figures tend to shy away

from frank talk about sex, and that, like with HIV/AIDS, that only leads to worse outcomes.

“We need to do a better job of talking about sex in general, and then recognizing that people of any identity will have sex and that’s healthy and normal and good,” Sethi explains.

When it comes to monkeypox, the line shouldn’t be that people need to stop having sex, but that there are things we can do to reduce risk. Right now, most of that education is happening person-to-person, but it needs to be shared more widely.

“What I see is a community of people who have been left without access to the care that they need, advocating for themselves and for others and going to extraordinary lengths to try to minimize viral risks,” Joseph Osmundson,

DHS maintains a list of locations across the state with publicly available vaccine appointments at dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm.

a queer health advocate and clinical assistant professor of biology at New York University, recently told *Vox*. “All the while, their suffering is not being taken seriously.”

“Gay sex is a fact of life. Gay sex exists on planet Earth, you will never change that, whether you want to or not. Gay sex will always exist, gay sex doesn’t drive anything. It’s like the sun in the sky or the tide going in and out,” Osmundson went on to say. “So when epidemics spread through gay sexual networks, we want to be very precise about that language. And also to be clear that sex is a normal and healthy behavior. And our goal in biomedicine should be giving people all the tools that they need to make the best decisions and, in this case, have sex with the lowest risk possible. In this case, the drivers of the epidemic are the structures globally that have led to vaccines, tests, and treatment all existing for a virus and yet being almost entirely inaccessible. We cannot change the fact that gay sex exists, but we can change the fact that the Jynneos vaccine is not globally available. We can change the fact that TPOXX is largely inaccessible.”

Some of that advocacy and hard work is beginning to pay off. The White House in late August announced that it was ramping up distribution of vaccines and antiviral treatments, with special focus given to large LGBTQ gatherings and events. This came after the administration officially declared monkeypox a public health emergency, freeing up resources to help battle the virus.

Whether it will be enough to prevent a larger outbreak, or be too little too late, remains to be seen. In the meantime, the best medicine is good information and getting vaccinated as soon as you’re able/eligible.

ABOUT THE VACCINE(S)

As Osmundson notes, there are two vaccines already in existence (developed for smallpox, which is genetically similar) that can be used to help prevent monkeypox infection.

The **Jynneos vaccine** is the preferred method and what’s currently being distributed and used in the United States. It’s approved for use in adults 18 and up who are considered high risk for infection and has been in use in Europe since 2013 and the U.S. since 2019. The vaccine usually requires two shots given 28 days apart, with peak immunity being reached 14 days after the second dose.

The older **ACAM2000** is a single-dose vaccine, and takes four weeks for its immune protection to reach its maximum. However, it has the potential for more side effects and adverse events than Jynneos. It is not recommended for people with severely weakened immune systems and several other conditions.

Ryan Westergaard, chief medical officer with the state Department of Health Services, told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that, as of mid-August, Wisconsin had received about 3,286 doses of the 5,986 it has requested from the federal government. Due to an inadequate supply of vaccine nationally, states are only allowed to request additional amounts once they’ve distributed at least 90% of their supply.

Given the continued supply chain issues, priority is still being given to people considered to be at high risk for contracting monkeypox. According to the DHS, that includes:

- People who know that a sexual partner in the past 14 days was diagnosed with monkeypox.
- People who attended an event or venue where there was known monkeypox exposure.
- Gay men, bisexual men, trans men and women, any men who have sex with men, and gender non-conforming/non-binary individuals, who have had multiple sexual partners in the last 14 days.

DHS maintains a list of locations across the state with publicly available vaccine appointments at dhs.wisconsin.gov/monkeypox/vaccine.htm. As with any public health emergency, it’s important to check back for updates often, as the situation changes and more vaccine doses are made available.

There is also an anti-viral treatment: **TPOXX (tecovirimat)**. It can help patients avoid the most severe forms of the illness. Thanks to bureaucratic hurdles, it’s been nearly inaccessible.

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BLACK LIVES MATTER



The Biden-Harris Administration recently announced that it would relax some of those rules and release 50,000 courses of the treatment to different jurisdictions at the end of August.

WHAT MONKEYPOX IS—AND ISN'T

What is monkeypox and how serious is the current outbreak? Monkeypox is a rare but potentially serious disease that is caused by the monkeypox virus. The virus is from the same family of viruses as smallpox.

According to the CDC:

People with monkeypox get a rash that may be located on or near the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole) and could be on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth.

The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.

The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be extremely painful or itchy.

Other symptoms of monkeypox can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Exhaustion

- Muscle aches and backache
- Headache
- Respiratory symptoms (e.g. sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough)

You may experience all or only a few symptoms.

- Some people have flu-like symptoms before the rash.
- Some get a rash first, followed by other symptoms.
- Others only experience a rash.

Monkeypox symptoms usually start within three weeks of exposure to the virus. If someone has flu-like symptoms, they will usually develop a rash 1–4 days later.

Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2–4 weeks and is rarely fatal.

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, skin-to-skin contact, including:

- Direct and sustained contact with monkeypox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox.
- Touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone

- with monkeypox.
- Contact with respiratory secretions.

This direct contact can happen during intimate contact, including:

- Oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals of a person with monkeypox.
- Hugging, massage, and kissing.
- Prolonged face-to-face contact.
- Touching fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with monkeypox and that have not been disinfected, such as bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys.

A person with monkeypox can spread it from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed.

There are certain things about how the virus is spread that are still unknown and being researched. For instance, we do not yet know if the virus can be spread when someone has no symptoms, how often monkeypox is spread through respiratory secretions, or when a person with monkeypox symptoms might be more likely to spread the virus through respiratory secretions, or whether it can be spread through semen, vaginal fluids, urine, or feces. ■

NEWS BRIEFS

WRITTEN BY MELANIE JONES

CARDINAL BAR, PIVOTAL LGBTQ ESTABLISHMENT, TO RETURN UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

THE CARDINAL BAR, a legendary former community hub and dance club, is coming back thanks to five partners who want to reestablish it as a welcoming place for the LGBTQ+ community in Madison. What was once a cultural, political, musical, and artistic hub for 42 years on East Wilson Street closed in 2017 when the former owner, **Ricardo Gonzalez**, decided he was ready to retire. The space was then taken over by Mike Eitel with his Nomad World Pub, which moved to the former Brickhouse BBQ spot and has since closed. The five partners (**Andy Hansen, Allison Lenz, Dustin Lenz, Anthony Rineer, and Carrie Tobias**) all had an emotional connection to the old bar and felt its loss in 2017 created a void in the larger Madison community. Hanson, a musician, experienced it as a musical hub, playing numerous DJ and live band sets in the old space. “I was introduced to a lot of different cultures and all that. It was just a big community hangout,” he told the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

Allison Lenz connected with the original bar because of the Latin Jazz scene there, and its status as a place for neighborhood and political meetings—as well as music—both of which led her to join the project a year ago. “What attracted me was the community of the space, a place where people could be free, a place where people could have conversations,” she said. “And Ricardo was really, really good at that. And he held a lot of community events there.” Rineer and Tobias connected in a different way, attending the fetish nights and EDM parties.

These connections reflect the diversity within the community, and with new LGBTQ events led by Carrie Tobias, such as drag bunches, the space has potential.

With a goal of opening as soon as October, these five have their work cut out for them. Because the place was built in 1912, they can’t do much except restore it, but according to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, “Lenz said they’ve worked with Gonzalez over the past year to define the new bar’s identity. ‘We want to do a lot of the same things with Ricardo’s blessing, and we want to make it our own as well.’”

KETTLE MORaine SCHOOL BOARD BANS PRIDE FLAGS, BLACK LIVES MATTER SIGNS

THE KETTLE MORaine School Board voted on August 16 overwhelmingly in favor of a policy that forbids district employees, including teachers, from displaying any political or religious messages. This policy prohibits, among other things, pride flags, Black Lives Matter signs, and signs in support of police. It also prohibits staff from including their pronouns in emails. According to *USAToday*, “Superintendent Stephen Plum recently told the board that the district’s interpretation of a policy that prohibits staffers from using their positions to promote partisan politics, religious views, and propaganda for personal, monetary, or nonmonetary gain changed following a legal analysis.” Despite vehement community opposition, the only board member who voted against this measure was Jim Romanowski, who previously supported the measure but says that he “changed his mind about the policy after hearing from students and staff.”

The policy, which is similar to one passed in Waukesha, has been criticized as an attack specifically on LGBTQ+ students and teachers, and has been said to discourage educators from designating themselves as “safe spaces” for queer youth in the district. While it does restrict displaying “Blue Lives Matter” and “Back the Blue” signs as well, forbidding the use of pronouns in emails has been criticized as a targeted measure to silence the LGBTQ+ community.

FREEDOM, INC. ANNOUNCES STAFF CHANGES

FREEDOM INC. has recently had a shift in their leadership with the departure of co-executive director **M Adams**. Co-executive Director **Kabzuag Vaj** sent out a letter that outlined how the organization has been working during the pandemic and George Floyd and Breonna Taylor uprisings. She also outlined how it has been working internally, “strengthening out organizational operations, and preparing for leadership transitions.”



M was with Freedom Inc. for 14 years, starting as an intern and working her way up to co-director and is leaving to become an executive leader at M4BL, a nationwide abolitionist and anticapitalist coalition that advocates for policy and cultural changes to save black lives.

Mahnker Dahnweih, Bianca Gomez, and Chai Moua will join the leadership team, bringing with them experience in civic engagement strategies, youth organization, and gender justice. With this team, Vaj states that the organization is “in the best position we have ever been to fight for our people and the liberated world we all deserve.” ■



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Selena Fox



Raven Fabal

people speaks of their queer identity as connected to their religious faith.

To be clear, people who follow Wiccan paths and other paths of Contemporary Paganism are too often attacked by majority culture and people from other faith traditions. Just as for queer people, Contemporary Pagans may feel the need to hide their identity to be safe. To help protect and uplift, Rev. Fox's activist work includes serving as the Executive Director of the Lady Liberty League, a Pagan civil rights and religious freedom network sponsored by Circle Sanctuary.

QUEERLY BECOMING

Megan, Raven, and Selena were each born into Christian faiths and have varying relations with those traditions. Interestingly, none expressed disdain for those who believe differently than them, accepting all, as long as their faith is rooted in true, encompassing, inclusive love. Imagine if all faith leaders felt the same?

In their journeys, both Raven and Megan speak of their great wonder of the Divine and Rev. Fox also speaks of the call to faith leadership from an early age. But all were shut down by exclusivist interpretations of

Christian faith.

For all, wonder was, and is, at their core. Megan's wonder led her to "so many questions!" Raven told me that she was kicked out of Bible study for asking too many questions, and, if you spend time with her, you hear her ask many questions—questions that are discerning, honest and always filled with the joy of learning.

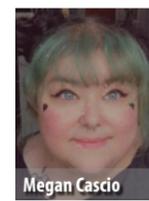
Selena felt the call of nature religion all of her life, feeling a special relationship with nature and the Spirit, but she followed her parents' practice of Southern Baptist Christianity. For Rev. Fox, a moment of change came in 1967 when she was a senior in high school. She had the unusual opportunity for a girl in a strict, patriarchal faith, to give a youth sermon along with two male classmates. She decided to bring social justice into the space, speaking to a purpose in developing interfaith ministry to the immigrants in her community who "were impoverished and needed support." The sermon did not go over well and Rev. Fox got the distinct impression that the "interfaith ministry I was proposing shocked people." That's when she realized that she needed to leave that Baptist church. After that experience, she explored a variety of different paths before discovering Paganism.

QUEERLY CLAIMING

This search for faith resonates across all the stories I've heard from Wiccan and other Contemporary Pagan believers. Experiences of exclusion and limits of love could have led them all away from faith, but instead, they each, in their own way, felt the call to search for faith that resonated. They searched through other Christian denominations, Buddhism, and Hinduism. In a world that dismissed Pagan faiths, it took a journey of uncovering to discover their path in Contemporary Paganism.

For Rev. Fox, the journey was brought into focus when she was an honors student at the College of William and Mary. In the desire to understand her courses in Classical Greek and Roman society, culture, and language better, Rev. Fox convinced her professors to hold a re-creation of a Pagan Rite of Spring. What she and some others gained "was not just a wonderful educational experience," but spiritual transformation.

Rev. Fox says that, "calling to the divine with some ancient names opened alignment within myself that began my journey as a Pagan priestess."



Megan Cascio

For Megan, an unexpected gift brought them to Wicca. Their mother bought them a book called, to the best of Megan's memory, *What the Hell is Wicca*. The book enthralled Megan and led them to study more from other books, websites, and conversations. They found that nature faiths gave them "that little joy that's like, 'Oh! That piece goes right there!'" They have grown in their learning of nature religions and Wicca, and love

how much "our Mother Earth and the Gods and Goddesses have to offer us," adding that what they feel in Wicca "can go for other religions" and what those religions' understandings of "Divine power has provided them." Megan says they can talk for hours about their faith and practice. Megan blossoms with the joy that in Wicca, "each person's journey is their own," and there are so many different branches to faith spinning out from the umbrella terms. Megan embraces how much the Divine of Nature has to offer, becoming a common ground for all faiths.

Raven found her path open up in a moment of distress. She was 18 when her brother outed her—he saw her kissing her girlfriend. Her mother threw her out of their home, and Raven says that moment resulted in "a hysterical fit as I ran out into a violent lightning storm" that "suited my mood." In her exile, she found freedom with a friend, "John, the tri-sexual," so named, "because he would 'try' anything," who gave her the space where she "could be myself, be anything, do anything I wanted ... it was wonderful, the freedom." The affirmation of not being made to think she was bad gave her time to heal. It was during this time that a youthful interest in Contemporary Pagan paths started to give her the peace to open herself to faith and leadership.

Rev. Fox tells of her own moment of exposure, but for her it wasn't just coming out of the closet, it was "coming out of the broom closet" as she says it. Though she was a public Contemporary Pagan minister and priestess in Madison, she had kept her faith and leadership from her Southern Baptist family. But in 1979, Time magazine sent reporters to cover a gathering of Contemporary Pagans. The reporters were particularly interested in a wedding that Rev. Fox officiated, a traditional hand-fasting. They even ran a photo of her holding the broom from the ceremony high overhead. She was outed nationally and internationally. But for Rev. Fox, her family had raised her to understand that "love is a foundational concept," and she sees that truth "across many world religions, probably all of them depending on who you talk with." She also adds, "It isn't so much that I have rejected Christianity, but I included a much wider circle of expression." In fact, today Rev. Fox sits on national interfaith organizations alongside people of many faiths and traditions and is active in interfaith work.

QUEERLY BEING

In each of their stories, Megan, Raven, and Selena, inhabit and create truly welcoming spaces for all who are marginalized, whether from racism or Queerphobias or any other forms that exclusion takes. The three faith leaders here, like so many of us, have experienced faith spaces that are not welcoming or worse—are actively hostile. Megan recognizes that harm can come from practitioners in Contemporary Pagan practice too, but they rarely encounter people like that in their life or practice. When they do, Megan takes the time to "to redirect them and inform them," though not all are ready to listen. By far most of the people in Pagan faith Megan meets are welcoming and affirming.

Raven feels that the nature of Pagan faith is one that is "very accepting and a lot of 'non-traditional' people are drawn to it." She states that she's "seen everyone from full on flamboyant Queens to quiet gay couples and everything in between," and all are "happily participating



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FAITH NATURE RELIGIONS PAGAN WICCA

The Queer Nature of Faith

Vica-Etta Steel introduces you to three local faith leaders from the Nature Religions and Contemporary Pagan faiths.

WHEN YOU THINK OF FAITH, do you think of Islam? Buddhism? Judaism? Christianity? Do you ever consider the Nature Religions, the Contemporary Pagan faiths that include (but are not limited to) Wiccan, Druid, Heathen, Pantheists and those who understand Nature as their religion?

Too often, the paths of Pagan faiths are dismissed or ignored. This month I work toward learning more of Contemporary Pagan religions. I owe a great debt to the leaders and practitioners interviewed below. They span the spectrum from the self-defined "baby witch," Megan Cascio (she/they), to Raven Fabal (she/her) who practices her faith and gives care to individuals who contact her through social media, to Reverend Selena Fox (she/her) senior minister, High Priestess, and founder (in 1974!) of Circle Sanctuary near Barneveld. Each of these

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in Pagan rituals and ceremonies.” Raven also takes a stand that it is absolutely necessary that each person must practice welcome, stating, “We can’t be true to ourselves, we can’t have faith that’s all accepting, if we don’t practice that for ourselves.”

Rev. Fox notes that she cannot speak for all in Contemporary Pagan religions, and that the umbrella of paths is vast. But she does feel that most are growing and adapting, just as the world has been growing and adapting and that most are affirming of LGBTQIA+ people.

It is refreshing to speak with people in faith who have at their heart inclusion and true welcome for queer people. It is powerful that these leaders are queer themselves. In this world where transgender youth and adults are under renewed attacks, targeted for political gain, these three remind us that there are faith leaders who embrace love and speak toward justice. Rev. Fox spoke of her long work for LGBTQIA+ rights, and her acceptance, in particular, of transgender people. In the late 1970s, Rev. Fox was co-facilitating a women’s conference in which a transgender woman was participating. There were other women present who did not want the woman who was transgender to be there. Rev. Fox says that there are moments when you have to make some choices. She stood up for the transgender woman, which caused some of the other women to leave the group. More recently, in 2015 before marriage equality became law, Rev. Fox also participated in an interfaith ceremony affirming inclusive marriage rights of couples in gay or lesbian relationships. In that ceremony, she left the stage and went among the people for a hand-fast-ing ritual, a literal “tying the knot” of committed love.

QUEERLY CALLED

Megan, Raven and Selena speak of the internal call, and the call from their faith, to be of aid to others, to do good, and to speak for justice.

Raven refers to her call as if it were, “a big, shiny, red injustice book. I absolutely abhor injustice, and I’ve always been the one who would stand up and advocate for someone who couldn’t speak for themselves. As I’ve grown older I know now that there are whole communities that are unable to properly speak for themselves.” Raven feels guidance from the goddesses Hecate and Erzuli in her call to justice. “Hecate,” she says, “helps people find their way,” and Erzuli “stands up for all women and stands up for anyone and everyone who needs to be aware of theirself.”

Megan speaks of care for others through channeling energy and reading Tarot pulls. Sometimes the messages she sees in her work are not what she, or the people she is reading for, want to hear, but she finds that honesty, even if it hurts, helps people find their paths.

And Selena’s long history of work in “activism is intertwined with my spirituality. It’s a way of putting love in action.” And she does put love in action with an impressively long list of actions, including anti-racism work and queer affirmation starting in the 60s, uplifting of the marginalized everywhere in her work through Circle Sanctuary, and as an active member of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice now.

Ultimately, the queer truth that sits with Megan, Raven, and Rev. Fox is that we are all family, and in deep relationship with nature. We are all called to justice and to care for others—whether human or animal—and for all who cannot speak for themselves, or whose voices are silenced. ■



VICA-ETTA STEEL is a Vicar at St. John’s Lutheran where she preaches and does outreach. She also serves as a public chaplain at the Madison Farmers’ Market, at coffee shops, and on Tik-Tok. It is her joy to work with people across the spiritual spectrum who have returned to their queer family, Jewish, Pagan, Christian, to name a few, and the many atheist and agnostic people who taught her how to believe deeply in love, in community.

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The Ballet Boy

Ja' Malik, Madison Ballet's new artistic director, plans to shake up conventional ballet while creating space for underrepresented communities to have a place on the stage.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT | MADISON BALLET | QTBIPOC

THE FIRST TIME JONATHAN SOLARI, the Madison Ballet's CEO told me that they were courting Ja' Malik, "a choreographer to watch," according to a *NYT* critic, I immediately Googled "Ja' Malik Ballet." When I learned about Ballet Boy Productions and watched a few video interviews, I felt thrilled about the possibility of such an impressive and accomplished artist choosing Madison to be his home base.

The Madison Ballet and Ja' Malik actually started discussions before the pandemic, but those negotiations were derailed by Covid. Like many other long-distance courtships, the pandemic cut into their dance, so to speak. It also gave both parties the opportunity to get to know one another better and see just how well suited they were for each other.

At the start of the pandemic, lockdowns immediately halted in-person performances, pulling the rug out from under almost every dancer. Initially, all of Ja' Malik's work engagements were canceled. In November, in a powerful essay in *Dance* magazine entitled, "My Life as an Invisible Black Choreographer," Ja' Malik wrote, "Now, 2020 is drawing to a close. And I'm fighting double duty: to stay alive as a Black man in America, and also as a Black male artist in the ballet world." A reality that persists in our divided country—and, in some ways, is worsening.

In addition to the skills and high profile Ja' Malik brings with him to Madison, he also possesses a wealth of knowledge about how to support boys, especially boys of color, who are interested in learning ballet.

By early 2021 things started turning around for Ja' Malik, and he was once again working nonstop. The Boston Ballet School commissioned him to work virtually to choreograph a piece. Then the American Repertory Ballet, Charlotte Ballet, Boston Conservatory, and Festival Ballet Providence, among others, hired him. "Everything was moving back in the right direction," he told me when we spoke by phone four days after he arrived in town. He was so new to his apartment, I heard the delight in his voice when he discovered that he has under-cabinet lighting.

During the early months of the pandemic, the Madison Ballet was also scrambling to survive the economic crisis that nearly decimated the performing arts sector. Solari created many innovative projects to keep the company a relevant and viable cultural presence. One of the Madison Ballet's well-regarded pandemic projects was staging a production of *The Nutcracker* for Afghan refugees at Fort McCoy. Solari also used the last two years to ensure the Ballet was in the position to hire a new star artistic director like Ja' Malik to move the company toward new horizons.

During that intense-for-everyone-but-especially-in-the-arts-and-service-industry period of the pandemic, Madison Ballet and the choreographer stayed in touch. In August of 2021 Ja' Malik came to Madison to

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where we started, to be able to perform in New York, my hometown, on Broadway, I looked out in that theater and I looked at those four men on stage and listening to the reaction of people when they finished the ballet was just...I was completely..."

LANDING IN WISCONSIN

Ja' Malik made the move to Madison from New York City in early August. He has lived in many places across the U.S., and had no qualms about downsizing to a midsize city in the Midwest. One of his frequently repeated slogans is, "I'm always happy in any city I live in, as long as I'm happy doing the work." Artistic director and choreographer for a ballet company? This is what Ja' Malik was born to do.

He started working with the Madison Ballet company the week he moved here, but was already scheduled to travel to North Carolina two weeks later to start a new ballet at the Carolina Ballet. "My full time position and focus is really on the (Madison) Company, but as most choreographers who are also artistic directors, we need to keep working choreographically outside with other companies, because what it does, it expands the profile of not only myself, but of the company."

In addition to the skills and high profile Ja' Malik brings with him to Madison, he also possesses a wealth of knowledge about how to support boys, especially boys of color, who are interested in learning ballet. For years at Ballet Boys he worked to eliminate the obstacles preventing boys from training to dance and to support families who are trying to empower their children who want to learn ballet. From the socioeconomic barriers to combating gender norms that still inhibit boys from expressing themselves through movement and dance, Ja' Malik learned it all the hard way and wants to make it easier for others.

At one point in our discussion, I remember mentioning one of the video interviews I watched on YouTube. In it he said that he knew he wanted to be a dancer when he was four years old and saw Michael Jackson perform. He also said he knew he wanted to be a choreographer when he was about 12 or 13 and he saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Ulysses Dove's *Urban Folk Dance*. Many children want to be dancers when they see professional dancers for the first time, but few follow through to bridge the gulf between fantasy and reality.

A DREAM IS BORN

I asked Ja' Malik what enabled him to end up living his dream. He responded, "It was difficult. I come from a working class family. No artists. No knowledge of the arts. For me to pursue a career in the arts, it was like I asked them to move to Mars. They did not understand any of it. It was a learning process for them along the way as I was pursuing this career." It sounds like neither Ja' Malik, nor his family, had a choice. Ballet and choreography overwhelmed him with desire. It had him at *Giselle*.

Ja' Malik was born in Cleveland and moved to New York with his parents, but his parents died when he was young, and he moved back to Cleveland to live with his grandmother. He attended the performing arts high school there, but as his interests were in ballet and the focus of the school was modern dance, he used his out-of-school time to train in ballet. Luckily, he received a full scholarship to study at Marguerite Duncan Studio from age 13 to 16. During summer vacations, he attended programs at American Ballet Theatre, School of the American Ballet, Alvin Ailey, and Dance Theatre of Harlem. By the age of 16, he joined the Cleveland Ballet as a trainee apprentice, where he remained until the company folded and moved to San Jose.

He told me that this grandmother, recognizing how academically gifted he was, wanted him to be a lawyer. "It just wasn't my passion. I saw enough people work for a living, and not for their passion, and I did not want that. So, I pursued this career having no idea if it could really

explore the possibility of joining the Ballet. He taught a company class. The dancers interviewed him. He met with the board. He watched the Ballet's production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Warner Park. The visit went very well for all involved.

Luckily for Madison, when the Ballet was in a healthy position to make an offer, Ja' Malik was still interested and made himself available, even though it meant closing a door at Ballet Boy Productions, the company he started in 2007 while he was in Philadelphia working for BalletX. I asked him why he started his own company at that time and he told me that he knew he wanted to pursue a choreographic career in ballet and he was not receiving an invitation to practice his intended craft, so he invited himself. "I'm the kind of person that if I don't get the opportunity, I'm going to make the opportunity," he explained.

BALLET BOY PRODUCTIONS

Ballet Boy Productions started as an outlet to give young men of color, who wanted to pursue a career within classical and contemporary ballet, every tool and advantage that Ja' Malik himself wanted and needed when he was growing up: mentorship, training, education, and performance opportunities. "It was everything that I didn't have. I wish I had a mentor. I wish I had somebody to talk to help me navigate the waters of the ballet world that I knew nothing about, because I made a lot of mistakes along the way. I was learning. It just wasn't something that came natural to me coming from where I came from. I wanted to create something that gave boys and men of color the opportunity to have that," Ja' Malik said.

When I asked him if he was keeping Ballet Boys going, he explained that though Ballet Boys would still exist to provide mentoring and training, he could not maintain the performance aspect of that company while working for this one. Unsurprisingly, Ballet Boy Productions went out big. Their final production, *What Lies Beneath*, was staged at New Victory Theater in Times Square in July. It was a contemporary, slow and graceful, adagio ballet, performed to *Swan Lake* by four Black male dancers in hoodies. The summary of the performance on the New Victory website described it: "In this contemporary ballet set to music by Tchaikovsky, four male dancers physically express the emotional desire to challenge the visual perception so many have of young Black and Brown men, and explore beyond what is expected."

"It was really great." Ja' Malik said. "I was really humbled. From

happen. I had seen a few Black male ballet dancers, but I still was not completely sure ballet could be a career, let alone being a choreographer, but I just kind of stuck with it. I saw it in my mind, and I thought 'I am going to do this.' And I'm pretty headstrong."

He returned to New York and attended college at The New School, which had a B.F.A. program in dance through a partnership with the Joffrey Ballet. Growing up, he had been the only male dancer in his ballet classes, so he knew he needed to focus on the "male" side of training during his college years. At one point, he was taking academic subjects at New School, studying at Joffrey, apprenticing at Alvin Ailey, and working at Starbucks starting at 4:30 in the morning. He existed on very little sleep for a very long time because he believed it would pay off and he would achieve the career he wanted. It did, and he has.

When I asked him if his family would be visiting Madison to watch his productions, Ja' Malik explained that though he has a small family with only a few family members left, like many in the queer community, he has a large family of choice. "If you ever hear me on stage talking about my family, it is usually about my best friends because I've had them in my life for 20+ years. I have six really strong best friends that are like brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers to me that I've known for 20, 30 years, almost. We met when we were 14, and now we're heading toward the mid-40s. So, they'll be coming out."

UNAPOLOGETICALLY BOLD & PROUD

Toward the end of our interview, I asked Ja' Malik if there was anything else he wanted to know about or share with Madison's LGBTQIA community. There was, particularly regarding heteronormative ballet performances that typically show a "man" and a "woman" dancing together. Ja' Malik wants *Our Lives* readers to know that he is planning to shake that up. After all, he just came from his own Ballet Boys pro-

duction company where it is all men dancing together. "I definitely want to have work not only representing the LGBTQ+ community, but I also want to bring more of those artists in to create works. I don't want to shy away from that." He added, "I want to open the world up so that they can see the full spectrum of the human experience from all sides."

For the most part, Ja' Malik enjoys the process of discovering new communities without spoilers. He already knew about cheese curds, and he has heard about how cold the winters are, but I surprised him with the fact that we celebrate Pride at the end of August when he would be working in North Carolina.

He assured me I need not worry that he would have to miss it this year. "You know, I dress how I dress, and I move how I move, and I won't change that for any position. I interviewed as who I am. I am an openly gay Black man who wears outfits that are not necessarily the norm for a male-identifying person. Friends in New York are like, 'Ooh what are they going to do with you in Madison?' I don't worry. I celebrate every day, for sure."

To me, that is what Pride is about, bringing your authentic self out every day at work, at home, and at play, and celebrating your own life and others'. Ja' Malik, I am looking forward to meeting you in person and seeing your choreography on stage. And, as one who likes to dress up a bit myself, I hope that when we meet, we are both wearing something so fabulous, nobody anywhere is going to know what to do with us. ■



KARIN WOLF is an arts administrator, freelance arts writer, and consultant. She likes to get deep and try to understand complex art, people, and ideas. Writing about them is her favorite way to do so. She has a M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and undergraduate degrees in History, History of Cultures, and Afro-American History.

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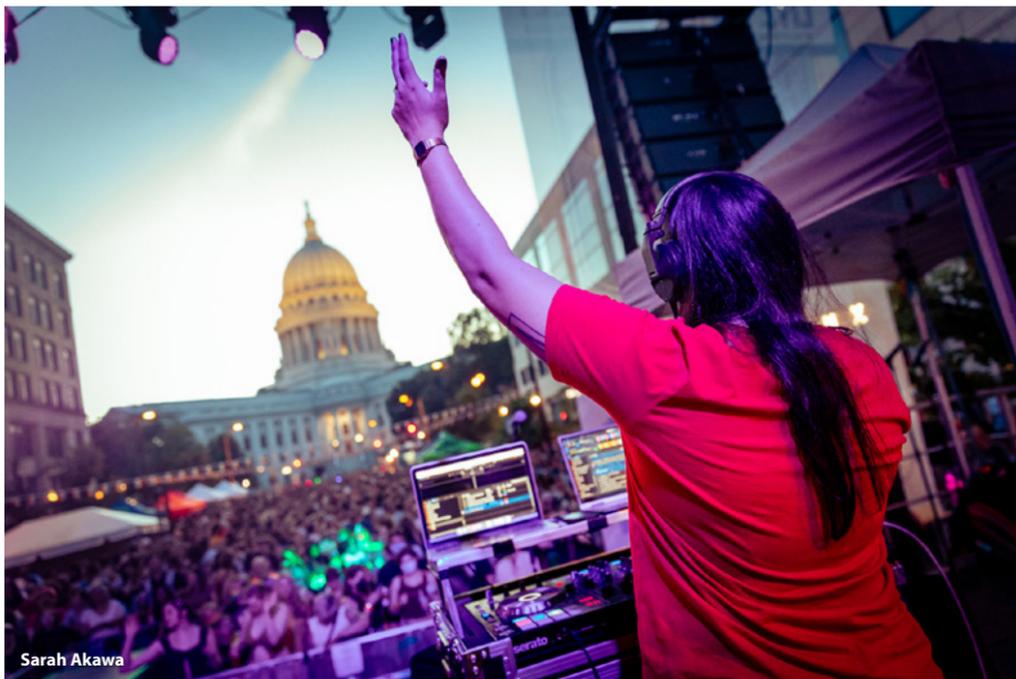
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Let the Music Play!

After finding her way behind the turntables herself, regular *Our Lives* contributor **Stacy Harbaugh** (aka DJ Shotski) connects with other **queer Wisconsin DJs** to learn what keeps them spinning for crowded dance floors.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT NIGHTLIFE MUSIC

MUSIC PULLED US through sad times during covid. We turned to streaming services to find old favorites and new songs. Young people shook off pandemic trauma through the choreography of viral Tik Tok videos. In times of trouble, we turn to the arts to find connection and relief.

In the fall of 2020, I bought a set of turntables. While I stayed safer at home, I thought about what I would do with my Covid-thwarted decision to learn how to be a music host at WORT-FM and engineer the station's studio equipment. My turntables brought me a lot of joy.



DJ Shotski

That feeling of joy came from polka music. I fell in love with polka when I moved to Wisconsin in 2004. It seemed like a ubiquitous, very Wisconsin sound at beer and brat festivals. The music facilitated community connection where young and old alike got out on a wood dance floor to move and be together. During the Covid crisis, I hoped to one day be able to play old-fashioned polka records at events so people could get together and experience joyful, happy music.

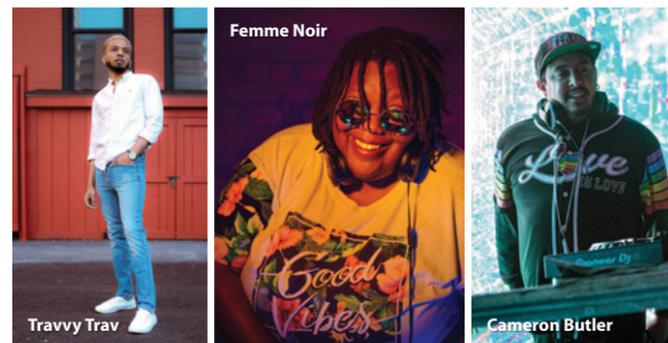
Now that we are gathering together again, I've been playing records at events just like I envisioned. That experience is giving me a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for DJs who carefully select music to create a community experience of fun and pleasure. I connected with four DJs in Wisconsin to learn how they are creating LGBTQ+ welcoming spaces, how they are bouncing back from the Covid crisis, and what advice they would give to others who want to DJ.

THE DJs

DJ Femme Noir has residencies in Madison and Milwaukee. She has played for the Milwaukee Bucks, at the Majestic, FIVE nightclub, and Dix and regularly provides music at drag shows and private weddings. IG: @djfemmeno

Cameron Butler is a resident DJ at Liquid nightclub in Madison. He specializes in electronic dance music and bass-heavy hip hop in

SHOTSKI BY PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS.



queer-friendly environments. IG: @creating.a.movement
DJ Travvy Trav is a resident DJ at This Is It!, Milwaukee's longstanding gay bar owned by Trixie Mattel. IG: @travvytrav_official

WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION?

DJ Femme Noir: I just look around at what's happening in the world. I follow trends, but I also like to find a way of synching the old and new. I know people who are making and producing their own music. The drag queens bring their own songs. Even the Ubers I ride in. When I tell an Uber driver I'm a DJ, they switch to music they think I'd like.

Cameron Butler: I get inspired by everything around me: The sounds of the world, the people I meet, and the way I can make people feel through simple bops. My biggest inspiration is being able to be the change I want to see in the world and being a light in our dark times. One person I keep in mind from the words they spoke, "Your music saved me and is the reason I'm still here." This is what drives me to continue what I do.

DJ Travvy Trav: I find inspiration through my curiosity. As a kid I remember always being curious. That's what kept me inspired. I would also say my most inspiring moments and thoughts came from when I was homeless. At many times, life comes hard for all of us, but for me that was my make-or-break moment. I often felt that I must make the most of my situation and create something out of nothing.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO CREATE QUEER-FRIENDLY SPACES?

DJ Femme Noir: I think I only operate in spaces where I can openly express all of my identities as a Black, queer woman. If you look up and see a Black queer woman, and see someone who looks like yourself, you'll feel better about coming to a place for the first time.

I like to work with certain parties or brands who are doing their part to create safe spaces for us. Dyke Dive, Hot Summer Gays, they have rules of engagement and a "no creeps" policy. It means consent is important. It also means you can come up to the DJ and let them know if someone is making you uncomfortable, and we can do something about it.

Cameron Butler: In every space I play, I am my unapologetically gay self. My persona is built upon not allowing people to bring you down for being you. I make sure to focus on the crowd and speak from the heart about issues that are happening in our world. Any space that I play is—and will remain—a safe place for ALL LGBTQIA+ humans! Anytime there is an issue or someone is not living up to our Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect (PLUR) lifestyle, they are kicked out, no questions asked.

DJ Travvy Trav: I just simply put myself in their shoes and I ask myself, "How would these two songs go together?" I guess the only thing I do is read the crowd really well and just have an understanding of how songs are being responded to by the crowd.

HOW ARE YOU RECOVERING FROM THE SAFER-AT-HOME ERA OF THE COVID CRISIS?

DJ Femme Noir: People are coming out to events. They are ready to be out and have fun. Even nights when I think it might be slow, it's busy. I

TRAVVY TRAV BY DUPRÉE ARMON. FEMME NOIR BY IAN DEGRAFF.



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love it. I feed off the energy of the crowd, and it makes my night better. But I also know friends who are not coming out or who have moved to different cities since Covid.

Cameron Butler: Covid impacted us all in so many different ways, the way we interact with people, our ability to connect, and so many other negative feelings. In reality, it showed me what I truly missed: The human bond that we so dearly yearn for. During Covid I used that time to perfect my craft and propel myself into the next level. Since Covid has subsided, I have been doing everything in my power to bring people back together and spread that love and affection we all so desperately needed. I wish health on everyone for the future and that we can create a pandemic of love and respect in place of it.

DJ Travvy Trav: Considering how so many people lost loved ones due to the pandemic, I did just fine. It sucked not playing live for the crowd, and finding other ways to make ends meet was scary. That's why it's important to be multi-talented because there's no telling if something as tragic as the pandemic can happen again. I did, however, have to work at a local Walgreens as much as I could to eat and pay my bills, but coming from being homeless I was given strength to be calm in dire situations.

WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF BEING A DJ?

DJ Femme Noir: I've always been that person who likes to boost other people's morale. I like to create an experience someone will never forget. Someone may meet someone they spend the rest of their life with. Or they may have just gone through a bad breakup and need to go out and feel like everything's going to be okay. Maybe it's someone's first drag show. Music has a way of cementing those experiences. I like that I can choose a song that a collective of people will like and that I am a part of that. It makes us truly connected.

Cameron Butler: Being a DJ is more than just playing a few tunes and

pushing bright flashing lights. It's a Movement, and that's what my name stands for. I get the joy of providing an escape for people in a world where there is no peace. For a few hours a week, people forget about their problems and get lost in the music. I do this for those people. I do this so that I feel fulfilled in life and can have a creative outlet that helps me continue day-to-day. Life isn't always easy, but do something you love, and you'll never work another day in your life.

DJ Travvy Trav: I get to meet so many people that are queer! Oftentimes before, during, or after my DJ set, people come up to me and tell me how they feel represented by my presence as a black, bisexual person. There's not a lot of DJs who are more open about being bisexual than I am. I am very open about my sexuality because representation matters, especially as a black person. If I was still working at Walgreens, I would never be able to travel and see different cities, but with DJ'ing, I have those privileges.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PIECE OF ADVICE?

DJ Femme Noir: For beginners, stay consistent. Don't worry about what the next person is doing. Just make it your own. Your DJ journey is valid, and there's no right or wrong way to do it.

For fans: Disrespecting other DJs isn't a compliment to me. It takes a lot to get up there and play music for strangers.

Cameron Butler: Get out there and do it! Don't be afraid to take that leap of faith into the unknown! Change can be scary but the rewards from something you take pride in and work on is the most beautiful thing you can imagine. Find something that you love, and go for it. I've been a musician for years now, and my biggest piece of advice is to not be your own critic. The world is always going to judge, but don't judge yourself. You are beautiful, you are important, and you matter! Show the world how you shine, and always keep Creating.A.Movement.

DJ Travvy Trav: My biggest piece of advice, especially for those who've thought about being a DJ, is simple: "Trust the process." It doesn't happen in a day. This is a long journey that's often a lonely feeling, full of doubts, a lot of doors slammed in your face. But it is well worth the effort when that one opportunity comes to show who you are as a disc jockey. Anyone getting into this work, I would tell them to first off buy a MacBook, then download as much music as you can—not just the hottest tracks, but all genres—because there is no telling when you have to be a DJ for a brunch and you may not want to play music with a bunch of swear words. The mechanics for transitions, being on the mic, being the orchestrator of the night are things that take years to master, but again, trust the process. ■

Creating queer-friendly nightlife

BACK IN 2015, I told an interviewer that the point of my events was to make space for people, my people, queer people, who don't have a space. A lot has changed since then, but the main reasons for creating and curating nightlife spaces has pretty much stayed the same: To create spaces that challenge the sexist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic norms our communities come up against in nightlife every day and to prioritize queer pleasure and joy while doing it.



After a decade of putting together events, these goals are just as important as ever. At a time when reproductive freedoms are under attack, when trans people are subject to increasing political persecution, when white supremacy grows more emboldened by the day, we simply need spaces that are by and for us.

Plus, to be blunt, our lives are harder and more boring without a good party! I love being able to offer people—queer people—a place to be joyous and move our bodies on the dance floor with friends and, hopefully, feel replenished and renewed. We need it to keep confronting the harsh realities of our world. Taking a nod from Adrienne Maree Brown, there's a special place for pleasure within the fight against oppressive systems. I hope my parties can play a role in providing it.

Of course, I don't do any of this alone. Throwing DIY parties gives me the freedom to uplift queer and trans DJs and performers, especially other DJs and performers of color. They take the events beyond anything I could do on my own, opening the space up to even more people who might not be comfortable elsewhere in Madison. Every single person who comes to a Queer All Year event is a creator and curator themselves. I'm overjoyed when I have that special moment of achieving flow when djing and looking around I see faces of so many beautiful queer people in all their unique glory. Special shout-out to Kelli from Dyke Dive / co-promoter of Hot Summer Gays and Robinia Courtyard for taking a chance on me in 2016 or so.

It's also important to me to create opportunities for others to create the spaces they don't have. People will often come to me with ideas for events they want me to hold, and I'm like, "That sounds cool as hell, but it's not really my lane. I can give you the tools to do it for yourself though!" It's incredibly important to me to share skills and knowledge, especially ones that are too frequently gatekept (like djing). I'm especially down to teach how to DJ or throw a DIY party if it means we get to have more spaces by and for queer, trans, and POC communities.

Bottom line: It's rad AF and, frankly, necessary to have spaces centered around queer joy and pleasure in this moment. Shout-out to everyone who comes and claims our space. —Sarah Akawa

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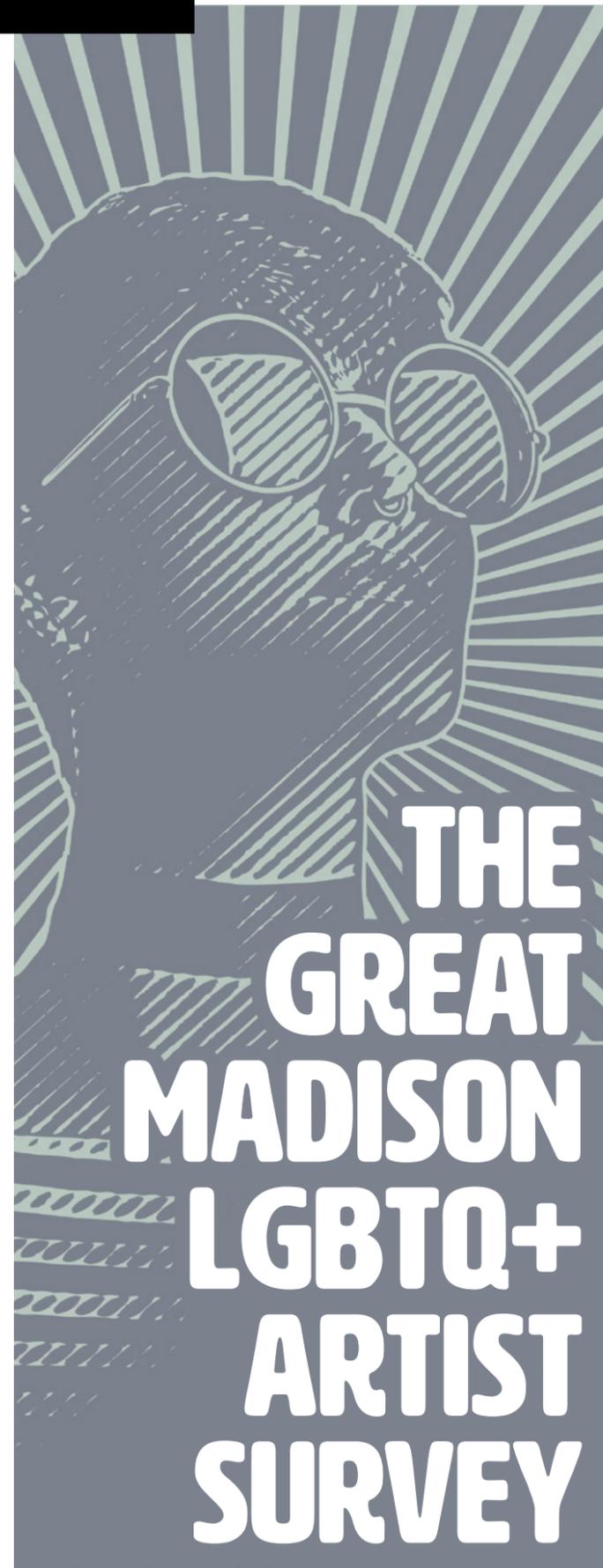
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QUEER PEOPLE have long contributed enormously to the fabric of our community through work that adds texture, vibrancy, and contemplation to our lives. To honor those creative efforts locally, below is our third annual survey of LGBTQ artists in the greater Madison area.

As always, this is by no means a completely comprehensive list. We reached out to our various networks for names and resources and did our best to contact each artist for updates. Entries are made through a form where participants are free to choose a category, self identify, and provide a description in their own words.

Thank you to everyone who participated and shared the form with their networks. We hope to continue building on this in future years, so feel free to reach out with recommendations at contact@ourliveswisconsin.com.

PERFORMING ARTISTS: BURLESQUE / DRAG

Amethyst Von Trollenberg | [instagram.com/amethystvt](https://www.instagram.com/amethystvt) | Amethyst Von Trollenberg is a local drag and burlesque entertainer known as the Seven Foot Siren. She is a former Miss Madison Pride and is known for her sultry demeanor and powerful vocal talent.

Anita Spanx | [instagram.com/spanx_me](https://www.instagram.com/spanx_me) | Anita Spanx is a creative queen who wants to make you laugh. She loves to bring you characters, concepts, and absolute buffoonery!

Anya K. Thunderkat | [instagram.com/theonlyanyaknees](https://www.instagram.com/theonlyanyaknees) | Anya has been performing for more than five years and was Miss Hamburger Mary's MKE 2019. She is an entertainer based in Madison and has been a show director at FIVE Nightclub and ThisIsIt! in Milwaukee.

Bianca Lynn Breeze | [biancalynnbreeze.com](https://www.biancalynnbreeze.com) | Since 2012 I have been working as a Drag Queen out of my pure love of entertaining others. Whether it is calling Bingo Balls or performing my favorite Britney Spears song, entertaining and event producing is what I was meant to do.

Bryanna Banx\$ | [facebook.com/bryannabanxs](https://www.facebook.com/bryannabanxs) | Bryanna Banx\$ has been in the industry for about 17 years and is still blessed to be able to continue emceeing, performing, and organizing events all over the entire state.

Cass Marie Domino | [facebook.com/cassdowning](https://www.facebook.com/cassdowning) | Fabulous at 50 and performing for over 30 years, Cass is the first trans woman to win the National Entertainer Of The Year Femme pageant. She is an advocate for the trans community as well as for people like her who live with HIV.

Cynthia Mooseknuckle | [cynthiamooseknuckle.com](https://www.cynthiamooseknuckle.com) | Queen of the Pups and the Mother of Moose, Cynthia is a Wisconsin-based has been performing around the state for eight years. Her entertainment styles vary from Broadway to country, diva ballads and concept costuming.

DaddyDon't GiveaDamn / MamaNo Shits | [facebook.com/mamano.shits](https://www.facebook.com/mamano.shits) | Daddy Don't Give A Damn is a fierce trans non-binary drag king that comes from the world of burlesque and theater. Daddy works to promote inclusivity and was the 2019 Madison Pride King.

DeeDee Purr | [instagram.com/deedeeppurr](https://www.instagram.com/deedeeppurr) | Dee Dee Purr is best described as the drag clown of Madison. Their performances are best described as crude, comedic, pushing the barrier, and celebrating everything stupid.

Gio | [instagram.com/gio_guzman_180685](https://www.instagram.com/gio_guzman_180685) | Gio has been a drag entertainer since 2008. They infuse their performances with hope and their Mexican culture. They've represented as Mr. FIVE Nightclub, Mr. Gay Latino Madison, Mr. Club Wisconsin, and Miss Wisconsin Capital Pride.

Invertia | [instagram.com/invertia_drag](https://www.instagram.com/invertia_drag) | Their stage name is a play on how queer people have been pathologized and demeaned. Invertia is a drag performer who embodies all corners of the gender spectrum. An Invertia show is a helping of cosplay, pop punk, and sad emo girl vibes.

Josie Lynn | [facebook.com/josielynn94](https://www.facebook.com/josielynn94) | Thirty years ago, Josie Lynn came out on stage for the first time at a small club in Wausau for a turnabout show and started this fantastic journey. Josie is someone who wears

many hats and, on occasion, a couple of wigs. An artist, ally, activist, and friend who is always there for anyone in need.

Karma Zavich | [facebook.com/karma.mirage.1](https://www.facebook.com/karma.mirage.1) | Karma was Miss Gay Madison 2021. She is also the co-director of the Madcity Drag Review at FIVE Nightclub and host of BABE at ThisIsIt! in Milwaukee. When she's not in drag, she teaches dance at Madison Ballroom Company.

Kasper James | [facebook.com/kasper.james.100](https://www.facebook.com/kasper.james.100) | Kasper has been a face of the stage since 2018 when he first competed, and was crowned Mr. Madison Pride. In 2019, he was crowned Mr. Gay Wisconsin USofA and represented well at the national stage.

Kayos Mirage | [instagram.com/worldofkayos](https://www.instagram.com/worldofkayos) | Kayos is a show director at FIVE Nightclub in Madison, Pyramid Event Venue in Lake Mills, and ThisIsIt! in Milwaukee. A wild child with a sharp tongue on the mic, Kayos delivers an amazing experience when she shares the stage with you.

Lola Monroe | [facebook.com/lola.monet.9275](https://www.facebook.com/lola.monet.9275) | Hailing from Juneau, Alaska. Lola Monroe, daughter of Gigi Monroe, is a drag queen whose art focuses more on Alternative Comedy. Lola has produced shows, mc'd and assisted in the production of many shows in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Loretta Love Lee | [instagram.com/sheezlovelee](https://www.instagram.com/sheezlovelee) | Loretta is a Wisconsin Sensation, she's kind, spiritual, and a plant loving goddess. She checks off fine details in drag serving glamor, glitter, and hyper-feminine illusions!

Lucy Von Cucci | linktr.ee/lucyvoncucci | Lucy has been in the drag scene for over a decade and has won many regional and state titles. Lucy's first love had always been the stage and she always adds her theater background to anything she does.

Madam Lucy | [instagram.com/madamlucy](https://www.instagram.com/madamlucy) | Madam Lucy is a burlesque, drag, and vocal artist. Her performance style is a campy mix of Disney Princess and storytelling that's sure to have you laughing and blushing.

Malaiya Marvel | [@malaiyamaryl](https://www.instagram.com/malaiyamaryl) | Malaiya is a nerdy and dirty cosplay baddie. Her aesthetic is nerd culture and the beauty of Black women. She hosts a cosplay drag revue called MANIA! at ThisIsIt! in Milwaukee. Malaiya hosted MKE Pride 2022 alongside her sister Melee.

Mercedes Benzova | [instagram.com/themercedesbenzova](https://www.instagram.com/themercedesbenzova) | Mercedes Benzova is a bodacious diva that's a whole lotta fun with an extra side of Sass.

MettahDroid | [instagram.com/mettahdroid_mks](https://www.instagram.com/mettahdroid_mks) | MettahDroid is Madison's interstellar and gender-defying queen! They are a technicolor cybernetic dream from an alien world with their lasers set to conquer the universe!

Michael Lynn | [instagram.com/thatchaellynn](https://www.instagram.com/thatchaellynn) | Reigning Mr. Gay Wisconsin USofA. Male Drag Entertainer, Producer, Host, Promoter, and Pageant Competitor.

Mimi Sanchez | [instagram.com/mimi_sanchez](https://www.instagram.com/mimi_sanchez) | Mimi Sanchez is the life of the party giving you face, grace, and no lace. During the day Mimi works as a full-time professional hairstylist and weave extension specialist.

Monica Ciccone | [facebook.com/valentin.elizalde.397](https://www.facebook.com/valentin.elizalde.397) | Monica has been an entertainer since 1998. She loves to entertain through her live singing or lip syncing. She is the hostess of Noches Latinas at FIVE Nightclub.

Mystie Von Cucci | [facebook.com/mystie.voncucci.92](https://www.facebook.com/mystie.voncucci.92) | Mystie's drag can be described as fun and comedic. She loves to get the audience laughing. You can catch her performing at FIVE Nightclub.

Nemo | [nemodrag.com](https://www.nemodrag.com) | Nemo is Miss Wisconsin Youth Entertainer 2022 and started performing drag at 14 in 2020 by making her own videos. In 2021 she started performing live. Nemo has produced her own shows at both FIVE Nightclub and ThisIsIt! in Wisconsin and has traveled to Denver as part of the Discovery Plus documentary series *Generation Drag*. Nemo is known for blending theater, dance, and contortion. As a member of the trans community, Nemo is passionate about activism and uses her voice to fight for Trans equality in the youth community.

Ponyboy | [facebook.com/ponyboy.trevor.9](https://www.facebook.com/ponyboy.trevor.9) | Ponyboy is a mix between funny and sexy. He tries to get the people hyped. He also tries to use some of his



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MICHAEL DARLING

Musician | michaeldarlingmusic.com

MICHAEL DARLING IS AN ARTIST, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer based in Madison. Compared to a wide range of artists such as Harry Styles, James Taylor, Perfume Genius, and Father John Misty, he blends elements of indie pop, folk rock, and jazz to create lyrically reflective and emotionally charged music that feels both familiar yet pleasantly subversive. WSUM calls him “one of Madison’s hidden gems.”

A child of two musicians, Michael has been immersed in music his whole life. He grew up playing drums and later started singing and songwriting, supplementing his voice with guitar and piano. He has played in jazz ensembles, produced chip tune music for his own video games, and performed at various venues all over Wisconsin—as a solo act, with a backing band, and with Madison-based collective MQBS.

Michael started releasing music in 2020 with his debut single “Drive” and has since put out three singles from his upcoming EP. He has collaborated on a number of music videos with one of his long-time close friends Jake Viaene (Bard Media), and together they’ve quickly found their collective creative footing.

In December of 2021, Michael decided to take a leap of faith and quit his corporate job to pursue music full time. Since then, he’s honed his social media presence, amassing 2000 followers and nearly 200k video views on TikTok. He’s also begun branching out from Madison, booking and playing shows around Wisconsin and beyond.

In July, Michael released “Spark,” the title track of his upcoming debut EP. “Spark” is a song about burnout—through dating, work, or life in general. Drawing inspiration from Father John Misty and Elton John, it’s the ballad of a hopeless romantic yearning for a deep connection in an online world. “Spark” marks Michael’s first time venturing outside of bedroom production and putting his music into the hands of the community, featuring live drums and grand piano recorded at Madison’s own Audio for the Arts with Audrey Martinovich. Tone Madison describes the new song as “effortlessly compelling even as it stretches out for bigger arrangements and a longer run time.”

Now officially a full-time musician, Michael has his highest ambitions yet: With his debut EP “Spark” set to release in fall, hints at possible collaborations with other artists, and his first tour is in the works. He is beyond excited to see all his plans come to fruition. ■

numbers to inspire people to be who they are and not care what others think and to show to trans folk that they can do it, too.

RyRy Minaj | [facebook.com/ryan.moffat.39](https://www.facebook.com/ryan.moffat.39) | Former Mr Gay Wisconsin USofA and Mr. Gay Madison, RyRy has been performing for over seven years. You never know what you’ll get when he’s on stage—from his sparkly costumes to his amazing flipping body in front of your face.

Sasha Christine | [facebook.com/sasha.christine.1](https://www.facebook.com/sasha.christine.1) | Her drag can be described as a tiny little dancer, who’s polished and pristine, but doesn’t mind getting a little dirty. You can her performing at FIVE Nightclub. She also has a side gig of doing promo shots for local queens.

Sheeza Herr | [instagram.com/sheezaherr](https://www.instagram.com/sheezaherr) | Sheeza is the kooky cat lady and DIY queen of Madison. Sheeza is a proud trans non-binary entertainer. They are known for their out-of-the-box performances and fashion.

Susan Sox | [facebook.com/auntsusansox](https://www.facebook.com/auntsusansox) | Susan Sox is Madison’s Premier Auntie of Drag. Her charming, comedic stylings make you feel right at home. Why don’t you ever visit your Auntie Sue anymore!?

Victoria Lynn | [facebook.com/jeremy.sharpee.77](https://www.facebook.com/jeremy.sharpee.77) | Victoria Lynn also known as Bicky the Bucking Queen is a quick witted, kind, and very statuesque drag queen who has been performing for more than years!

PERFORMING ARTISTS: COMEDY

Becky Wennlund | Becky (she/her/hers) has dabbled in the realms of drag (known as drag king Colonel Honey Mustard), improv, and most recently stand-up comedy, thanks to classes with Lady Laughs Comedy. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Becky’s jokes are cheesy.

Dina Nina | [dinanina.com](https://www.dinanina.com) | Dina Nina, who was called “...very funny.” by the Late Late Show’s James Corden, is a transgender stand up comedian, speaker, and actor. Her blend of sass and charm has been featured in comedy festivals and world-class comedy venues. She is the founder of Lady Laughs Comedy & Artemis Bow Productions. She was named one of the “58 Trans Women Actors You Should Know & Also Love” by AutoStraddle and won Madison’s favorite Local Comedian as voted by the readers of the Isthmus and Best of Madison Comedian.

Forest Reed | Queer. Trans. Non-Binary. Feminist. Artist.

J. Michael Bruno Productions | [facebook.com/Bruneaux1955](https://www.facebook.com/Bruneaux1955) | TV host, Emcee, Stand-up comedian, theater producer/director. Michael Bruno is the former Artistic Director for WhoopDeDoo Productions and past President of StageQ. He is a former board member of The Bartell Theatre, AidsNetwork of Madison, and Dane County Cultural Arts Commission.

Linda Lenzke | [mixedmetaphorsohmy.com](https://www.mixedmetaphorsohmy.com) | Lesbian comic, emcee, spoken word artist, and producer comes out of retirement and returns to the stage for her new show, “Funny, Not Funny!,” a riff on queer life, culture wars, and aging. Lenzke has written for, performed, and/or produced shows including Conceal & Carry, Queers Exposed, standup at The Lesbian Variety Show, Apple Island Comedy Jam, and as a founding member of the Acting Out Improv Collective.

Vanessa Tortolano | [facebook.com/vanessa.tortolano](https://www.facebook.com/vanessa.tortolano) | Vanessa jumps from improv comedy to playing music and singing, and can be found on various Madison stages and in support of women- and LGBTQ-centric stand-up comedy classes and events.

PERFORMING ARTISTS: DANCE/THEATER

Alex Trofka | [facebook.com/people/Alex-Trofka](https://www.facebook.com/people/Alex-Trofka) | Alex Trofka is a company dancer with Kanopy Dance in Madison. He also works with local drag queens and performs numbers with them.

Brian Wild | [proudtheater.org](https://www.proudtheater.org) | Brian has been active in the Madison theater community since 1992 and is the current Executive Director of Art and Soul Innovations, Inc., the fiscal sponsor of Proud Theater in Wisconsin, since 2004. Over the years, Brian has also written and directed 15-plus successful plays for Broom Street Theater.

Chris Walker | [education.wisc.edu/staff/walker-chris](https://www.education.wisc.edu/staff/walker-chris) | Chris Walker is a professor of dance and founding artistic director of the First Wave program in the Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives at UW-Madison. He is also a senior choreographer with the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, and program director for the New Waves Dance & Performance Institute in Trinidad & Tobago.

Dana Pellebon | Dana has acted, directed, written, and produced for a variety of theatrical troupes since 2001. She performs in/produces the Caburlesque troupe, Foxy Veronica’s Peach Pies. She produced three shows for the New York International Fringe Festival and is a Co-founder/Producer of the Loud ‘N Unchained (LNU) Black Theater Festival. She will be directing an Equity Showcase of *Genealogy* in New York in January.

Jay Gile | [facebook.com/jeremiah.a.gile](https://www.facebook.com/jeremiah.a.gile) | Jay’s goal is to create meaningful and fun theater. They want to continue to bring uplifting, emotional, and thoughtful theater to Madison, while developing their voice in social justice works. Jay has done work as a Director for StageQ.

Jim Chiolino | [madisontheatreguild.org](https://www.madisontheatreguild.org) | Jim recently left his presidency of the Madison Theatre Guild (MTG) after 12 years of managing it, Madison’s oldest community theater organization. Jim will continue producing and directing for MTG and plans to expand his acting work, having last performed with the Madison Savoyards in *Trial by Jury*.

KelsyAnne Schoenhaar | [encorestudio.org](https://www.encorestudio.org) | KelsyAnne has mixed career of music (everything from rock to symphonic to jazz), theater (in the Chicago area as a musician; in addition to writing “to” actors, as she wrote, directed, and produced original children’s theater) and human services.

Laura McMillan | [ctmtheater.org](https://www.ctmtheater.org) | Laura McMillan is a proud Black/Lebanese Queer Womxn that is not only a 20-year theatre vet, but a Navy

vet as well. Laura works as Children’s Theater of Madison’s Education Manager. Some of her on-stage credits include: *The Revolutionists* as Marianne (Bartell), *Little Shop of Horrors* as Ronnette (Edgewood College), *Broadway at Paliku* as Rafiki (Hawaii), *Twelve Angry Jurors* as Juror #11 (Florida), and *The Crucible* as Judge Danforth (Arizona).

Malissa Petterson | [facebook.com/mal.lamont](https://www.facebook.com/mal.lamont) | Malissa Petterson has written and directed 10 major projects in the last decade, with another in the wings. Armed with an MFA in creative writing, she spends her days spinning stories about her two favorite topics: feminism and sex.

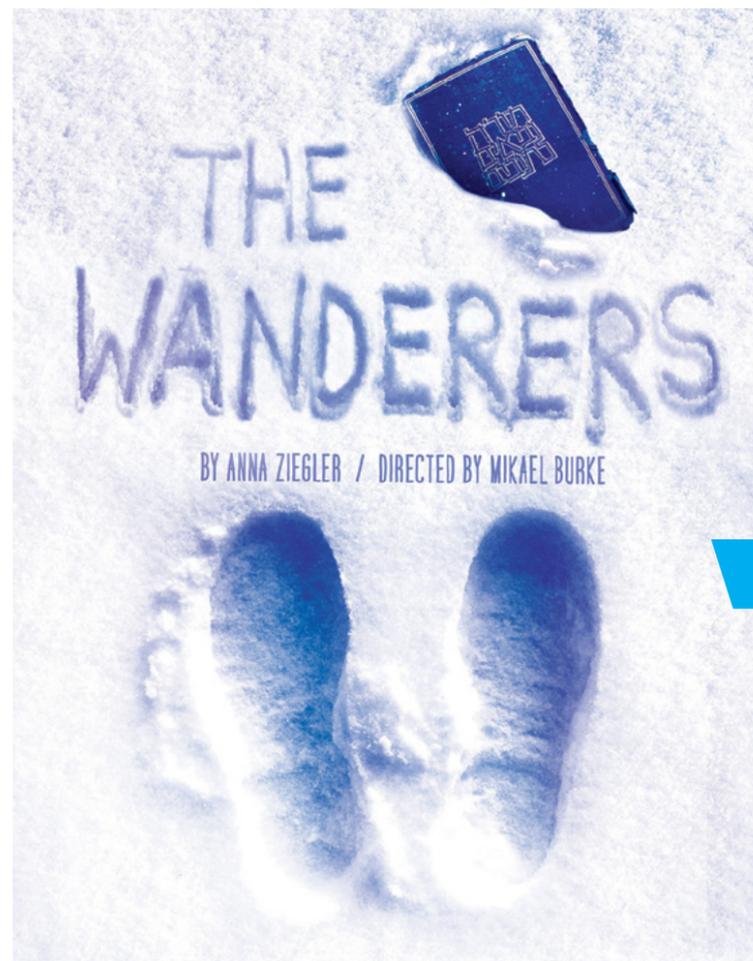
Neil Mills | [neilmillsdesign.com](https://www.neilmillsdesign.com) | Neil is a Scenic Designer and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theater and Drama at UW-Madison. He’s also a proud trans and queer man. Upcoming productions include: *Act a Lady* (Stage Q, Fall 2022), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (UW-Madison, Fall 2022), and *Airness* (Forward Theater, Spring 2023).

Orion Risk | Orion is a director and theater artist who’s work includes creating TransTheatreFest–Madison, crafting the virtual play GenderTalks from real conversations about gender between trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people, and producing and directing as founding artistic director of Scene D Theatre Project in Iowa’s Cedar Valley.

Richard Ganoung | The Madison-based actor is best known for his roles in the movies *Parting Glances* (1986), *True Identity* (1991) and *Billy’s Hollywood Screen Kiss* (1998), but has appeared on stage with groups like TNW Ensemble Theater, the Madison Rep, and Forward Theater.

Robert (Bobby) Goderich | [facebook.com/bobby.goderich](https://www.facebook.com/bobby.goderich) | Goderich’s love for singing brought him to the stage with Madison Opera. He has worked with local theater companies including Children’s Theater of Madison, Verona Area Community Theater, Middleton Players Theatre, StageQ, and Four Seasons Theatre.

Roseann Sheridan | [ctmtheater.org](https://www.ctmtheater.org) | Roseann has been with Children’s Theater of Madison since 2008. She was Producer and Associate Artis-



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JAIMIE SHERLING

Author/Designer | ydysweets.com

JAIMIE SHERLING SPENT the first seven years of her life in Queens, New York. The baby of the family—at that time—Jaimie relied on her older siblings to speak for her. Even as a toddler, she understood the power of efficiency. With a two-word vocabulary for years, no one would have predicted that one day this quiet child would be told she talked too much—and would even write a book.

One of eight children, Jaimie grew up a people pleaser, a perfectionist, and a problem solver. Jaimie spent her formative years in Florida, upstate New York, and Wisconsin, where she graduated from UW-Madison. After graduation, she moved to the San Francisco Bay area. Two years later, she was drawn back to Madison where she still resides today. Go Badgers!

Throughout late elementary and middle school, Jaimie was told that she talked too much. In 2017, Jaimie put that mouth to good use. She performed with Sun Prairie Civic Theater, where she was part of the company in both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Through that experience, she became friends with her first drag queen, Beverly Bee. Beverly introduced Jaimie to live local drag at FIVE Nightclub. This glorious experience had such an impact, she quickly became an almost nightly regular.

In 2018, Jaimie's life turned upside-down. Five months before her 42nd birthday, Jaimie was diagnosed with breast cancer. After recovering from a double mastectomy, Jaimie felt frustrated by the way her clothes fit her new, post-surgery body. Through many discussions in online support communities, she found she was not alone. Armed with the desire to solve a problem, Jaimie worked with a local pattern maker to design a unique clothing line for her sister survivors.

Jaimie was ready to launch it in spring 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic had other plans. With most of the world in pajamas and yoga pants, Jaimie made the difficult decision to delay the launch. With too much time on her hands and no one to talk to (in person), Jaimie poured her energy into writing a memoir. *From Queens to QUEENS: How the Madison Drag Community Saved My Life* was published in September, 2021. These days you can still find Jaimie living in Madison, where she keeps busy hosting brunch, glamming out on #FormalFridays, and attending shows at FIVE on a regular basis. ■

tic Director at American Players Theatre. She has directed for regional and university theaters, including UW-Madison, Texas Shakespeare Festival, Next Act Theatre (Milwaukee), Penobscot Theatre (Maine), UW-Whitewater, Edgewood College and UW-Oshkosh.

Sara Beth (SB) Hahner | facebook.com/sbhahner | Sara Beth (SB) is the founder and former Program Director for The Penguin Project of Sun Prairie Civic Theatre, and a past board member of Wisconsin Association of Community Theatre, SPCT and StageQ. SB is an abilities advocate, designing DEI theater initiatives for artists with disabilities.

Tim Sauers | facebook.com/tim.sauers | As Overture Center's Chief Artistic Experiences Officer, Tim is responsible for providing program and marketing vision, strategy, leadership, and management, and for developing and directing Overture Center's portfolio of artistic experiences.

TNW Ensemble Theater | tapitnewworks.org | **Donna Peckett** is producing artistic director of TNW. She serves on the faculty of the Edgewood College Department of Theatre Arts, and as an instructor for UW Education Outreach and for the UW-Madison Department of Liberal Studies and the Arts. **Danielle Dresden** is producing artistic director and co-founder of TNW alongside her partner, Donna. She has served as a peer review panelist for the Wisconsin Arts Board and Dane Arts, a member of the Barrymore Theatre Board of Directors, the Dramatists Guild, the Theatre Communications Group and the Network of Ensemble Theaters.

Trevin Gay | ctmtheater.org | Trevin Gay is an actor, director, teaching artist, and arts administrator. Madison audiences may have seen his directing work in *The Little Mermaid* (Four Seasons Theater), and *Butterfly Wings* (Forward Theater), or onstage in *Freaky Friday*, *Stellaluna*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Matilda* (Children's Theater of Madison).

Zak Stowe | zakstowedesign.com | Zak is an award-winning lighting designer for theater and opera. He is the Lighting Supervisor for the Overture Center. Zak has been President of StageQ since 2018 and is also the Bartell Community Theatre Foundation President. He is a founding member of the National Queer Theatre Alliance, and tours as a pyrotechnician for the airshow act Tora!Tora!Tora!

PERFORMING ARTISTS: DJs

DJ Avalon | linktr.ee/theonlyDjAvalon | A DJ since 2011, Avalon made her mark in Philly celebrating women in punk, riot grrl, and rock n' roll. Since then she has charmed audiences across clubs and bars with her emphasis on pushing women and LGBTQ artists toward the spotlight.

DJ Boyfrriend | linktr.ee/djboyfrriend | Boyfrriend's dark pulsing sets showcase queer, political, and femme artists while keeping the dancefloor throbbing. She's performed across North America and been voted Madison's Favorite Club DJ. Other notable gigs include Governor Evers Inauguration and the 2021 NBA Championship Game.

DJ Ellafine | facebook.com/djellafine | DJ and promoter ellafine spins current and classic darkwave, industrial, goth, new wave, post punk, synthpop, dream pop, indie, and more. Look for the Tuesday night Isolation session on Twitch or catch ellafine at another online show.

DJ Femme Noir | facebook.com/DJFemmeNoir | Femme Noir spins an eclectic blend of highly danceable tunes. Catch a show at FIVE Nightclub, Hot Summer Gays, Majestic Madison, ThisIsIt! in Milwaukee, or many other venues around Southern Wisconsin.

DJ Millbot (Emily Mills) | facebook.com/djmillbot | Millbot's heart lies in the house genres (classic, tech, vocal, deep), but you can also expect to hear dark electro, underground '80s, old school soul/blues/rock/R&B. Her sets focus on underrepresented identities and include obscure hits.

DJ Pearl Marshall | facebook.com/DJPearlMarshall | The Madison native celebrates a wide range of genres through diverse rhythms and unexpected mashups. You can find her regularly at The Rigby and Nattspil.

DJ Sarah Akawa | facebook.com/djsarahakawa | Voted Silver for Madison's best DJ 2022, DJ Sarah Akawa has been curating nightlife and community events for queer people since 2014.

PERFORMING ARTISTS: MUSICIANS

7ucky Vita | 7uckyvita.com | Queer Pop/R&B musician 7ucky confronts concepts of normalcy/love/freedom through music and performance art.

Akiya Alexander | facebook.com/kiloakaskitz | The hip-hop artist and emcee's accolades include Female Artist of the Year (Madison Hip-Hop Awards 2016), Madison's #1 Lesbian Rapper (Queer Pressure Awards 2017) and Hip-Hop Performer of the Year (MAMAs 2019 and 2020).

Amanda Jane Hoffman | facebook.com/AmandaJaneSingsALot | Amanda Jane Hoffman (queer lefty Jew) soulfully sings her favorite songs from the radio, stage, and campfire, accompanying herself on guitar.

Benjamin Rose | mxbenjaminrose.com | Self-described as a "hopeful skeptic," Rose uses music to tell stories and connect with people. Since early 2018, they have been a core member of the Madison synth-rock outfit Kat and the Hurricane. They are also the creator and host of the podcast Queerful, highlighting stories of queer creators and trailblazers.

Bone Holler | facebook.com/BoneHoller | Bone Holler is a three piece acoustic band (Maggie Richardson, Molly Mitchell, and Ellie Erickson) that plays gleefully dark and sparse songs about murder, revenge, loss, and sometimes zombie apocalypses.

Brannen Clark | zykfa.mailchimpsites.com | Clark is a member of the Zhong Yi Kung Fu Association lion dance team and performs on the drum, gong, and cymbals while other performers dance under the lion.

CNL | cnelsonlifson.bandcamp.com | C Nelson-Lifson plays solo as a singer and guitarist in a heartland rock style. They are also part of the group Proud Parents.

Damsel Trash | damseltrash.com | Damsel Trash is all frenetic, queer punk energy with a twist of trash funk; deeply feminist, tongue-in-cheek, and committed to letting their freak flag fly. Live shows are known to include free snacks, communal shouting, and toplessness.

Dana and the Joanis | facebook.com/Danaandthejoanis | One of the hardest working recording and live musicians around, and a favorite in the local Madison music scene, Jenna "The Joanis" provides smooth grooves on multiple live and recording projects.

Dana Perry | danaperrymusic.com | Dana Perry is a powerhouse vocalist and rhythm guitar player, with poignant original songs of an evolutionary folk rock variety. She is a 15-time winner at the Madison Area Music Association (MAMA) Awards.

Dylan Bryne | shebco.bandcamp.com | Dylan has released house and techno on a variety of labels including their own imprint, Shebco Sounds. The pandemic has helped them realize how burnt out they are, and as a result the future will see some less dancefloor-oriented projects which will draw from late 70s Ultravox and Gary Numan.

Elixir | soundcloud.com/colortunes | Elixir's focus genre is drum and bass, and they experiment with different sounds and filters. Finding a voice in music has helped them find confidence throughout their transition.

Falling Flat | linktr.ee/fallingflat | Falling Flat is a trans-fronted pop punk/emo band that has taken Madison by storm. Since performing at High Noon Saloon, The Majestic Theater, and Live on Queen Street, Falling Flat has become a staple in the Madison music scene.

Hannah Edlén is a clarinetist, composer and multi-instrumentalist. She can be seen playing all kinds of instruments all around town. Her original "one person band" act is truly a unique and immersive experience.

Jessie Waggoner | queermadisonmixtape.bandcamp.com | Jessie Waggoner (they/them) is one of the founders of the Queer Madison Mixtape project. They are drawn to songwriting themes such as rural queers, trans

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WILL KILEY SANTINO

Visual Arts / Illustration | patreon.com/willsantino

WILL KILEY SANTINO is best known for his *New Yorker* cartoons, but has been drawing, writing, and making up new worlds and stories for his entire life. The cartoons emerged out of a particularly difficult time. In 2017, as a caregiver to a terminally ill older brother, the humorous sketches became a way to find light and levity in the darkness. They also honored the bond of silliness he shared with his brother.

Will sold his first cartoon to *The New Yorker* in 2020, after drawing and submitting over 400. He left his job as an animator at an art studio in 2021, supporting himself with freelance work, cartoon sales, and, most importantly, the amazing enthusiasm of his Patreon supporters.

Will's creative practice is multifaceted. In addition to the cartoons, he also writes whimsical rhyming poetry under the *nom de plume* J. K. Ellomenope. His illustrations are magical and mythical. In various media, including acrylic paint, watercolor, collage, and digital, he depicts worlds of his own creation. These include metaphorical realms, such as Sunset City and the Outer Oops, and creatures like the Sobaloopsians. These characters and geographies are enriched with histories and backstories that recall the world-building of Tolkien. While the visuals are meant to delight, beguile, and inspire wonder, the themes tackle more adult topics, such as grief and love, shame and confusion, sexuality, self-acceptance, and self-discovery.

Will finds artist statements hard. Will's not so huge a fan of writing about himself in the third person, you might say. Basically Will loves to draw; Will loves to create new funny cartoons every week; Will loves to read novels and write fiction too; Will doesn't know how semicolons work; Will misses his brother in inexpressible ways; Will finds that transforming the pain and loneliness of human existence into art can help others feel less alone; Will thinks that's neat; Will likes friendship and biking and soccer and cats; Will prefers summer; Will likes rhyming poetry; and Will submits, humbly, that life is one big beautiful run-on sentence that doesn't quite make sense but feels freighted with meaning and magic and comes hurtling towards you like the last day of summer or the last word of a novel you don't want to end. ■

trucks, big hair, and femme utopias. Past projects include a drag gospel quartet, a femme-fronted Meatloaf cover band, and various twangy femme-centric projects such as Corn Palace and Mary Okie.

jilip is an anarchist folk punk solo project conceived of in these Covid times. jilip is where angst meets the ethereal, with catchy hooks and rad, socially conscious lyrics.

Johannes Wallmann | johanneswallmann.com | Wallmann is a pianist, composer, and recording artist on Shifting Paradigm Records and Fresh Sound New Talent Records. He's the Director of Jazz Studies at UW-Madison. Wallmann's current album release, *Elegy for an Undiscovered Species* (2021, Shifting Paradigm Records), is a full-length album of new compositions for jazz quintet and string orchestra.

Juli Johnson | julijohnson.com | Juli Johnson is a singer/songwriter. Her music is filled with expressive melodies and emotional lyrics. If you like the sound of Sarah Bareilles or Norah Jones, you'll enjoy Juli's music. Juli released her first EP, self-titled, in 2015, while she was living in South Korea, working as an ESL teacher.

Julia McConahay | facebook.com/JuliaMcConahayMusic | Julia began training as a classical violinist from a young age, but it was her first non-classical experience in high school that truly opened the door for her to begin to explore her own identity as a musician. She is a three-time award winner for Madison's Best Strings Instrumentalist.

Kat and the Hurricane | campsite.bio/katandthehurricane | Kat and the Hurricane is a genre- and gender-bending indie-pop/synth-rock trio from Madison. Lead singer/guitarist Kat Farnsworth (they/them), keyboardist/vocalist Benjamin Rose (they/them), and drummer Alex Nelson (they/them) deliver a unique blend of pop and haunting indie rock they affectionately refer to as "sad lesbian music."

Killcrop | facebook.com/Killcrop | The solo project of Josh Killcrop, one half of the founding members of psychedelic-industrial band, Gentleman Loser, the experimental electronic music draws influences from indie rock and darker industrial.

Ladyscissors | facebook.com/ladyscissorswi | Prolific and longtime Madison musician Stephanie Rearick joins forces with Brent George and Anne Bull for a boppy rock project with an irreverent core.

LINE | linesoundslike.com | LINE is a queer multi-genre, collaborative music project by artist Maddie Batzli. Maddie works as a solo artist and with bandmates Esther Chun, Austin Lynch, and Will Ault to create songs ranging between reflective contemporary folk, moody indie rock, and electric synth pop.

Little Red Wolf | littleredwolf.bandcamp.com | First formed in 2008, Little Red Wolf returns from an eight-year hiatus this year with the release of their third studio album, *The Tops of the Trees*. Featuring Kelly Maxwell (vocals, guitar, keys), Meghan Rose (vocals, guitar, keys, accordion), Emily Mills (vocals, drums), and Laura Detert (viola, bass, keys), LRW fuses a wide variety of musical influences and genres into something uniquely their own.

Meskales | flowcode.com/page/meskales | Meskales is a high-intensity ska-punk band from Madison. Meskales brings a blend of influences including cumbia, punk, ska, jazz, and reggae.

Michael Darling | michaeldarlingmusic.com | Michael Darling is an artist, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer based in Madison. He blends elements of indie pop, folk rock, and jazz to create lyrically reflective and emotionally charged music that feels both familiar yet pleasantly subversive.

Negative/Positive | negativepositivemke.bandcamp.com | Negative/Positive has been making music for nine years, and their music is widely varied, but always unapologetic. In the spring they released a new EP, *I will Spend My Entire Life Savings on One Cool Hat*.

Queen Pauline | yungpauline.bandcamp.com | Queen Pauline (fka Yung

Pauline) is an underground Madison hip-hop artist. She raps, sings, and produces her own music, including 2017's LP *Tranny Thuggin*.

Rin's Violin | facebook.com/RinQRibble | Genre bending violinist and teacher, Rin plays with Madison groups including the Five Points Jazz Collective, Frank Martin Busch and the Names, and the So it Goes Duo.

Salamander Sunday | salamandersunday.com | Salamander Sunday is a pop-up incubator and collective of singers, songwriters, and musicians who came together for a couple of uniquely arranged cover songs.

T. Price | linktr.ee/tessajadeprice | Tessa Price is a singer/songwriter based in Madison who likes writing songs and eating spicy foods.

threadfall | threadfall.bandcamp.com | threadfall is an indie pop band fronted by Angie Remington the former bass player of Sassy Come Home, Token Minority, and Turbo Loogie. She writes catchy numbers about love and awkward situations.

Venus in Furs | venusinfursband.com | The long-running surf-punk outfit features couple Victoria Echeverría (guitar/vocals) and Natalie Hinckley (bass/vocals), alongside energetic drummer Marlo Darken. This group is heavy on the instrumentals with catchy, darkly humorous, and sometimes pointedly political lyrics.

Woke Up Crying | wokeupcrying.bandcamp.com | Woke up Crying is a 90s alternative queercore project fronted by Doug Rowe (they/them). Their lyrics include the themes of loss, apathy, depression, and executive dysfunction backed by guitar sounds that move between grunge, surf, and telecaster twang.

LITERARY ARTISTS

Annie Menzel | gws.wisc.edu/staff/menzel-annie | Annie Menzel is completing revisions on her first book, *The Political Life of Black Infant Mortality*, under contract with University of California Press. She is also at work

on a second book project, *Birthing Paradox: Race, Colonization, and Radicalism in US Midwifery*, which seeks to understand the contradictory practices in the homebirth midwifery movement since 1970.

Bridget Birdsall | bridgetbirdsall.com | Bridget Birdsall, MFA, is an award-winning author who overcame dyslexic challenges to balance a life in business and the arts. Her 2015 YA novel, *Double Exposure*, won numerous awards and outstanding reviews for its portrayal of an intersex character.

Callen Harty | callenharty.com | Callen Harty is a writer, director, and actor. His books include *My Queer Life*, a collection of writings on 30 years of queer activism; *Empty Playground: A Survivor's Story*, a memoir on surviving child sex abuse, and *The Stronger Pull*, a memoir on his coming out days in southwestern Wisconsin.

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D. J. Goodman is the author of multiple sci-fi and horror novels, including *The Reanimation of Edward Schuett* and a number of deep-sea adventures from Severed Press. She has also written for the Mutants and Masterminds TTRPG from Green Ronin Publishing.

Jaimie Sherling | [ydysweets.com](https://www.ydysweets.com) | Jaimie graduated from UW-Madison and briefly lived in the bay area but was drawn back. After covid delayed the launch of a clothing line in 2020, Jaimie instead poured her energy into a memoir. *From Queens to QUEENS: How the Madison Drag Community Saved My Life* was published in September 2021.

K. Iver | [kleiver.com](https://www.kleiver.com) | K. Iver is a nonbinary trans poet from Mississippi. Their book *Short Film Starring My Beloved's Red Bronco* won the 2022 Ballard Spahr Prize for Poetry and is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions. Iver is the 2021–22 Ronald Wallace Fellow for Poetry at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing.

R. B. Simon | [instagram.com/poet.r.b.simon](https://www.instagram.com/poet.r.b.simon) | R. B. is a fierce, queer mama, artist, and poet (*The Good Truth*, 2021) living in Madison.

Raphael Kadushin | [facebook.com/raphael.kadushin](https://www.facebook.com/raphael.kadushin) | Raphael is an award-winning travel and food writer, with work appearing in a wide range of anthologies, including three editions of *Best Food Writing*. He is the editor of two travel anthologies: *Wonderlands* and *Big Trips*.

Rita Mae Reese | [ritamaereese.com](https://www.ritamaereese.com) | Rita Mae Reese (she/her) is the author of *The Book of Hulga*. She designs Lesbian Poet Trading Cards for Headmistress Press, is in the bluegrass band Coulee Creek, and serves as the Co-Director at Arts + Literature Laboratory in Madison.

Sami Schalk | [samischalk.com](https://www.samischalk.com) | Dr. Sami Schalk (she/her) is an Associate Professor of Gender & Women's Studies at UW-Madison. She published her first book in 2018 entitled *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. Dr. Schalk also writes for mainstream outlets, serves as a board member for Freedom Inc., and once twerked with Lizzo.

VISUAL ARTISTS

Angela Richardson | [angela-richardson.com](https://www.angela-richardson.com) | Richardson's work often explores the idea of "community"— how communities form, operate, and how art plays a role in their vitality. As a teaching artist, she's led classes at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, Center for Healthy Minds, Madison Children's Museum, Madison Public Library, and many other community organizations.

Anna Campbell | [annacampbell.net](https://www.annacampbell.net) | Campbell's practice employs props, scaffold, and trusswork to support models of representation for queer forms that challenge the gaze of classifying taxonomies. This critique via form, space, and ephemera resists the social dynamics that reinforce our constructions of what may be understood as aspirational.

Araceli Zuniga | [sleeplesstransgressor.com](https://www.sleeplesstransgressor.com) | Araceli Zuniga is a Mexican-American multidisciplinary artist based in Madison and Milwaukee whose distinct work is defined by vibrant colors and fluid figures. Her relationship with her own mental health and its origins in childhood are key themes in her personal work.

Ari Gochberg | [@ari.g.ink](https://www.ari.g.ink) | A tattoo artist at Giige, Ari (ZZ) (he/they) is a trans and neurodivergent tattoo artist focusing on fineline illustrative works. They draw inspiration from manga and anime, botanical illustrations, queer sexuality, and the human form.

Babette Wainwright | [babettewainwright.com](https://www.babettewainwright.com) | As a youth, Babette exhibited at the Centre d'Art of Port au Prince, Haiti. In the US, her work has been shown in Baton Rouge, Atlanta, Washington D.C., Chicago, Iowa, North Carolina, and Madison. In 1998, she discovered the power of expressing herself with clay, making sculptures informed both by her African roots, and by the work of the pre-Columbian people of Haiti, the Arawaks.

bear cunningham | [giige.co/bear-cunningham](https://www.giige.co/bear-cunningham) | bear (they/them) is a queer tattoo artist specializing in fine-line minimalist and illustrative design. They love working with a wide range of subject matter from florals, pop culture references, celestial bodies, and occult imagery, to pin-ups, portraits, and anything involving queer forms and identity.

Benjamin D. Rinehart | [benrinehart.com](https://www.benrinehart.com) | Benjamin specializes in multimedia images with a focus in printmaking and book construction. His socially charged work is currently a part of 60 public collections and has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. He is a Professor of Printmaking and Artist Books at Lawrence University, and author of *Creating Books & Boxes*.

Bernadette Witzack | [bernieandzuzu.com](https://www.bernieandzuzu.com) | Bernie & Zuzu creates original, hand painted, printed and dyed home goods, accessories, and prints. We believe everyone deserves to have more beauty and joy in their lives.

Beth Racette | [bethracette.com](https://www.bethracette.com) | Beth Racette is a cultural worker and visual artist. Underlying themes in her work are flow and interconnection. Since 2012, she's worked on a series of paintings called Gaia, which tries to portray the Earth as a living being. Beth is an administrator Overture Center, and in the spring is curating a show about democracy.

Chris Nania | [nahkneeahh.tumblr.com](https://www.nahkneeahh.tumblr.com) | Chris has an extensive background in the creative industry and the arts. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, with additional training in graphic design and visual communication.

Claire Warhus | [snaggletootharts.com](https://www.snaggletootharts.com) | Claire Warhus has been doing freelance art for over 12 years and translated that skill set to tattooing. Illustrative organic subject matter is what calls to her the most, especially portraits and animals mixed with plant life.

David Wells | [finearts.edgewood.edu/art-department/faculty/david-wells](https://www.finearts.edgewood.edu/art-department/faculty/david-wells) | David is Gallery Director at Edgewood College. He previously served as Executive Director of Edenfred, the creative residency program of the Terry Family Foundation from 2004 through 2010. Wells also serves as Director of Ernest Hüpeden's Painted Forest and Study Center, Edgewood College's restored folk art site in Valton, WI.

Goldie Raye | [goldieraye.com](https://www.goldieraye.com) | Goldie Raye is a fine art photographer, illustrator, and printmaker. Her art work focuses on gender identity and defining the female queer gaze. She also studied graphic design and works as a freelance illustrator and designer.

Janis Nussbaum Senungetuk | [janis-senungetuk.pixels.com](https://www.janis-senungetuk.pixels.com) | Janis is a visual artist working primarily in fine art photography. Her focus is on floral, garden, and farmers' market imagery using natural light to capture vibrant, translucent colors and textures. Most recently, Dane County Arts selected an image for inclusion in the 2023 Dane Arts Calendar.

Jaundy Brunswick | [jaundybrunswickart.com](https://www.jaundybrunswickart.com) | Jaundy's work explores and critiques personal identity and highlights the space between self-perception, others' perceptions, and how easy it is to alter those perceptions. As a woman of color, raised by white parents in a predominantly white farm community and education system, Jaundy has spent life balancing the urge to blend in while simultaneously needing to feel heard.

Jordyn Alft | [jordynalft.com](https://www.jordynalft.com) | Jordyn Alft (he/they) is an artist, photographer, graphics/merchandise designer, and filmmaker. Specializing in music videos for local bands, he has created several films for local band Kat and the Hurricane.

Kaci Sullivan | [instagram.com/caseninedreams](https://www.instagram.com/caseninedreams) | Kaci is a queer business consultant, strategist, and professional creative. He makes art in several mediums that is often vibrantly colored and inspired by nature.

Karin Wolf | [facebook.com/karinwolf](https://www.facebook.com/karinwolf) | Karin serves as the Arts Administrator for the entire City of Madison, curating events, running grant programs, and generally advocating for all things arts and artist. She goes to area neighborhoods for local art projects and learns of the community's concerns and addresses them through art.

Kimberly A. Blanchette | [kimberlyblanchette.com](https://www.kimberlyblanchette.com) | Kimberly's art is almost always in the form of poetry, photography, or paintings. She also writes screenplays, meditations, and short stories. During college she even performed as a comedienne, and she is back performing comedy with a troupe called Steadily Improv'ing.

Kristin Ellis | [farwellgallery.com](https://www.farwellgallery.com) | Kristin Ellis is a self-taught glass-on-glass mosaic artist. She is inspired by the beauty in nature, and enjoys spending time outdoors, especially at the Olbrich Botanical Gardens. She is also one of the owners of the Farwell Gallery.

Lisa Loren | [instagram.com/kettleblacksilver](https://www.instagram.com/kettleblacksilver) | Lisa Loren specializes in creating jewelry through silversmithing. She uses stones, crystals, bones, fur, leather, silver, copper, and a variety of other natural/found materials.

M. Rose Sweetnam | [artitlab.org/mrose-sweetnam](https://www.artitlab.org/mrose-sweetnam) | M. Rose Sweetnam is a mixed media artist, educator, and organizer. They work primarily with collage and print, as well as embroidery, illustration, dance, video, photography, and found objects.

Mar Gosselar | [mgosselar.com](https://www.mgosselar.com) | Mar Gosselar is a work in progress, and moves through the world knowing everyone else is, also. Their tattooing art is illustrative, most often depicting the natural world, both alive in botanicals and remembered in bones.

Michael Velliquette | [velliquette.com](https://www.velliquette.com) | Michael Velliquette is an artist who makes intricately constructed paper-based sculpture. His work is vibrant even when monochrome, formalist even when colorful, and sculpturally durable even though his medium of choice is so noticeably ephemeral.

Natalie Hinckley | [hinckleyproductions.com](https://www.hinckleyproductions.com) | Natalie is the founder and owner of Hinckley Productions, and has created video work for companies like the NHL, Lands' End and Duluth Trading Company as well as Madison Roller Derby and the Roller Derby World Cup.

Nicole Bresnik | [nicolebresnick.com](https://www.nicolebresnick.com) | I paint from life, trying to bring the most beautiful elements out of people and places. "Painting is a medita-

tion and an act of putting positive energy into the universe," my teacher told me. But once in a while, I need to get in the world's face and just make sure some things are clear and non-negotiable by appearing as my alter-persona-artist-self whom I call "peyton place."

nipinet | [nedpines.com](https://www.nedpines.com) | nipinet is a Michif, Anishinaabe, Nêhiyaw and mixed-European descent Two-Spirit tattoo artist working in Teejop. Their art focuses on the intersections of identity, culture, queerness, and deep, nasty, complicated emotions. They tattoo with bright color gradients and bold lines and love beadwork, ledger art, anime, decomposition, the natural world, and the human form.

Nykoli Koslow | [nykolikoslow.com](https://www.nykolikoslow.com) | Working in the realm of painting and drawing, Nykoli fuses figuration with abstraction to explore notions of gender, sexuality, and agency. Part autobiographical and part research-based, his current series turns the visceral feelings of gender dysphoria into a queer cosmology.

Owen Tuohy | [concretebedsheets.net](https://www.concretebedsheets.net) | Woodburning artist and signmaker, Tuohy is a multi-discipline maker of nice things with a minor in whimsy.

Rae Sowards | [instagram.com/raesowards](https://www.instagram.com/raesowards) | Sowards is an author and fine art photographer with a focus on shooting with film and in black and white. The photos are often beautiful and gritty at the same time, showcasing deeply personal reflections on identity, location, class, and more.

Risë Christesen | [facebook.com/RiseChristesenFineArt](https://www.facebook.com/RiseChristesenFineArt) | Risë is a mixed media assemblage artist who deconstructs and reassembles objects in ways that give them new life and renewed purpose. She creates tableaux and installations in which the relationships of objects convey layered riddles about notions of domesticity, sexuality, gender, relationships, religion, and other axiomatic ideas.

Rolando Cruz | [rolandocruz.com](https://www.rolandocruz.com) | Rolando is an award-winning artist and photographer, as well as an ardent runner, who frequently explores issues of identity and race through his work.

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Simone Doing | simoneandmax.com | Simone is a visual artist, youth worker, and museum educator. She is co-founder of the multimedia studio Midwest Story Lab and the artist collective Solarpunk Surf Club. Simone and her collaborator, Max Puchalsky are artists, organizers, and educators who work collaboratively on projects that reflect their interest in empathy, technorealism, and engagement with local community issues.

Steve Noll / SNollPhotography | snollphotography.com | Steve loves photographing humans in action. Be it sports (rugby), theater, drag, or just people being people, he strives to show real people doing real things.

T.L. Luke Park | tl-luke.com | T.L. Luke is a professional illustrator providing printed goods, custom commission services, and art business consultations. In 2018, she started illustrating empowered g*rls, exploring whimsically dark and often spooky worlds.

Transpainter | transpainter.com | Rae Senarighi (AKA Transpainter) is your average non-binary cancer survivor inspiring self-compassion, activism, and gender resilience via unapologetic portraiture of vibrant transgender and non-binary power. His art has been featured in a wide range of press, Netflix, and hundreds of billboards across the United States.

Will Kiley Santino | patreon.com/willsantino | Will Kiley Santino is best known for his New Yorker cartoons, but has been drawing, writing, and making up new worlds and stories for his entire life. Will's creative practice is multifaceted. He also writes whimsical poetry under the nom de plume J.K. Ellomenope. His illustrations are magical and mythical.

Woody Olsen | woodyolsen.com | Woody Olsen is an abstract painter, and his acrylic and watercolor paintings are rendered primarily in bright colors with overlapping, floating colorations in an informal balance utilizing different shapes and sizes with positive and negative areas.

Yvette Pino | yvettempino.com | My work is transitioning from using visual language that reflects my military experiences toward investigations within my family's lineage and folklore. I am seeking to gain under-

standing of family behaviors that ultimately choose to reject our Mexican lineage in favor of elevating our Spanish heritage.

CRAFTERS/MAKERS

Brown Horse Herbal LLC | brownhorseherbal.com | Helen Hazelmare (she/they + we/our) is a non-binary queer botanical artist, writer of cautionary tales, and keeper of a community apothecary. Their focus on Dissociative Identity Disorder for systems and their partners.

C3 Designs | c3-designs.com | Nationally award-winning custom jewelry designer specializing in fine jewelry using gold and silver. Gay-owned and -operated serving South Milwaukee and surrounding area.

nibiiwakamigkwe | giige.co | nibiiwakamigkwe (they/them/awi) is an Onyota'a:ka, Anishinaabe, Michif, and waabishkiiwed Two-Spirit artist and organizer working in traditional Indigenous craftwork and contemporary Woodlands style to foster awareness of land protection, Indigenous cultural landscapes and complexity of identity. They currently co-own and operate giige, an Indigenous and Queer art and tattoo space, in Teejop/Madison and serve as the Community Leader in Residence at the University of Wisconsin School of Human Ecology.

Queer Suave By Niko | I believe clothing is like armor to protect against the negative elements of society and encourage self-expression. The garments I make are genderless.

Scott by Design | linktr.ee/ScottbyDesign | Abbey and Haley Scott are a Madison-based queer couple, both Wisconsin-born and -raised. We love thrifting, growing our plant family, and adding color (and sparkle) to the work around us by using our creativity!

Universal Friend/Darn Queers | [facebook.com/groups/930631423985133](https://www.facebook.com/groups/930631423985133) | Kandra is a multi-disciplined artist, sewist, painter, creator of wearable sculpture. They love to teach sewing at the monthly Darn Queers meet-up. ■

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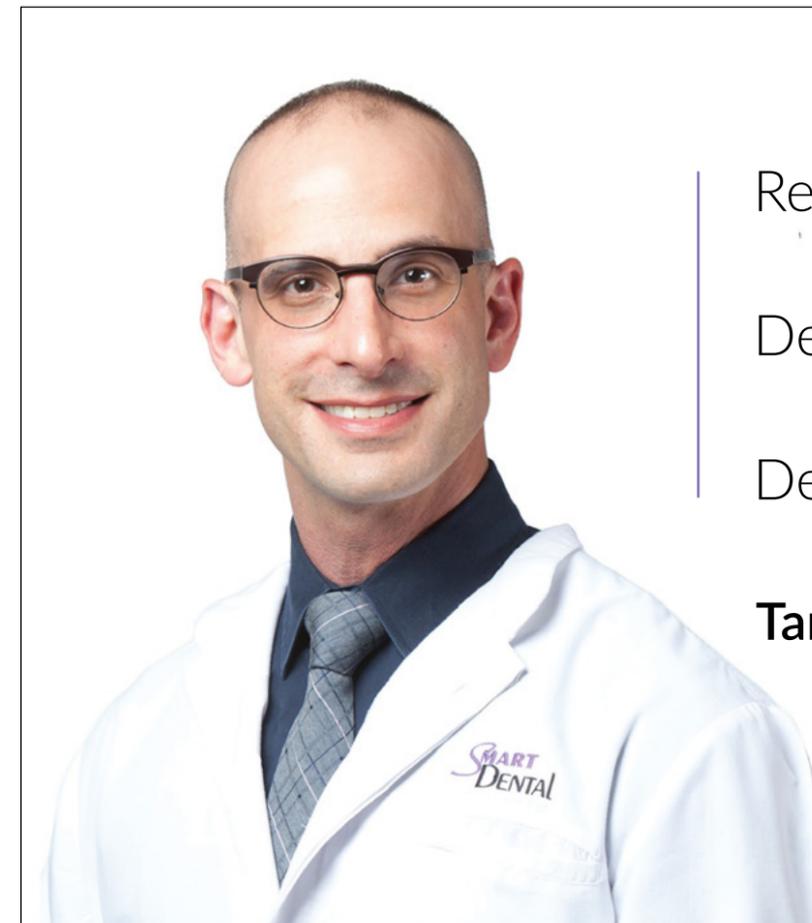
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SCOTUS MARRIAGE EQUALITY LEGAL PROTECTIONS POLITICS & LAW

Ways to safeguard your LGBTQ family

With the threat of SCOTUS overturning marriage equality, Attorney **Linda S. Balisle** outlines a strategy for protecting your family's rights.

I'VE BEEN ASKED to address what same sex couples can do to protect their current marital rights or to establish similar rights in the event the U.S. Supreme Court overrules or limits the rights affirmed in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The short answer is that existing rights to execute wills, trusts, Powers of Attorney, and certain adoptions, provide some protections similar to marriage, but all fall short of providing all the rights and responsibilities of marriage as well as the presumption of parentage marriage provides.

Prior to the *Obergefell* decision, which affirmed the right of same sex couples to marry, with all the attendant rights and privileges, many family law and estate planning attorneys created alternatives to securing committed relationships of couples not allowed to marry. None of them replicated all the rights and responsibilities available to married people. With the right to marry confirmed in 2015, all of the alternatives used previously became unnecessary. Then came *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which reversed *Roe v. Wade*, the case affirming a right to abortion based on privacy rights. The short version of the court's decision is that because such privacy rights were not rights deeply rooted in our country's history, they were not a federal right. States were free to grant that right, but did not have to. While the majority of the court claimed *Dobbs* would not affect any rights grounded in substantive due process, Justice Clarence Thomas, in a concurring decision, urged the court to reconsider *Obergefell* since the right to marry was based on a legal analysis similar to the one applied in *Roe v. Wade*, and

because the *Dobbs* case cast doubt on substantive due process protections as well.

With good reason, the decision alarmed members of the LGBTQ community. Justice Thomas made real the potential invalidation of their marriages, and the prohibition of future marriages. Since we do not know if Congress will pass legislation to protect the right to marry, or if they will set limits and conditions on that right, many in the community are concerned and want to know what they can do to protect what they have, if married, and protect what they could have in the future if they are not allowed to marry.

If *Obergefell* is overturned or limited in its effect in some manner, we are able to use some of the same legal devices to protect some of the rights lost, but not all. I wish I could create a perfect checklist, but not knowing if the Court or Congress will place limits on the right to marry, even the most experienced lawyers working with LGBTQ families cannot anticipate every possible alternative. What I can provide is a list of actions which can protect certain rights. There are more than 85 legal rights conferred by marriage, and many of them, such as rights to social security benefits and the presumption of parentage for a child born during a marriage, cannot be granted by private agreements. To the extent rights and responsibilities can be protected by private agreement, there are several legal vehicles available.

- 1. Write a will. If a marriage is not recognized or cannot occur, a will can protect your wishes for the transfer of assets to your partner and any children of yours or**

your partner's. Keep an updated list of personal property you want to leave each other. Name your partner as guardian of your children in the event of your death with a clear explanation that they were a co-parent. If there is another parent with existing parental rights, such a guardianship provision in a will may not be enforceable without that other parent's agreement.

- 2. Immediately execute a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care and Financial Decisions naming your partner as first choice and someone who will consult with your partner as second choice. This document will allow visitation in hospitals and ensure medical decisions are made by the person of your choice, rather than a hospital's concept of "next of kin." The Financial Powers of Attorney will allow your partner access to your funds to pay obligations.**
- 3. Consider a living trust where you and your partner retitle all assets in the name of the trust leaving those assets to the other in the event of one of your deaths.**
- 4. If a living trust is not appropriate or necessary given the nature of your assets, title property as joint tenants, giving each other a right of survivorship, and on bank, savings and investment accounts that allow it, name each other as the Paid on Death (POD) beneficiary so the funds go directly to your partner upon your death.**
- 5. On insurance policies and retirement accounts, name your partner as beneficiary.**
- 6. If you are planning a family, execute a custody agreement detailing the rights and responsibilities of the non-biological or adoptive parent. Work with an attorney who knows the options at the time you are**

planning a family to execute the documents that best protect parental rights. The legal strategies employed pre-*Obergefell* to accomplish adoption by both partners, or a limited guardianship may or may not work in the event *Obergefell* is overruled or limited.

- 7. If you live in a state that allowed legal marriage before *Obergefell*, consult an attorney in that state about what rights were provided before the federal right existed. It will inform your planning.**

I consider the list in this article a first pass. Attorneys who represent LGBTQ couples and their families will be learning as the law moves through the system. It is fair to say that legal marriage has been the only route to providing full legal recognition to LGBTQ couples and their children. To move backward is something we all dread because we cannot preserve all those rights and responsibilities in other ways. As the law becomes clearer, attorneys will be attending to these issues. ■



LINDA S. BALISLE is the founder of the Madison law firm of Balisle Family Law Legal Counsel, S.C. She concentrates her practice in the area of divorce mediation, arbitration and, if necessary, litigation for high net worth clients and business owners, as well as complex jurisdictional issues, non-traditional families, and appellate practice.

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INVESTING LIFE INSURANCE TRANS & NONBINARY

Empowered & Prepared

Carrie Waters Schmidt wants to reassure trans and non-binary folks that investing and getting insurance is not as hard as it seems, and she offers tips for building a financial foundation.

INVESTING AND GETTING insurance as a trans or non-binary person may be easier than you think. I've talked with several folks who fear that it's not available to them, so they brush it off, but I'm here to say that's not the case.

INVESTING

Investment account applications typically require certain identification details such as:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Social Security Number
- Marital status

When investing with my broker/dealer, all of our account applications require applicants to use their legal name, which is basically what is listed on your Social Security card. The reasoning is that all our applications go through an identity checking system that matches people's identifiers with a national system that proves you are who you say you are, which is a fraud-prevention measure. Perhaps not all companies have the same requirements. Personally, I feel safer knowing that the investment company I work with prioritizes protecting my identity, but if this doesn't feel right to you, then you might consider checking around to see how others do it.

LIFE INSURANCE

Let's now address life insurance. You can get life insurance through the same avenues as a cisgender person. The process will likely be a little more involved, but nonetheless, it is possible. It starts with investigating insurance companies.

Before we delve into the details, let's go over the basics of life insurance. There are two main ways to apply for it. One way is to apply for a guaranteed-issue plan that will not require any underwriting in order to insure you. These policies are often quite expensive because they are not based on any risk-based information other than your age and the benefit amount you're applying for. The other way is

to go through an underwriting process, which requires more information which is used to best determine your insurability and premium cost. All underwriting policies will need the same information to properly underwrite someone's risk:

- Age
- Gender (often required)
- Occupation
- Blood pressure
- Build (height and weight)
- Cholesterol
- Physical health history
- Mental health history
- Surgical history
- Family health history
- Prescription history
- Chronic health conditions
- Tobacco use
- Illegal drug use
- Driving record
- Criminal record
- Bankruptcy history
- Travel to dangerous countries
- Participation in high-risk recreation

You'll note that Mental Health is listed above. This includes evaluation for issues such as depression and/or suicidal ideation and attempts—both of which are prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community, especially for our transgender clients. Insurance companies are less likely to insure someone with a suicide attempt within the past two years or a hospitalization for a mental disorder within the past year, according to *Qualifying for Life Insurance When You're Transgender*, Investopedia.com. Not all insurance companies underwrite mental disorders (such as depression) the same. There are plenty of insurance carriers that have rated people with a history of depression as the highest health rating. It just depends on the carrier. Regardless of past history, note that all life insurance policies have a suicide clause which makes the policy null and void if suicide occurs within the first two years of the policy.

As part of the physical health history evaluation, all life insurance applicants must go through many different tests, including HIV testing. I once was questioned by a lesbian couple why this was part of their underwriting process, as they felt targeted. They were unaware that this is required of all applicants—straight, gay, bi, transgender, cisgender, etc. Do not let this alarm you, everyone goes through HIV testing when applying for life insurance.

What's not shown on the list above, but is required by most insurance companies, is your gender. This may seem inconsequential, but gender can be an important factor in determining risk as it has historically been correlated with one's life expectancy. For instance, since 1880 there has been a worldwide historical relationship between being male and having a shorter life expectancy, according to *Provisional Life Expectancy Estimates for January through June, 2020*, Vital Statistics Surveillance Report. According to the CDC, a child born male in 2020 has the life expectancy of 75.1 years while a child born female in 2020 has a life expectancy of 80.5. While it's generally required by all insurance companies to use gender in underwriting, it's unfortunate that there is no uniform practice, or standard, for how this information will be used in the underwriting process. Some companies will underwrite you based on the sex assigned at birth while others will use your true gender. Some insurers' requirements differ depending on the length of time you've been undergoing any hormone therapies or the duration of time passed since any gender affirming surgeries.

My broker/dealer is affiliated with a well-known life insurance company in the top five of the nation. For life insurance this company has applicants apply using the gender they identify with. If you are non-binary then they have you go through underwriting using the gender you were assigned at birth. This is true of several other insurance companies, but not all. To save you the time researching the marketplace, instead, you could choose to work with an advisor that is familiar with this area. Not only will you be guided through the process by someone who is familiar with it but you have a built-in advocate should you come across any issues or concerns.

DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE

Similar to life insurance, not all insurance companies underwrite the same way. Many of the factors used to determine insurability for disability income insurance are also used for long term care insurance, which are outlined

below. This is because disability income insurance is covering a different risk other than death as there aren't any benefits paid at death, but instead are paid in the case of a disability. This means they are concerned with your job (is it hazardous?) your hobbies (do you enjoy rock climbing or skydiving?). They're looking for something in your life that is likely to cause you to make a claim with them. When underwriting for disability income insurance, some companies have unisex rates so gender isn't a factor. For those that don't, many will underwrite using your true gender and only a handful will underwrite using the sex assigned at birth. For someone who is non-binary, the underwriting process would use the gender assigned at birth. Many of the carriers are not concerned with hormone therapy, though a few need a history of six months of use without complications. As for gender-affirming surgery, this is also a non-issue to many insurance companies, though a few require a 90-day wait period after the surgery to ensure there aren't any resulting issues, as they would with any surgery, according to Crump Insurance brokerage service.

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE

At this time, none of the carriers I have access to will underwrite using your true gender. Some use birth-gender while others will use the gender you have transitioned to, but only if you've undergone gender-affirming surgery.

Essentially, the data points asked in underwriting long term care insurance are different than those of life insurance because the insurance is covering a different risk other than death. They are concerned with a diagnosis or disability that causes you to be unable to perform two out of the five Activities of Daily Living, such as bathing, getting in and out of bed or a chair, feeding yourself, toilet hygiene, getting dressed, personal hygiene, walking/climbing stairs, and safety/emergency responses. Naturally, the information they need to properly insure this risk will be slightly different. The information needed for a long term care insurance application are:

- Age
- State of residency
- Marital status (married or unmarried)
- Gender (often required)
- Build (height and weight)
- Physical health history
- Mental health history (specifically for psychiatric/psychological disorders)
- History of Diagnoses (several common diagnoses are an automatic decline)
- Prescription history
- Chronic health conditions
- Tobacco use

- Current health concerns
- Current physical health/limitations
- Surgical history (Including gender reassignment surgery. If yes, were there any complications. If no, do you plan to undergo such surgery?)
- History of drug or alcohol abuse
- Hormone or psychotherapy treatments (If yes, when did therapy begin?)

As shown, not only do insurance companies underwrite differently, but there are also many different types of long term care insurance products available. At this point, you might be discouraged knowing most long term care insurance carriers will only underwrite an individual based on the gender they were assigned at birth. But there might be a work-around for this. As mentioned previously, several life insurance companies, including the insurance company connected to my broker/dealer will underwrite you with your true gender. That being said, let me introduce you to the hybrid life insurance policy. The base is a life insurance policy that works like any other permanent life insurance policy as it has cash-value and offers a death benefit. Then, on top of that, it includes a long term care rider, which uses the life insurance benefit for long term care, if needed. It's really a fantastic way to cover two needs at once, as well as offer a way to be insured in a more authentic way.

Hopefully any questions you've had are now answered, and you now feel more confident about investing and insurance. It's not uncommon for most new investors to have fear, but it shouldn't be due to fear of rejection or judgment. There are plenty of other issues in life that are worth worrying over, but this should not be one of them. By arming yourself with partnerships within the industry you can be confident that the steps you end up taking are right for you. And really, that's all that's important in this world—doing what's right for you. And when it comes to financial matters, I believe the best way to start is to find an advocate who is seasoned in the industry, and together you start by biting off one bite at a time. This way you will feel comfortable asking as many questions as you need to ask, and can begin building your financial foundation both empowered and prepared. ■



CARRIE WATERS SCHMIDT, MS, CFP®, AWMA®, ADPA®, CSRIC is the Founder of Equanimity Wealth Planning and Investing in Madison. She is an Ally and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. She is dedicated to ensuring everyone has a place in the investment markets and is committed to keeping you on your path to success. CRN-4293382-020822



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Finding Recovery Strategies

OutReach LGBTQ+ AODA Advocate **Linda Lenzke** surveys the impact substance use and addiction has on our local communities.

ACCORDING TO The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Recovery Month is "a national observance held every September to promote and support new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, the emergence of a strong and proud recovery community, and the dedication of service providers and community members across the nation who make recovery in all its forms possible."

In 2020, SAMHSA enlisted community members to manage the Recovery Month observance and identified Faces & Voices of Recovery to lead the charge. The organization's mission is, "Changing the way addiction and recovery are understood and embraced through advocacy, education and leadership."

TRENDS IN OVERDOSE DEATHS

Locally, in Madison and Dane County, we've experienced increases in drug overdoses, substance and alcohol use, mental health crisis, and suicides. Public Health Madison & Dane County from their Drug Overdose Deaths Dane County Annual Report 2022 (Note: Data updated through 2020) highlight the following key takeaways:

- The number of people who died of a drug overdose death from 2018 to 2020 was 43% higher than from 2014 to 2016 (254–365).
- 86% of all drug overdose deaths involved an opioid from 2018 to 2020.
- We often talk about opioid deaths in waves. The first wave, which started in the 1990s, was driven by prescription opioids, the second wave, which started in 2010, was driven by heroin. The third wave in 2013, was driven by synthetic opioids (illicit fentanyl, specifically). We are now in a fourth wave, characterized by polydrug—or multiple drug—overdose deaths.
- More than half of all people who died of an overdose death from 2018 to 2020 were between the ages of 25 and 44 years old.
- 78% of all people who died from a drug overdose in Dane County from 2018 to 2020 were white. However, Black people in Dane County experienced a disproportionate rate of overdoses in 2018 to 2020 and were three times as likely to die of an overdose than white people.

IMPACT ON OUR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Unfortunately, Public Health Madison & Dane County does not collect data from our LGBTQ+ community. Substance use disorder and mental illness among LGBTQ+ adults, from the most recent nationwide information from SAMHSA from 2019, reports:

- 18.3% (2.6 million) people 18 year or older had a substance use disorder (SUD)
- 12.9% (1.9 million) people 18 year or older had BOTH a SUD and a mental illness
- 47.4% (6.8 million) people aged 18 or older had a mental illness

Anecdotally, recovery treatment, mental health, and healthcare providers report that since the pandemic began in 2020 SUD, alcohol, drug overdoses, mental health crisis, and suicides have increased in disproportionately affected communities, including LGBTQ+.

HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Since we are in the midst of a drug overdose, SUD, and mental health crisis, it's important to remember that harm reduction saves lives. Harm reduction includes promoting the concept of "never use alone," encouraging the use of fentanyl test strips, and warning users not to mix drugs. Fentanyl is present in illicit drugs other than just heroin and opioids, so harm reduction practices need to be applied when using meth, marijuana, etc. In the past, 12-Step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous required complete abstinence as a measure of recovery success. Now, harm reduction recognizes that any reduction in use and the addition of safe practices and peer support are a first step to recovery.

- Following are harm reduction strategies:
- **Address Stigma and Bias**
 - Expand culturally appropriate services
 - Trauma-informed judicial practices
 - **Good Samaritan Laws**
 - Alternative responses
 - **Substance Use Prevention**
 - Address ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) & youth substance use
 - **Support for Families**
 - Increase overdose education &

- **Narcan distribution training**
 - Support services for family members
- **Traumatic Loss**
 - Grief support training for providers
 - Process traumatic loss in treatment center
- **Harm Reduction Saves Lives**
 - Promote "never use alone"
- **Risk Mitigation**
 - EMS leaves behind a program
 - Emergency Department take-home programs
 - Naloxone boxes
- **Access to Care**
 - Expand outside of traditional hours
 - Integrate primary care and behavioral health services

ENDING DEATHS FROM DESPAIR TASK FORCE

As a member of Dane County's Ending Deaths from Despair Task Force, representing OutReach and our LGBTQ+ community, I meet monthly with a coalition of 26 people, including mental health providers, first responders, and court and community advocates. We focus on ways to prevent death by suicide, alcoholism, and drug overdoses.

"In spite of our strong local economy, active social networks and excellent health care, Dane County has not been spared losses caused by the opioid overdose epidemic and suicide," said County Executive Joe Parisi. "We continue to see unnecessary loss of life and harm to families and can't stand by and watch this trend continue. The task force is intensifying our efforts to end preventable deaths by expanding county created initiatives and implementing new strategies to save lives."

The coalition's initiatives include monthly recorded webinars which began in May and will continue into 2023, available on YouTube (safercommunity.net website). Following is the coalition's 2022–23 strategy at a glance:

- Reduce drug harm
- Use data to prevent alcohol/drug harm
- Reduce access to lethal means
- Promote health care best practice to prevent suicide
- Prevention awareness and skill building
- Improve treatment access
- Reduce access to drugs

TIPPING THE PAIN SCALE

As part of September Recovery Month, a special screening of Tipping the Pain Scale is scheduled for Wednesday, September 28 at 7:30 p.m. at Marcus Theaters Ultra Point Cinemas at 7825 Big Sky Drive in Madison. Tickets are \$12 and can be reserved in advance on the Gathr Films website.

The screening will be introduced by members of the Madison recovery community, Charlie Daniel, Founder of the African American Opioid Coalition; Tom Farley of Rosecrance Addiction Treatment Center; and

Linda Lenzke, OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center, LGBTQ+ AODA Advocate.

From the Gathr Films event website "Tipping the Pain Scale is a feature documentary film following individuals grappling with the current systematic failures of how we have dealt with addiction in communities and their journey to develop new, innovative, and often controversial solutions to the problem. It is a quasi-anthology, weaving characters through their own stories as they connect to the issues plaguing all communities and the country in an urgent fight to save lives."

As the film says, "Addiction isn't a choice. Compassion is."

HARM REDUCTION RESOURCES & REFERENCES

- **OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center**
outreachmadisonlgbt.org
- **Faces & Voices of Recovery (Recovery Month)**
rm.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org
- **Public Health Madison & Dane County**
publichealthmdc.com
- **Safe Communities safercommunity.net**
- **Dane County Ending Deaths from Despair Task Force**
safercommunity.net/ending-deaths-from-despair
- **Behavioral Health Resource Center Dane County**
danebhrc.org
- **988 Crisis & Suicide Lifeline (Wisconsin)**
dhs.wisconsin.gov/crisis/988.htm
- **Tipping the Pain Scale (National Recovery Month, Madison Screening)** gathr.us/screening/32081. ■

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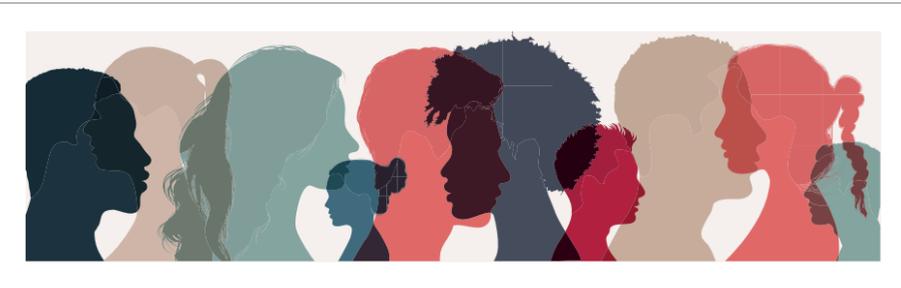
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MENTAL HEALTH MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES QTIPOC

Representation in Mental Health

New Beginnings Counseling Center Founder **Frederick Harris** unpacks the kinds of trauma caused by a lack of culturally specific care.

COULD YOU IMAGINE? Your white supervisor allows her son to rub your skin at a staff meeting while asking her why it is so soft. And you are the only Black person at the clinic. Then your supervisor responds, “I apologize; his nanny was Black.”

Could you imagine? Submitting a formal resignation to your supervisor; then an hour later she meets with you and her assistant but also brings her sister’s Rottweiler in your office during the meeting. Again, you’re the only person of color and LGBTQIA employee at the facility.

Could you imagine? Being beaten up in school by four white boys, but you’re the one who receives the suspension.

Could you imagine? Your white employee tells you they run on “Colored People Time,” and therefore they are always late to work.

Could you imagine? One of your classmates sending you Instagram pictures of Black men and women being lynched.

Could you imagine? Continuously being misgendered by your teachers and classmates to the point you are told it’s too much for the staff and students to try and remember what to call you.

Throughout my career as a psychotherapist in the field of behavioral health; I have heard about these traumatic experiences from patients. As a person who represents the marginalized communities as a person of color and gay, I have personally experienced racism and discrimination, both conscious and unconscious biases personally and professionally based on my race, gender, and sexual preference. People with marginalized identities seek therapy from therapists they can identify with,

relate to, and feel safe with.

I founded New Beginnings Counseling Center, LLC in 2017 after moving to Madison, and noticing a lack of diverse providers in Dane County. Many agencies were ethnocentric in their services to culturally diverse populations, which resulted in treatment approaches that were colorblind. I wanted to provide the much-needed representation of the underserved, marginalized communities, including the BIPOC community (including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and people of color) and the LGBTQIA+ community; while offering low-cost, self-pay therapeutic services to marginalized groups children, adults, and families.

Racism is a mental health issue because racism causes trauma, and trauma directly leads to mental illnesses that need to be taken seriously.

As a representation of the marginalized communities and my own personal traumatic experiences, I realized the importance of empowering patients in a safe and non-criticizing environment and developing skills to promote the healing of the wounds that have become a barrier for them to move forward in their lives.

The disparities in mental health services and lack of access within marginalized communities have always been a serious issue and concern. The stigmas among marginalized groups regarding mental health have historically been a barrier to receiving the proper mental health care—marginalized communities identified as the BIPOC community (including Black, In-

digenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and people of color) and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+ continue to experience worse physical and mental health outcomes than their heterosexual or cisgender peers. These experiences include lack of culturally specific care, limited availability of services, healthcare provider discrimination, database collection systems biased toward heterosexual orientations and traditional gender identities (as categorized by biological male and female definitions), accumulated stress from social stigmatization and marginalization, mental illness, and an increased likelihood of tobacco use, alcohol use, and illicit drug use according to statistics from Public Health Madison and Dane County’s Dane County LGBTQ+ Health and Wellness Profile: Research and Recommendations.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations across the country, including Wisconsin, have been disproportionately affected by the past year’s events. Add in a pandemic, plus the ongoing fight for racial equity, and that challenge has been greatly multiplied. The high number of COVID-19 cases among BIPOC populations has increased the number of people requiring treatment for mental health issues. Depression, anxiety, and addiction are the three most typical issues for people in Dane County, and Madison’s BIPOC community is less likely to seek help for mental health.

Discrimination and violence toward marginalized communities continue to increase in this country. Individuals who identify within the BIPOC and LGBTQIA communities are experiencing these traumatic events, which leads to increased mental health disorders and trauma.

Transgenerational and intergenerational trauma has increased significantly within marginalized communities. The reported trauma experiences correlate to issues such as transracial adoption, racial trauma, and various forms of racism (i.e., systematic/structural, institutional, interpersonal, internalized, reverse, and oppression). They experience overt racism and bigotry far too often, which leads to a mental health burden that is deeper than what others may face. Racism is a mental health issue because racism causes trauma, and trauma directly leads to mental illnesses that need to be taken seriously.

A recent report by *USA TODAY* revealed that 77% of LGBT individuals experience a hate crime at least once in their lifetime. And for most, they experience hate many times over. There was an 86% rise in anti-LGBT hate crimes between 2016 and 2017, as reported by

a quintennial report from *NBC News*. While the information is dated, its central message holds true even today. The number of hate crimes targeting Black people jumped nearly 40% last year compared with 2019 levels. Hate crimes targeting people of Asian descent in the U.S. rose by 70% last year compared with the number of such incidents in 2019.

Representation matters in mental health, because it can interrupt that distrust when underserved communities have access to therapists that struggle and fight the same system through lived experiences.

Historically, individuals in marginalized communities have been negatively affected by prejudice and discrimination in the mental health system. Many individuals seeking services within these marginalized groups continue to have these negative experiences when they attempt to seek treatment. It has been reported that some of the reasons for disparities in mental health utilization by marginalized groups include provider discrimination, lack of adequate health insurance, high costs, limited access to quality care, stigma, mistrust of the healthcare system, and limited awareness about mental illnesses.

Disparities in the utilization of mental health services could be partly responsible for these differences in outcomes. A 2015 survey by *Psychiatry* magazine found that 48% of white adults with mental illness utilized mental health services in the previous year. In contrast, 22% of Asian Americans and around 31% of Black and Hispanic individuals with mental illness received mental health services during the same time. Individuals from marginalized communities who live with a mental illness are more likely to be misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed and receive a lower quality of care.

One population that continues to be affected by a lack of cultural competencies within mental health is Black/African-American clients. It’s been reported that Black/African-American individuals are more likely to receive a misdiagnosis of schizophrenia when expressing symptoms related to mood disorders.

Clinicians tend to overemphasize the relevance of psychotic symptoms and overlook symptoms of major depression compared to treating clients with other racial or ethnic backgrounds. For this reason, Black men are significantly over-diagnosed with schizophrenia. They are four times more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than their white male counterparts. Furthermore, Black people, in general, are significantly more likely to be

diagnosed with schizophrenia alone when a mood disorder is also present than white people, according to *Mental Health America*.

Systemic racism also encompasses social and cultural norms influenced by racial prejudices, which can lead to unconscious or implicit biases. Implicit biases may manifest themselves in the form of microaggressions, which are subtle verbal or nonverbal slights toward marginalized individuals that may or may not be intentional.

When someone is diagnosed with a mental disorder, the person requires adequate and sustained treatment from a provider specializing in that mental disorder. Providers in the mental health field exhibit behaviors of discrimination when working with marginalized communities through microaggressions, stereotyping, and cultural biases, which continues to increase the mistrust by individuals in the marginalized communities and leads to discontinuation, early termination of treatment, or discouragement from the marginalized communities to seek treatment services.

In addressing these barriers within the marginalized communities and within mental health professionals, individuals must feel safe and understood by their providers. Representation matters in mental health, because it can interrupt that distrust when underserved communities have access to therapists that struggle and fight the same system through lived experiences. Providing representation allows individuals within the marginalized communities seeking treatment to feel validated and allows them to express their opinions comfortably.

Adequate treatment looks at culturally specific services and broaches dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, and culture during the counseling process. A provider that represents the marginalized community of the client helps identify the intersectionality of the clients in addressing the barrier to receiving culturally competent care in hopes that the clients feel validated and affirmed.

Representation in the mental health field for marginalized groups bridges the gaps in discontinuation, early termination, and unwillingness to seek services. Mental health providers

who can identify with the marginalized communities understand the discriminations and traumas the clients have experienced.

The providers bring an open attitude, self-awareness of themselves and the awareness of others, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills. In turn, this enables the client to feel comfortable and heard when describing symptoms they are experiencing and their life experiences as it correlates to their diagnosis. This allows the provider to complete accurate assessments, evaluations, and treatment recommendations for the clients which, in turn, minimizes misdiagnosing and inadequate treatment within the marginalized communities. ■

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FOOD & DINING TRAVEL ARTS & CULTURE

Smalltown Flare

Matt Trotter has built an inspired arts ecosystem in Princeton, Wisconsin with **Horseradish Kitchen**, his unique shop-dine-stay experience.

WITH A LOCALLY FOCUSED food philosophy, an artistic style, and a sense of history of both his family and hometown, Matt Trotter is building a welcoming community in Princeton, located in Green Lake County.

Matt owns Horseradish Kitchen + Market, the restaurant, retail shop, and lodging anchored at 505 W. Water Street. A new venture, Parlor Hotel, is due to open this spring as a seven-room boutique hotel nearby. Working with staff, friends, investors, and a supportive family who share his vision, Matt uses his background in the arts to create a space where people can have experiences beyond what's on the food menu.

Horseradish's roots are in his family's history. "My family is from the area," said Matt. "My great grandparents lived here in the 30s and had their own business. They created Muk Luks, the iconic socks, and were successful, especially in the 50s and 60s. I basically grew up in the sock factory. In my teens, Water Street in Princeton started taking off. There was new blood and new faces, people from cities opening shops. A lot of my interests started there. There was a plant store that started my obsession with plants. A good coffee shop, retail, and merchandising. It was a cool backdrop for a teen who was un-



1. Matt Trotter by Hannabarger.
2. Facade of Horseradish Kitchen + Market.
3. The food truck where it all started. Submitted by Horseradish Kitchen + Market



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sure of his future. But there were shop owners who created a nurturing environment, including a gay restaurant owner I worked for. I saw him as a mentor, and we're still friends today."

For school, Matt went from the town of 1200 people to Milwaukee, where he spent seven years studying art. He worked in Sheboygan for a bit. But back home, his parents owned a building downtown that had space available. Matt's drive to start his own business in retail motivated him to make the hour-and-a-half commute to Princeton while working full time in Sheboygan to get his new company started. That's how the Teak & Soxy shop was born.

"Teak & Soxy was named after these horses that lived behind the sock factory," he said. "The horses would occasionally get out of their pens and wander around downtown. So we named the shop after the horses who had no boundaries and wanted to be downtown. I was always interested in design, packaging, and makers. I love anything vintage. That space was my canvas for a shop. I loved creating a visual space for all these products."

Two years later, Matt was inspired by the movie Chef, and decided to start a food truck. He admits that the film made the food truck business seem easier than in real life. He worked with his then-partner to find a truck on Craigslist. They paid \$1,000 for the vehicle that looked abandoned in a field overgrown with weeds. The vision kept them motivated to restore the truck and park it in front of the retail shop to serve food and drinks that offered something different to diners downtown. At the time, it was so innovative that the city didn't quite have permit rules in place for them to operate.

"I wanted to serve food on the weekends that was a little healthier and a little more exciting," said Matt. "I knew a baker who did artisan bread and pastries, good growers in the area, and I worked with a friend, my aunt, and my mother to put together a food menu. Then we needed drinks, so we got a liquor license and built an enclosed, tropical beer garden full of plants around the food truck. It was a cool place to eat, shop, and entertain."

The shop and food truck inspired his Chicagoan friends and regulars, Alex and Sarah Pearsall, to pitch the idea of investing in a new location in town. Opening a new space in 2018 sparked a broader vision of food, retail, and lodging in what Matt calls a shop-dine-stay experience in one building. It was then that he says he felt like he was hitting his stride as a creative entrepreneur.

Two years later, the Covid crisis hit restaurants hard. But Matt looks at that time as another chapter in finding new ways to do things to serve the supportive community around him.

"What's become part of our culture is the people. Covid meant having fewer hours, putting up plexiglass by the front door, and serving people through a pick-up service. People wrote messages on their order tickets, and there was such an outpouring of love and support. 'We miss you. We love the space.' Their support got us through lean times. We still have those messages on their tickets hanging up."

It's that love and support that also makes Horseradish a friendly space for LGBTQ+ patrons, their friends, and for Matt himself. A Trans Pride flag hangs in the building, and staff notice more and more same-sex couples visiting the restaurant. Matt reflects on his own coming out journey, and says he may have played it safe being from a small town. But the more his team embraced being a welcoming place, the more people responded to it.

"No matter what's going on in the world, it all disappears when you come in here. It's a safe space for everybody. It's been the people coming in here that validated my experience that we're going to be okay. It's like a community coming out, in a way. The more I dug into it, I felt more myself because I've been able to work through it all with the people who come here." ■

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Overcoming

Growing up, biracial youth **Sunnie Jeffers** was subjected to domestic abuse, poverty, and regular exposure to drug dealing and use. Now as an excelling academic student, she shares how she didn't allow any of these things to have power over her.



“Sometimes we’re tested not to show our weakness, but to discover our strengths” —Unknown

AS I SIT HERE, as a 16-year-old, writing this article for *Our Lives*, I wonder how I got to this point. A member of the Youth Activist Council for Wisconsin, an excelling academic student, and a role model to kids, teens, and adults, I ask myself when did I become this successful woman that I have never met before? It is genuinely crazy how I got to this point today, and it was far from being handed to me on a silver platter.

Behind the curtains, my childhood seemed like something pulled out of a teenage movie. Starting from the beginning, my parents were together until I was 9, my mother, white and my father, African American. They never really got along, but they stayed together for their little girl. As they split, my life split, too. I lived two extremely different lives. In one house I was cherished, loved, and grew up with the most amazing mother anyone could ask for. As for the latter, I went to my father's house, which was the exact opposite. My father was an undiagnosed schizophrenic, he suffered from an extreme case of Glaucoma, costing him his eyesight, and yet he was a part of a drug dealing gang in my local area. In his mind, everyone in his life was against him, and against me. He claimed that since my mother's side is white, they were racist, and hated me because of it. I was “a plant he must water with the wisdom and truth behind whites.” Despite me being biracial, he believed that “they” (my mother and her family) were plotting to hurt me. I was brainwashed and abused. I encountered drugs on a daily basis, whether he was using them or someone was buying them. It all got so bad that he didn't have money for rent, clothes for me, or for food. I went days

without food, which led me to steal snacks from the local gas station. My life felt unreal most of the time, but I blindly followed him. I was the only person in his life, and he threatened if I told anyone what he said or did, that he would have people “come for me.”

I stayed silent for four years, until August 29, 2019. My mom got a call saying my father had passed away. Once she told me, my life changed forever. I was finally free, and I could tell my mom everything that he did. She has and will always be my biggest supporter. She gave me the courage to overcome. I started throwing myself into school, hoping to become everything my dad never wanted me to be. My motivation came through because I desperately wanted to show him that I was worth it, that he didn't ruin me. That he doesn't control me anymore. I am free. I started paying more attention to classes and learned how to cope with PTSD, depression, and anxiety that came along with all of my trauma. All I needed now was to believe in myself. Even now, I struggle with believing that I am enough.

I know many people have experienced something similar to what happened to me. You might be curious as to why I'm writing about all of this, to which the answer is simple. I want to spread awareness to domestic abuse survivors. To anyone who might read this and relate to my experiences, I want them to know that they aren't alone. I see you, I believe you, and I believe in you. If writing this and sharing my story helps even one person, I'll be happy. Domestic abusers don't deserve to hold power over their victims.

“The enemy doesn't stand a chance when the victim decides to survive”
—Rae Smith



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Doing the Right Thing for LGBTQ+ Wisconsinites



Gov. Tony Evers signed an executive order prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ+ people across all state agencies.



He signed executive orders to protect LGBTQ+ kids from harmful practices, including banning the use of state and federal funds for conversion therapy.



Gov. Evers has vetoed multiple Republican attempts to turn back the clock on LGBTQ+ rights in our state.



And, he's the first governor in Wisconsin history to fly the Pride flag above our State Capitol.

LGBTQ+ rights are on the ballot, and Gov. Evers is the last line of defense to protect our freedoms in Wisconsin!

ELECTION DAY: NOVEMBER 8

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