

our lives



Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine



18

Wisconsin Pride Festivals



56

Java Cat Coffee House



52

Michael Bruno

FOOD & DINING

DIRECTORY: Local LGBTQ-owned & operated restaurant list

May / June 2023

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Herbiery Brewing

Founder Nicholas Ryan and business partner Maddy McKeown on Madison's newest trans-owned, herb-focused, hops-free brewery.



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AMERICAN RHAPSODY

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Terrence Wilson, *Piano*

music

Aaron Copland, *Appalachian Spring*
George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*
John Adams, *The Chairman Dances: Foxtrot for Orchestra*
Howard Hanson, *Symphony No. 2, Op. 30 "Romantic"*

MONUMENTAL MOMENTS

Kyle Knox, *Conducting*
Naha Greenholtz, *Violin*

music

Leonard Bernstein, *Three Dance Variations from "Fancy Free"*
Dmitri Shostakovich, *Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77(99)*
Johannes Brahms (orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg), *Piano Quartet in G minor, Op. 25*

SYMPHONY GEMS

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Jonathan Biss, *Piano*

music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Symphony No. 35 in D Major, K. 385 "Haffner"*
Robert Schumann, *Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54*
William Levi Dawson, *Negro Folk Symphony*

A MADISON SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Evelyn Saavedra, *Soprano*
Limmie Pulliam, *Tenor*

Madison Symphony Chorus, Beverly Taylor, *Director*
Mount Zion Gospel Choir, Tamera and Leatha Stanley, *Directors*
Madison Youth Choirs, Michael Ross, *Artistic Director*

MSO AT THE MOVIES

Kyle Knox, *Conducting*
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Disney
CONCERTS

jan
19, 20
& 21

THE PERFECT PAIR: MOZART & MAHLER

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Joyce Yang, *Piano*

music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491*
Gustav Mahler, *Symphony No. 5*

mar
15, 16
& 17

FAVORITES OF MINE & YOUR CHOICE!

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Steven Isserlis, *Cello*

music

Jennifer Higdon, *Loco*
Dmitri Kabalevsky, *Cello Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 77*

audience choice

Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 "Pastorale"*
Antonin Dvořák, *Symphony No. 9, Op. 95 "From the New World"*
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade, Op. 35*
Your Write in Selection

apr
12, 13
& 14

BOUNDLESS BEAUTY

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Madison Symphony Chorus, Beverly Taylor, *Director*

Alexandra LoBianco, *Soprano*
Margaret Gawrysiak, *Mezzo-soprano*

Jonathan Burton, *Tenor*
Kyle Ketelsen, *Baritone*

music

Giuseppe Verdi, *Requiem*

may
3, 4 & 5

FIESTA FINALE

John DeMain, *Conducting*
Rachid Bernal, *Piano*

Mariachi Los Camperos

music

José Pablo Moncayo, *Huapango*
Manuel de Falla, *Noches en los jardines de España (Nights in the Gardens of Spain)*
Silvestre Revueltas, *Suite from La Noche de los Mayas**
(*The Night of the Maya*), compiled by José Yves Limantour

Selections by Mariachi Los Camperos and the Madison Symphony Orchestra

*Synchronized imagery assembled by Peter Rodgers



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our lives

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

Patrick Farabaugh
Publisher / Editor-in-Chief

Virginia Harrison
Copy Editor

Doug Rowe
Features Curator

Online Jobs & Events Curator

Contributing Writers

BJ Daniels
Joey Drouin
Frederick Harris
Virginia Harrison
Ezra Johson
Melanie Jones
Maddy McKeown
Emily Mills
Nicholas Ryan
Janet Shelton-Vance
Vica-Etta Steel

Contributing Artists

Ian DeGraff
Melanie Jones
Sarah Stellino
Samantha Waldron

Social Media Curators

Jill Nagler
Doug Rowe

Webmasters
design.garden

National Advertising Sales
Rivendell Media Inc.

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(608) 302-4101



David Ryan-Sukup, Agent
514 Grand Canyon Dr
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dryansu1@amfam.com
(608) 833-1717



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OBITUARY



Author **Jaimie Maura Sherling** (born October 5, 1976) passed away on April 20, 2023 after a long fight with cancer. Her memoir *From Queens to QUEENS: How the Madison Drag Community Saved My Life* was published in September, 2021. Her second book *I'm Tough... And I Cry A Lot* was published early this year. She was an active member of Out Professional Engagement Network (OPEN) and is survived by—and will be remembered by—many.

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

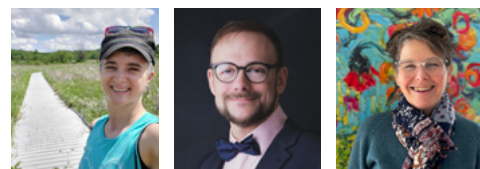
BUSINESS WORTH SUPPORTING

TOO OFTEN businesses want in on the spending power of our community. While overall it's good that they're acknowledging that we're a demographic worth courting, far too few put in the work to earn our dollars. Performative allyship is real, and before supporting a business that is willing to slap a pride flag on their window to get you to come in, ask yourself: Where does this business show up in our community? Have you seen them at community events, either attending or as sponsors? Do they advertise in LGBTQ media? What are they doing to support us beyond asking you to spend your money in their business?

I've occasionally been asked about the value of lists like our LGBTQ restaurant and third space directory, and I think this issue speaks directly to that. The businesses listed in it have skin in the game, like you, and share many of your same values. At a time when we are consistently under increasing attack from anti-LGBTQ people and policies, it's important to prioritize and support businesses who are equally at risk over allyship that might tap out when the profit isn't there.

—Patrick Farabaugh

CONTRIBUTORS



EMILY MILLS is the former Editor and a current board member for *Our Lives*. She is a writer, musician, photographer, and nature lover currently working for a non-profit environmental organization where she sometimes gets to help set (planned) fires. Emily lives in Madison with her partners and two small dogs.

IAN DEGRAFF is a creative brand storyteller with a talent for corporate video production. His current projects include a documentary focused on the intersection of ufology and the lives of Wisconsin residents, producing a food trends and marketing podcast, and editing the photographs of butterflies and orchids taken during a recent holiday trip to Costa Rica. He lives in Madison with his husband and macaw.

VIRGINIA HARRISON enjoys copyediting *Our Lives* and recently served as the chair of the *Wisconsin Pride* documentary advisory board. Her other work hat is as Bridge Builder Project Manager for LOV Inc. When she isn't working, she can be found hiking with her partner, Melissa, and their fur babies or seeking balance in a yoga studio.

OUR READERS

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MADISON, WI

Becky Barnes

My name is Becky and I'm a loud and proud lesbian woman! I grew up in a small agricultural town in Wisconsin where family, community, nature, and hard work were priority. I left home to attend a local college where the LGBTQ+ community there felt safe enough that I came out as gay/lesbian. I played rugby, participated in the LGBTQ+ student group, and was a student employee throughout college.

Post college I began what has turned into an interesting career in facilities management. I also determined that alcohol consumption was negatively impacting the life I desired. Flash forward—I celebrated 17 years sober this year, and I continue to be infinitely grateful for making that challenging choice! I always wanted a family of my own, but as life goes I spent many years solo. I made the most of it by focusing on my relationships with family, friends, and community, building my career, and creating stability in sobriety.

In 2015 I met my wife on a blind date, and we married in 2016. My past life challenges and persistent pursuit of growth supports a rich and full life today. My wife, her child, and I have created a successfully blended family, and I am so proud to be a partner to my spouse and a chosen parent for my daughter. I continue to try to inspire others with my experience to pursue growth and fully experience life no matter what challenges are presented. ■



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OUR NEWS

Leading News & Local Stories



**ALD. DINA NINA
MARTINEZ-RUTHERFORD**
District 15



Left: Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford becomes Madison's first openly-trans alder.
Right: Vandalism targeting out alder Mike Verveer.

Taking Our Political Temperature

With anti-LGBTQ sentiment on the rise, we look at the scoreboard after the spring election to see what our wins and losses are, and what's coming down the pike.

LAW & POLITICS ANTI-LGBTQ VANDALISM SPRING ELECTIONS

THE YEAR ISN'T EVEN HALF OVER, but it's already been an eventful one for the LGBTQ community, with some historic firsts and distressing lows all mixed in. The onslaught of anti-LGBTQ legislation continues to grow across the country, though we're fortunate to have the thin firewall of Gov. Tony Evers' veto pen to prevent—for now—the GOP's worst impulses from being passed into law in Wisconsin. Groups like Fair Wisconsin and GSAFE are still keeping a close eye on the situation, building coalitions and providing support and resources to those who need it, as the ramped-up rhetoric is still

causing real safety concerns for LGBTQ children and adults across the state.

Still, queer and trans folks continue to show incredible creativity, joy, and resilience even in the face of such hate. Bright spots abound, including historic firsts in local elections in Madison.

We take a look at a few of the news stories that caught our eye this spring, and take a look ahead at the legislative outlook for the coming year. If you have news items that should be elevated (from anywhere in Wisconsin), please consider submitting them to us at contact@ourliveswisconsin.com.

NETWORK WITH US

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Exclusive Events

Discussion Boards

Job Board

Featured Members

Networking

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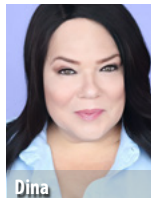
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DINA NINA MARTINEZ-RUTHERFORD WINS RACE FOR MADISON ALDER

In a historic first, local comedian, writer, and teacher Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford won her race for District 15 Alder in Madison, becoming the first transgender woman to serve on the city's Common Council. She was officially sworn into office April 18.



"I'm feeling great and excited to get to work," Martinez told *Our Lives*. "It was such a close election, and we were so ecstatic to have pulled it out in the end. I'm excited to work on LGBTQ+ measures that will help create a safer and more welcoming city, and to collaborate on what matters most: creating a more affordable and equitable city for all of us."

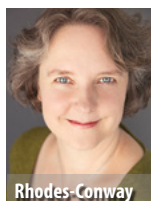
Martinez-Rutherford says she had thought about running for years, but was pushed to officially campaign in November after the shooting at Club Q in Colorado and the overall rise in anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ hate nationwide.

Dina Nina plans to represent District 15 by advocating for affordable housing, mental health, awareness and the queer community.

"I want them to be cared for and know that they belong," Martinez-Rutherford told NBC15. "If I can make life better for one trans, queer kid in this city, state, and in the country, I've done my job."

MAYOR WINS RE-ELECTION BID

Satya Rhodes-Conway won re-election to a second term as Madison's mayor. In a statement after the election, Rhodes-Conway said, "This win would not have been possible without the voters who turned out in record numbers to support my re-election. I am proud of the work we've done over the past four years, and I'm committed to working for our community for the next four."



The mayor says she will focus on and prioritize issues of public safety, affordable housing, opportunities for young people, and fighting climate change. Bus Rapid Transit will continue to be front and center, too, as the project to build out the new system is already underway.

STATEWIDE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK FROM FAIR WISCONSIN

Our Lives asked Fair Wisconsin what to expect in the upcoming legislative session:

As we head into the 2023–24 legislative session, Fair Wisconsin is working closely with the LGBTQ+ Caucus in the State Legislature to develop a package of proactive, pro-LGBTQ+ bills, also known as the Equality Agenda. This package of positive bills, introduced during each of the last several sessions, has historically included legislation banning conversion therapy, ending the panic defense law, expanding our nondiscrimination protections to include gender identity and expression, eliminating the constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage, and more.

During the 2021–22 legislative session, more than a dozen anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in Wisconsin.

While we are working on this proactive agenda, we are acutely aware of the legislative attacks against our community that are happening across the nation. With more than 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced so far—and more being introduced in state legislatures across the country each week—we are diligently preparing for any that may surface here in Wisconsin.

During the 2021–22 legislative session, more than a dozen anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in Wisconsin, and with the help of the community and allies we were able to defeat every single one of them. To do this we mobilized a statewide coalition of more than 60 organizations and individual advocates, facilitated the submission of over 10,000 pages of constituent and expert testimony, directed 5,000 calls to legislative offices, and helped organize rallies at the capitol and around the state to send a resounding message that LGBTQ+ Wisconsinites are seen, heard, valued, and demand respect.

At the beginning of this session, we reconvened this coalition in preparation: gathering input, offering support and training, and preparing for legislative action on both good and bad bills. And in mid-January, just days into the new session, we saw extremists in the state legislature take one of their first actions to suspend a statewide rule prohibiting conversion therapy as unprofessional conduct by licensed social workers, therapists, and counselors.

Fair Wisconsin and the National Association of Social Workers' Wisconsin chapter worked together for more than five years to advocate for the promulgation of this rule, which went into effect on December 1, 2022. After the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules suspended the rule in January 2023, we began

exploring every legal option at our disposal to get this important, lifesaving rule reinstated.

While we are confident that we'll be able to stop harmful legislation and advance positive bills, we are also grateful that Governor Evers has our backs. Since day one, the governor has shown unwavering support for our community. He has pledged to veto any legislation that makes Wisconsin a less safe or welcoming environment for anyone in our community.

In addition to our focus on the state legislature, local issues are also at the core of our work. We continue to collaborate regularly with counties, municipalities, school boards, and local advocates and activists to defend and expand equity and justice for LGBTQ+ people. If you are a local elected official or community member with an issue brewing in your backyard, please reach out to us at info@fairwisconsin.com for any organizing and advocacy support we might be able to offer. Join our coalition and learn more at fairwisconsin.com.

ANTI-LGBTQ VANDALISM TARGETS LOCAL GAY ALDER

In March, vandalism targeting District 4 Alder Mike Verveer was discovered on more than two dozen buildings along Doty and Main Streets in downtown Madison. The spray-painted phrase included accusations of pedophilia, a slur that has long been used to wrongly denigrate LGBTQ people and has seen a recent



Verveer

spike in usage as part of a right-wing campaign to target and oppress the community.

Contacted by *The Cap Times* about the incident, Verveer sent a statement through his campaign consultant, saying, "Homophobia has no place in our city or in our politics. I am deeply saddened by the hateful attack on me, and I know Madisonians will see it for what it is: a vile expression of ignorance and prejudice. I appreciate the outpouring of support I have received in the face of this repulsive act. To the individual or individuals responsible, I have this message: Love wins."

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway also released a statement of support for Verveer and condemned the graffiti as anti-trans and homophobic and urged Madisonians to stand up against rhetoric like it.

The attack came just a month before the spring election where Verveer won handily against challenger Maxwell Laubenstein. Asked for his comment on the incident, Laubenstein, a UW-Madison student, insinuated that Verveer had been embroiled in "past scandals" and tacitly supported investigating the charges leveled by the vandals. Verveer has never been found guilty of unethical behavior during his decades on the Madison Common Council. ■

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NEWS BRIEFS

WRITTEN BY MELANIE JONES



Trans TikToks Mercury Stardust and Jory have raised over \$2 million for the LGBTQ+ charity Point of Pride.

LOCAL CONTENT CREATOR MERCURY STARDUST, THE TRANS HANDY MA'AM, RAISES MORE THAN \$2,000,000 IN A 48-HOUR TIKTOK-A-THON FOR POINT OF PRIDE'S HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR TRANS FOLKS

MERCURY STARDUST, a local content creator and trans advocate who is more commonly known as "The Trans Handy Ma'am" and has made a name for herself by showing renters and younger people how to do their own home and apartment maintenance, raised over \$2,000,000 in a 48-hour livestream on Trans Day of Visibility. The money went to an organization named "Point of Pride" that, according to its website, "provides financial aid and direct support to trans folks in need of health and wellness care." Through their website, trans people can request access to direct financial assistance for gender-affirming surgery, HRT therapy, electrolysis support fund, as well as free chest binders and shapewear.

The fundraiser was supposed to be 30 hours and had a goal of \$1 million with the help of co-host Jory (who brought the total TikTok followers between them and Stardust to 4.6 million), other presenters such as the cofounder of Point of Pride, Dylan Mulvaney, and Mama Tot "to reach as many people on

their platforms as possible." That goal was reached less than 6 hours into the livestream. "It's showing how we are constantly stigmatized and demonized and made to look like these terrible people, when in actuality we're a community of people that will band together in the darkest of times to ensure that we can take care of our own and others," Jory told *The Cap Times*.

The fundraiser was supposed to be 30 hours and had a goal of \$1 million. That goal was reached less than 6 hours into the livestream.

"We believe that this is a really important time to do this work because of the anti-trans laws that have been pushed around in the country and have terrified the trans community," Stardust told *The Cap Times*. "In a time that often feels like it is hard for us to even exist publicly, it's nice to have a refreshing moment of hope." On the Point of Pride website, Stardust says, "When you talk about trans people, talk about our happiness, talk about how we help each other, talk about how we stand together, and we are one. Trans people are extremely talented at trying to

persevere through a society that often pushes you down. And all we hear is negative things about us in the press. But we know who we are."

Point of Pride, who dedicated a page to where the TikTok-a-thon money will go, said, "In keeping with our commitment to transparency with donors, supporters, and community members, we wanted to share some insight into how your generous donations will make a difference." They continue that binders/femme shapewear, their HRT Access Fund, and their Electrolysis Support Fund will get 5%, 10%, and 10% respectively, allowing for the mailing of 4000 garments, one year of hormone therapy for 120 people, and 190 \$1250 grants toward permanent hair removal. The largest chunk by far, 75%, will go toward the Annual Trans Surgery Fund, which will allow approximately 300 recipients to receive 100% of their surgical fee covered. The rest will go toward a few earmarked projects, and toward building infrastructure within the organization to continue their work with paid staff members.

UW-MADISON LIBRARIES RECEIVES A \$660,000 ENDOWMENT FROM THE LATE RICHARD (DICK) WAGNER'S ESTATE TO SUPPORT ITS LGBTQ+ ARCHIVE.

ON MARCH 30, the UW-Madison Libraries announced a gift from the late Richard (Dick) Wagner that "establishes an endowment fund that will provide lasting support for the

 **PBS Wisconsin**

WISCONSIN
PRIDE

Watch the new documentary for free in the PBS App on all streaming devices starting June 1 and on PBS Wisconsin and Milwaukee PBS 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 20.
pbswisconsin.org/pride

How great would it be if she could grow up and earn as much as a man?

- 1963

How great would it be if she could grow up and earn as much as a man?

- 2023

The Equal Pay Act passed in 1963 to put an end to wage disparity based on sex — but there's still work to do. Women continue to be underrepresented in higher paying roles and industries, are more likely to work lower-paying jobs in fields that are undervalued, often carry additional caregiving responsibilities, and can face unfair compensation practices. And that makes it harder for women to build wealth over time.

We are leading the conversation about ways to close the wealth gap because it puts women behind in being able to save for the future and avoid poverty in retirement. In addition to our award-winning financial wellness programs, we put our own pay equity policy in place to ensure female job candidates don't fall behind their male colleagues. And we are working on new programs to help close the wealth gap in our communities. Because when women thrive, the whole community thrives.

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LGBTQ+ Archive in perpetuity,” according to a statement from the Libraries. Wagner, who died in 2021 and was *Our Lives*’ longest-running contributor as well as profiled in our March 2022 issue, co-founded the



Dick Wagner.

official archive with Scott Seyforth, Michele Besant, and others in 2015.

The archive was a continuation of an Oral History Project that “started documenting the stories and memories of politicians, professors, students, and activists” in 2007. On the UW Libraries’ website, the Archive is described as containing “oral histories, personal papers, photographs, ephemera, and organizational records related to LGBTQ life in Madison and Dane County from the 1940s to today. Beginning with only a few oral histories, the collection has grown to include an increasingly diverse array of materials and voices from the LGBTQ community.”

Dick Wagner’s ties to the libraries of UW-Madison run deep, as he served on the board of the UW-Madison Friends of

the Libraries for eight years, and “strongly supported the Friends in every aspect,” the statement continues, “attending events, giving financially, and donating portions of his rich research material to the UW Archives and the Friends.”

“Dick was such a generous, supportive, and tireless advocate, and we are extremely grateful for the endowed fund,” says Katie Nash, University Archivist. “His advocacy and legacy will live on for generations to come—as the UW Archives now has an initial donation on which to build a solid foundation of financial support for the continuation and growth of the LGBTQ+ Archive.”

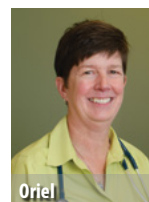
Wagner’s dedication to advancing the rights of the LGBTQ+ communities both statewide, where he helped pass the first protections for gay and lesbian people by banning discrimination “based on sexual orientation, employment, and housing,” and within Dane County, where he served on several boards and commissions.

The \$660,000 endowment will allow the library to hire students to organize the collections and work with other departments to make the Archives as “discoverable and accessible to everyone” as possible.

To add your voice and story, please contact the UW-Madison Archives at 608-262-5629 or uwarchiv@library.wisc.edu.

LGBTQ-CENTERED PRIMARY CARE CLINIC, OUT HEALTH, TO SHUT DOWN THIS SUMMER

OUT HEALTH, a nonprofit organization whose mission is “to improve the health of individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+)” according to their website, is stopping operations this summer, with their last day of patient care being July 13. In a message sent to donors in late April, they didn’t specify a direct reason for the closure, but



Oriel

did say that due to their work, and the work of other organizations, health care for the LGBTQ community “has greatly expanded.” They continue with “while the clinic is closing, the mission will continue. Dr. Oriel, Dr. Brinn, Katy, and Melisa plan to continue their long-held passion of advocacy, education, and outreach, but do not know at this time what next professional next steps might be.”

Out Health’s services included family medicine and LGBTQ-specific health—like

hormone therapy for gender transition, fertility and family planning, puberty blocking, STI testing, and HIV treatment, substance use and abuse assistance in the form of medication, and education and training for other health

care professionals to “reduce disparities and expand meaningful access to equitable care,” according to their website. At the time of writing, Out Health’s website does not list alternative resources for these services. ■



LGBTQ Organizations Update

General News | Awards | Staff & Board Changes | Events

Curated by Doug Rowe

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

GENERAL NEWS

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

BADGERLAND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Shake Off the Rust practices have begun for the next season of Madison LGBTQ+ softball, and games are open to the public May 15–July 31 at Bowman Park.

COURAGE MKE

On the evening of Tuesday April 11, the C2 Apartments were burgled resulting in an estimated \$50,000–100,000 loss of fixtures and donations intended for future residents. LaCage Niteclub and This Is It quickly banded together to fundraise and replace a portion of what was taken. The property is intended to eventually house up to seven LGBTQ+ young adults (Ages 18–24) in a dorm-like setting.

CREAM CITY FOUNDATION

The LGBTQ Student Scholarship application window begins May 1 for student leaders in Southeastern WI seeking post-secondary education. Last year, 11 scholarships were issued totaling \$27,500.

OUTREACH LGBTQ+ CENTER

With support from the Madison Community Foundation’s Fund for Women and Steven A. Levine Fund for Law, Business, and Finance, OutReach is starting a new program, the Name Change Fund, to help provide financial assistance to transgender people seeking to change their legal names and identification documents.

AWARDS / RECOGNITION / GRANTS

Special thanks for those who do good.

MILWAUKEE LGBT CENTER

This spring the center celebrated their 25th anniversary of serving LGBTQ+ individuals in the greater Milwaukee area.

STAFF / BOARD CHANGES

Who’s moving on or moving into org leadership.

DIVERSE & RESILIENT

Kristen Ramirez (Finance & Operations) and **Bethamie Wyatt** (Community Programs) have returned as Directors. In April Anti-Violence Program and Co-Director **Kathy Flores** announced that she would be retiring from her position after seven years at Diverse & Resilient. Over a 40-year career Kathy spent 30 years in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and 20 years working with DV/SA programming.



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OUTREACH LGBTQ+ CENTER Several new members have been added to the Outreach staff this year including **Gabriel Loredó** (Transgender Advocate), **Mack McKellips** (Operations & Event Coordinator), **Araceli Esparza** (Social Media Content Creator), and **Tarah Stangler** (Opioid Overdose Prevention Coordinator).

MILWAUKEE LGBT CENTER The Center is operating with a full staff for the first time since before the pandemic. They now have three mental health professionals on-site, which is a part of expanding clinical services.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plan ahead to join in.

BADGERLAND SOFTBALL LEAGUE **July 1–2** the Badgerland Classic Tournament will be held in Madison. Registration is open through June 16.



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

CREAM CITY FOUNDATION **June 28** The Summer Social will be held at the Charles Allis Art Museum in Milwaukee. This is a business casual event with a cash bar and appetizers (\$75).

FAIR WISCONSIN **May 10** Fair Wisconsin will be holding their biennial Equality Day at the Capitol event at Bethel Lutheran in partnership with Equality Federation, Human Rights Campaign, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, The LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin, and Milwaukee LGBT Community Center. This is a free grassroots advocacy networking event to energize participants for the state legislative session.

GSAFE **May 20** The 27th annual Celebration of Leadership will be held at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison. Six high school seniors and one educator will be recognized for LGBTQ+ activism in Wisconsin.

MADISON MINOTAURS **May 6** Madtown Scrum-down 15s Rugby Tournament will be held at the Wisconsin Rugby Sports Complex in Cottage Grove. The first game will kickoff at 10:00 am.

OUTREACH LGBTQ+ CENTER **June 2** The Chip-In Fore the Community benefit for Willma's Fund will be at the Door Creek Golf Course. Community members can golf 18 holes (\$110) or join for lunch (donation suggested).

PERFECT HARMONY CHORUS **June 2 & 4** They will be singing an evening of pop hits from throughout the decades (\$30).

PROUD THEATER MADISON **May 25–27** QUEERANTINE will be performed at MYArts, Madison's Youth Arts Center. Reservations can be made at reservations@proudtheater.org.

STAGE Q **June 23–25** The 2nd annual Capital Q Theater Festival will be at the Bartell. Brand new play readings, 10-minute shorts, and one-act plays by up-and-coming queer playwrights will be on display along with free workshops and masterclasses for attendees (\$15–30). ■

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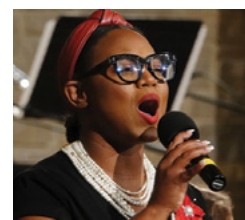
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PROGRAM

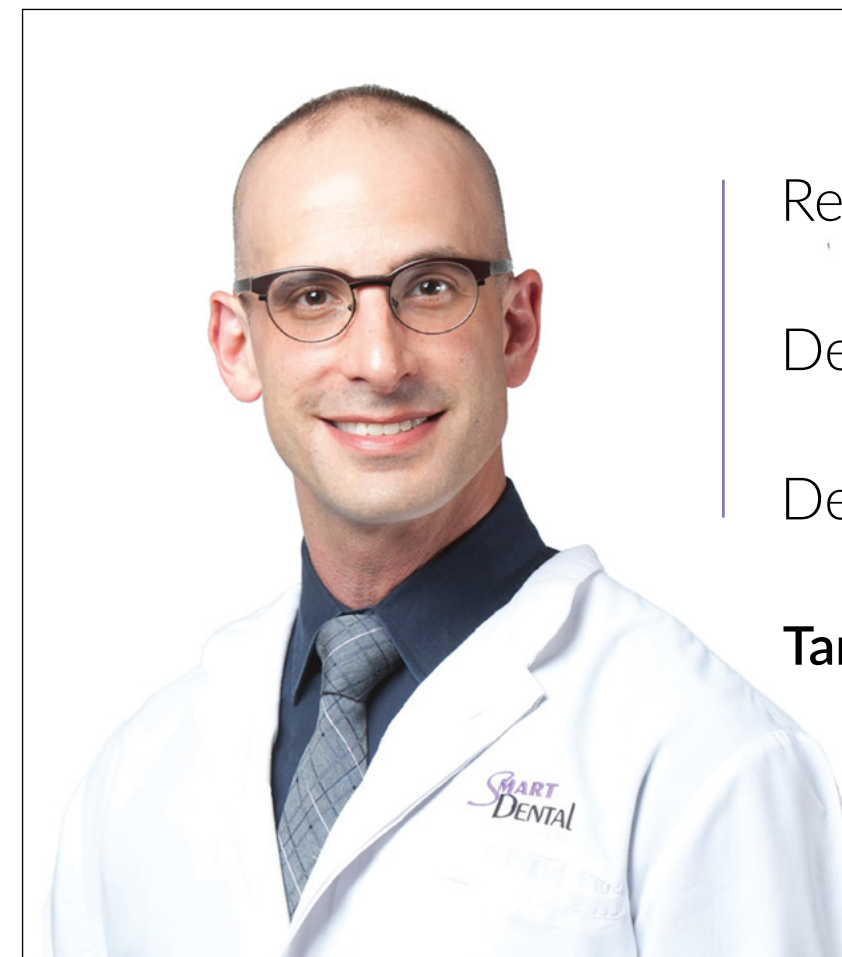
Antonín Dvořák, *American Suite in A major, Movement I*
Timothy Wright/Leotha Stanley, *Trouble Don't Always Last*
Jill Jackson/Leotha Stanley, *Let There be Peace on Earth*
Orlanda Draper/Leotha Stanley, *Praise the Lord Everybody*
Florence Price, *Symphony No. 1, Movements III & IV*
Giuseppe Verdi, *Overture to La forza del destino*
William Grant Still, *Symphony No. 1, Movement III*
Aaron Copland, *Dance Episodes from Rodeo, Movements III & IV*

MEDIA PARTNER



Dates, programs, and artists subject to change. Photos: Peter Rodgers

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PRIDE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

To the Point

Point Pride founder **Ryan Goszkowicz** shares details about this year's event in Stevens Point.

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT IS POINT PRIDE?

My name is Ryan Goszkowicz and I am the founder and Event Director of Point Pride! Point Pride is an annual Pride festival that is held in Stevens Point every year!

HOW DID POINT PRIDE START?

It took me a while to be comfortable with my own sexuality, but once I came to terms with it, I wanted to help people in my community have a safe space to express themselves. I had been to Pride festivals in big cities, but I felt like it was important to have something closer to home. I had the opportunity of performing at a small pride event in Stevens Point in 2019. The following year, I asked the previous coordinator if the event was going to happen again, and I was told that the group that put it together disbanded. I couldn't allow Pride to not continue in our city, so I took initiative and decided I was going to make it happen. Our first year ended up being fully digital due to the pandemic. Following that, I collected a small group of four or five



Upcoming Pride Events

- Sun. 5/21: PRIDEducation Rainbow Alliance, Appleton
- Thu. 6/1-3: PrideFest, Milwaukee
- Sat. 6/3: La Crosse Pride Family Picnic
- Sat. 6/3: Pride Ride, Milwaukee
- Sat. 6/3: Wausau Family Pride Fest
- Sun. 6/4: Milwaukee Pride Parade
- Sat. 6/10: Chippewa Valley Pride
- Sat. 6/10: Stevens Point Pride
- Fri. 6/16-18: Central WI Pride
- Fri. 6/23: Live on Queen Street (Madison)
- Sat. 6/24: 1st Annual EastSide Pride Fest (Madison)
- Sat. 6/24: 7th Annual Open Door (County) Pride Festival
- Sat. 6/24: Appleton Pride
- Sat. 6/24: Sheboygan Pride
- Sat. 6/24: Sun Prairie Pridefest
- Sun. 6/25: Fond du Lac Pride Picnic
- Sun. 6/25: McFarland Pride
- Sat. 7/8: Kenosha Pride & Pride Ride
- Sat. 7/15: 7th Annual Northwoods Pride Festival (Rhinelander)
- Fri. 8/11-13: WOOF'S King Street Pride (Madison)
- Sat. 8/12: Lake Pepin Pride
- Sun. 8/20: OutReach MAGIC Pride Festival Madison
- Sat. 9/9: Pride in the Park La Crosse

First Annual Madison East Side Pride Fest

521 Cottage Grove Rd, Madison
Saturday, June 24, Noon - 6 p.m.

Show your pride and enjoy live music, food carts, vendors, kid's activities, prizes, and more!

Hosted by the Lesbian Pop Up Bar (LPub), Dive Inn, & Java Cat.

like-minded individuals that really wanted to keep Point Pride going, and we hit the ground running! Our first in-person event featured over 30 queer performers and brought in over 2,000 people! We've been keeping it going ever since!

WHAT CAN PEOPLE EXPECT AT THE FESTIVAL?

Point Pride will be held Friday and Saturday, June 9 and 10. Friday will kick off with our second annual "Pride Crawl!" Starting at 3:00 p.m., this event is a bar crawl featuring participating downtown bars along with a drag show right in the public square on Main Street!

Saturday's festival is from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at Pfiffner Park Bandshell. The day kicks off with "2kids 4kids" a family-friendly drag performance/story time hosted by Wisconsin native drag teens, Nemo and Andi with an i Domino!

Pride's all-day entertainment lineup includes headliner hosts Sissy LaLa and Bryanna Banx\$, two multi-act drag shows, a performance by pop-punk band Falling Flat, and community performers including Authentic Theatre Ensemble, and Croi Croga Aerial Arts. The fun continues with a color powder party, food and beverage trucks, a local vendor and artisan market, and more.

Point Pride is a free, family-friendly event, open to anyone who wishes to celebrate unity and support the LGBTQIA+ community.

HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED—EITHER ATTENDING OR AS A VENDOR?

If anybody is interested in coming to the event, like our page on Facebook to stay up-to-date with all of the exciting details! Businesses, vendors, sponsors, and private citizens who wish to support Pride can find sponsorship tiers and donation links at stevenspointpride.com. ■

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ADVOCACY | GENDER-AFFIRMING CLOTHES | DISABILITY JUSTICE

A Different Kind of Closet

Ezra Johson is advocating for equitable access to gender-affirming clothing through **Ezra's Closet**, an initiative he kicked off in Rock County and through Janesville Pride.

MY NAME IS Ezra Johnson, and my pronouns are he/him. I am the founder of Ezra's Closet, which is a free gender-affirming clothing closet located in Rock County. I am a sub group within Janesville Pride, an LGBTQ+ nonprofit. I held my first pop-up event at Janesville Pride's second annual Pride in the Park event on October 16, 2022.

Ezra's Closet has been a dream of mine for the past five years. It started when I came out as transgender, and I finally wanted a wardrobe that matched my true identity. I had a closet full of feminine clothing which typically went untouched. I am disabled and live off of a very small

budget, so I realized being able to switch my wardrobe was going to be a very slow process, even with utilizing thrift stores in my area.

One night, I had a dream that I had opened up a building full of donated clothes and individuals were able to come and grab new clothing for themselves without having to pay for them and that they could bring in their current wardrobe which would then add points to their accounts which they could then use to get new-to-them items. If they were not able to donate any clothes, they would still have access to get items for free.

Last summer, I brought this crazy idea to my fellow directors at Janesville Pride, and I was shocked when they said, "This is great. Go for it!" I was able to get everything set up and secured a few drop off locations throughout Rock County where the community can drop off donations:

1. Katie Myers State Farm Insurance Agent, 4465 Milton Ave., Janesville
2. 20 S. Main St., Ste. 21, Janesville
3. Family Promise, 416 College St., Beloit

Ezra's Closet currently operates with pop-up events or when people contact me at my email. I've been trying to find funders, sponsors, or grants for an actual space. Since this is a free clothing closet, we would rely on donations, grants, and other funding to cover the cost of a space.

You can support this program by sharing information about Ezra's Closet to groups, friends, and family; by donating clothes at drop-off sites; or by donating storage bins with lids, portable clothing racks, and portable shelves. Feel free to send me an email with any questions or suggestions at ezrascloset608@gmail.com.

Besides Ezra's Closet, I am graduating in May with my Human Services associates degree with plans on continuing my education. My long-term goal is to get my masters degree and become a licensed clinical social worker. However, I also want to create an LGBTQ-specific homeless shelter that focuses on supporting the whole person and have started to work out some of the details for that plan. ■

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Family Outings

Connecting Wisconsin's queer families, **JR Witt** shares the work of **Out Families** and ways that others can get involved.

I AM JR WITT, current co-lead of Out Families. I joined Out Families in February of 2016 when it was just a Facebook group for people to connect through. My daughter was born in January of 2016 in Texas, and when we brought her back to Wisconsin, a friend who was part of the group invited me to join, and I have been a part of the organization ever since.



Out Families started in February of 2016 by Laurie Marks and Joseph Brooks. Out Families was originally called Miltown LGBT Families. After a number of years and our group growing to many families outside of the Milwaukee area, we decided to rename it to Out Families. The name seemed very fitting for a group of out LGBTQ+ led families to connect and share resources with one another—a large part of the connecting is through “out”ings for our families.

When the group started, there wasn't a thought of needing a financial aspect for the group, however after some time, the potential for the group was realized and Cream City Foundation was approached as being our fiscal agent. Cream City was our main funder and took care of the accounting for the group. Through this, we were able to use their 501c3 status and continue on as a nonprofit organization. After four years of the collaboration, we realized we were growing, and it was time to begin our own nonprofit. An official board of directors was created for the newly named Out Families, and all the paperwork was submitted. In December of 2020, we were officially recognized as our own 501c3.

The Out Families mission is to connect our members socially, share educational resources, and raise the visibility of LGBTQ+ parents within the queer and wider community. The group has grown from a few families to well over 1000. Another aspect of our group is helping people who are interested in starting their families find the right journey for them. We have had many people reach out and ask what is out there for them. We are always able to connect them with someone who has already done the adoption, surrogacy, or multiple other routes that are available for them.

Every year we organize many events so children can connect with families that look similar to their own. Our biggest event of the year is the Annual Water Park Weekend at Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells. Prior to us organizing this weekend, Rainbow Families of Wisconsin had been putting the event together. This year, we had 100 families, about 420 individuals, attend the waterpark weekend. All weekend long we connect in the waterpark with other families from across the Midwest. We host parent socials to meet one another at night once the kids are asleep, two pizza dinners are held in their largest dining room as we cannot get everyone in at one time on Saturday night. During the dinner, Milwaukee Drag Queen Channel D'Vine performs and then hosts



drag queen bingo for the families to play. After dinner we have a movie set up for all the kids to enjoy and the parents to socialize. The weekend isn't cheap, so we are fortunate enough to have many amazing businesses support us with items for a silent auction. We also started a new auction this year where our children created some amazing artwork and everyone was able to bid on them. Outside of this event, we also hold an annual Breakfast with Santa or Brunch with the Grinch, many local park

meetups, and a summer picnic with bounce houses, games and a fairy godmother. To find out more about us, or to join our group, go to outfamilies.org and click the Facebook link or sign up for our email list. We have at least one event per month planned for this year. Everything from baseball games to picnics to pumpkin picking to camping. We look forward to connecting with you and your family. ■

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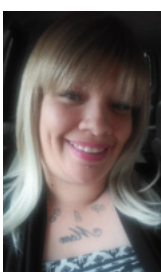
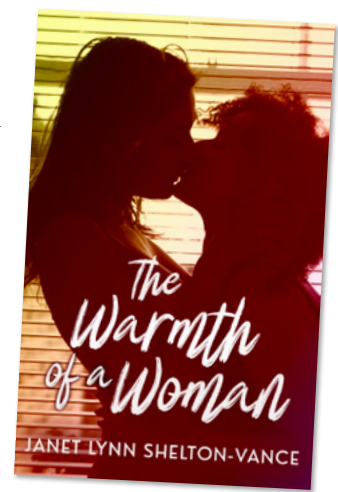
LITERARY ARTS QUEER EROTICA COMING OUT

Transformational

Local author **Janet Shelton-Vance** transforms the final months of her partner's life into a story about finding love and yourself in *The Warmth of a Woman*.

ALTHOUGH I WAS BORN and raised in Chicago, I graduated from Madison East High School, later graduating from the UW-Madison Odyssey Program in 2014 and am currently attending the Odyssey Project's Creative Writing class. I was part of a dynamic group that put together poems featured in *The Cap Times* (2013–14) as well as poems written and put into a collage book featuring our Odyssey class. I am a first-time, up-and-coming author, having recently published a debut LGBTQ romance erotica novel called *The Warmth of a Woman*.

I came into writing as a young child journaling to escape hardships. When I was 11 years old, after reading the Sweet Valley High series, I was captivated by romance and drama. Over the years, I lost my way with writing as life threw many curve balls my way, and in 2005, years after losing my two older children, I began to write short poems about my loss and pain. I submitted them to Poetry.com and received awards for them. In 2008, my life partner was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer. I sat with her as the doctor told her they could do nothing. But there was something I could do: I wanted my partner and me to have something together, so I quit my job and began writing. I had no plan of making it a book. I just wrote, thinking about my sexual experiences and how selfish I had been in viewing women as objects and not recognizing their inner beauty. Even with my partner, I didn't realize her inner beauty until I heard she would no longer be mine. She was dying, and I was losing someone else I loved.



During this difficult time, I woke up in the middle of the night, to find my partner cutting all her hair off. All I could do was hug her as we cried. Afterward, I sat at the computer day and night just typing. I barely slept. The only person I saw was my partner. After a month of non-stop writing, I decided that this could be a novel. It was sexy, and it was hot. It was also transformational, allowing me to finally understand true love and inner beauty. And this is how *The Warmth of a Woman* was born.

Of course, this isn't a book I could have written without the experiences I've had as an LGBTQ person, pouring in everything I have been through even after my losses. Incorporating my experiences, I decided that this would be an LGBTQ erotica series. I began my sexual experience at the age of 12, still afraid, then, of what others would think. I had many girlfriends along the way, but I often felt the need to hide who I

was. Being afraid of what my parents and siblings would think, I began to date a man at 16 years old. We had two daughters before that relationship came to a quick end. I then immediately entered another heterosexual relationship, marrying that man, and having one more daughter with him. During this time, I would still find myself attracted to women and often having affairs with them. After years of hiding my sexuality, I decided in 2000 that I would come out. I was done caring what anyone thought about me. I felt freer being judged by others than I was being judged by my insecurities and fears.


In 2008, my life partner was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer. I sat with her as the doctor told her they could do nothing. But there was something I could do: I wanted my partner and me to have something together, so I quit my job and began writing.

My lifestyle, sexuality, love, losses, pain, and heartbreak along with the stigmas and labels within our community and honestly, even my race, all had a role in shaping *The Warmth of a Woman*. After 14 years since my first keystrokes, I have finalized the first of this series bringing in all my experiences from my adolescent years through recent adulthood. This story is the first of a two-part series about survival as an LGBTQ person who truly just wanted to love and be loved.


In writing this book, I wanted to show that true love and passion between two women can be sexy. That there's beauty as well as a true commitment to another. Love can transcend looks or sex. I wanted Julianna and Dominique's story to be uplifting and inspiring, showing how beautiful sex can be when one person gives themselves completely to the other, trusting their mate fully with their mind, body, and soul. But, as the second novel comes about, you will see that this will not be without the harsh road it took for Dominique to finally find the love she was so desperately yearning for. Love for herself. Stay tuned. ■

Recent Releases by local LGBTQ+ Authors


From the Gravel Roads of Mudbrook
Author: J. Sargent Rady
Genre: Autobiography
Release Date: February 18



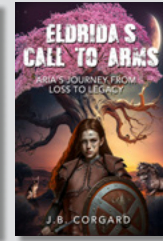
Not Just the Fire
Author: R. B. Simon
Genre: Poetry
Release Date: March 10




A Firecracker Wish
Author: Ace Jamerson
Genre: New Adult
Release Date: March 17



Eldrida's Call to Arms: Aria's Journey From Loss to Legacy
Author: J. B. Corgard
Genre: Fantasy
Release Date: March 26



Pack: The Jade Stone Chronicles Book 5
Author: Huckleberry Rahr
Genre: YA LGBTQ+ Shifter Urban Fantasy
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Queering Rural Spaces

Following the draw of rural land, **Sarah Stellino** uses her camera to document and make visible an often underrecognized community.



Cassie (she/her).

EVEN THOUGH I came out in my early twenties, for a long time I didn’t feel confident enough in myself to show who I truly was and to express myself in a way that felt authentic. In my mid-twenties I decided to move out of my hometown of Madison to Chicago to try to explore myself more. I started rock climbing and found community there, and dabbled a bit in photography as well. I felt I had created enough space for myself to consider who I truly was and what I wanted out of life. Around that same time, I met my wife by chance when we randomly became roommates in a three-bedroom apartment in Chicago. It didn’t take long for me to develop feelings for her—she has the kind of personality that is bubbly, warm, and slightly awkward in the most adorable way. She was at the end of a messy long-term relationship, and had never dated a woman before. It took many agonizing months of me being head over heels in love for Daniela to realize there was more between us than just friendship. I often said to my friends that I feel like I could marry this woman (my poor friends and family had to hear the play-by-play of our every interaction for months!). Being with her feels like the ultimate stroke of good fortune, and I take every opportunity to shout from the rooftops how in love with her I am. I think that’s due, in part, to being an extremely sentimental person—I’m always thinking of the personal history and significance of any place, time, or thing. That sentiment carries through in everything I do photographically as well. My artistic practice explores the topics of identity and legacy through photography and portraiture, and I am currently in the midst of two bodies of work.

“Queering Rural Spaces” started as an internal exploration as I was contemplating the future of my family with my wife. In thinking about who was truly welcome in rural spaces, I wanted to learn from the queer people who called these places home.

“Queering Rural Spaces” started as an internal exploration as I was contemplating the future of my family with my wife. We were deciding whether to return to living on a farm, or stay in the apparent “safety” of a larger city. In thinking about who was truly welcome in rural spaces, I wanted to learn from the queer people who called these places home. Has rurality supported and honored their identity? Do they feel safe and fulfilled? How do they find their own sense of community there? Society’s obvious love affair with small town life led me to speculate how gender and sexuality intersects with the love of rurality. For this project, I have traveled to different states to photograph and interview queer farmers. I wanted this underrecognized community to have the space to speak their own truth and show the nuances of their own experiences, and so each person’s interview is as important as their portrait. As I continue this exploration, I have been going back to revisit farmers in order to go beyond creating a representative portrait of them. Queering Rural Spaces is an ongoing project that continues to evolve and aims to



FL Morris (she/her).

reimagine the rural community’s past and present.

My second body of work “Redefining Conception” sheds light on the intimacy and intentionality of growing a queer family. This autobiographical series explores the often complex process of growing a family as a lesbian couple. We wanted to speak to the experiences involved in our journey—deciding on the conception method that best worked for us, hiring a lawyer to draft a sperm donation agreement, and tracking ovulation cycles in order to perform home inseminations. By intentionally occupying these moments in our lives, we are able to visually explore the complexity of emotions that come to the surface. Ultimately, I wanted these photographs to help our future child understand their origin story and how they came to be in this world.

My photographic practice is greatly influenced by using a view camera. A view camera is essentially a large box with a lens on one side and the film goes on the other side. It forces you to spend so much time crafting and composing each image. It feels almost as if time stands still and this contributes to a formal-yet-intimate feel in the images. It’s really important for me to continue the craft and care of each photograph, and so I enjoy creating each print by hand in the darkroom. There is a certain magic to the process of making silver gelatin prints by hand—watching the image come to life in the tray full of developer chemicals, and the feel of the soft fiber paper under your hands as you wash the print in water baths to remove any chemicals remaining in the fibers of the paper. I much prefer that experience to being on my computer editing in photoshop—instead it’s a tactile and physical skill to use your hands to lighten parts of the print by physically blocking the light from hitting the paper. Being in the darkroom is without a doubt my happy place.

Everything I do photographically and artistically stems from reading a book filled with images of the history of queer liberation as the authors described feeling “as if we’d discovered a family album full of people to whom we were deeply connected—infinately indebted—and about



Photographer Sarah Stellino.

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Shoshana (she/her or they/them).



Rufus (they/them).

whom we knew next to nothing.” This instilled a deep sense of the importance of recordkeeping and legacy-making within the communities around me. I don’t know where any of these projects or pursuits will lead me, but I do know that I’m having these brilliant, raw, and deep conversations with people in the queer community, and within my own family as well. I guess that’s all that any of us can hope for in our creative pursuits—to find meaning. The rest is icing on the cake.

SAM (HE/HIM OR THEY/THEM)

I identify lots of ways: Sam (he/him or they/them), queer, trans, sometimes agender, gender fluid, gender queer, Taiwanese-American, multiracial, settler, mostly middle-class, farmer, gardener. [Occupying space as a queer person and farmer] feels really stabilizing, and I also feel spiritually, emotionally, and physically connected to myself and everything around me. I feel actually more connected to life and death in this weird way. It’s like I’m seeing the whole cycle of it, and one thing feeds another. Everything returns to the land and everything comes from the land. On top of that, I feel like I’m always trying to find my role in the movement, in life, and I think making space for people, growing things, and providing things that support and nourish people is a role that I really feel connected to and feel good in.

MARJORIE (THEY/THEM) & DUSTIN (HE/HIM)

Marjorie: My pronouns are they/them, I identify as queer. I think my gender is fluid and my sexuality is fluid. So I have identified differently at different times in my life. But I think that “queer” is the term that best fits my gender and my sexuality.

Dustin: My pronouns are he/him, and I identify as queer.

Marjorie: Well, we are hetero-passing. And so, that makes things a lot less dangerous for us. I’m not white, though. So, I always have to navigate that. And I’m not necessarily out to every person that I meet, either. It’s just not safe. And so, you know it’s just we’re always walking that line, but as a queer couple we have an immense amount of privilege because you know we’re cis-passing, hetero-passing, and homeowners. We have class privilege, and shit. The thing that I am missing here is community. I love social media, that’s why we use social media to meet real people and build community. I would like for this to be a retreat space for BIPOC and LGBTQ people to rest first and foremost. But also create, because we have a studio to do art stuff, to be able to connect with nature, learn about homesteading and farming because those aren’t really great friendly communities to hold space in and exist in. Eventually I would like to be able to pay black people to come here on residency and do whatever. Like art, or music. Honestly, just rest. Just to have access to good homegrown food, and a space to just turn off and rest.

EMI (SHE/HER) & HANNAH (SHE/HER)

Emi: I really am out of love with my identity right now. Being this pregnant is really strange. I was trying to explain this to Hannah the other day—my identity has always been really odd—I look really cisgender female, and I am. It frustrates me a lot of the time because this is just the way I look. I want to be a guy with a shirt and pants on. I don’t look like this when I’m pregnant. It’s absolutely impossible. While I don’t identify as trans, I identify as on the spectrum of trans-ness. That’s why I just go with “queer.” I identify as female specifically because I like the transgressiveness of identifying as female and then looking like something else, which I cannot do when I am like this. And honestly I look so standardly female right now that it’s very disconcerting.

Hannah: I identify as a lesbian. I identify as gender non-conforming or



Marjorie (They/Them) & Dustin (he/him).

Being in rural spaces, especially living and working on farms, gave me context and permission to embrace my queerness, both in sexuality and gender.

slightly genderqueer, but in a boring way. You know?

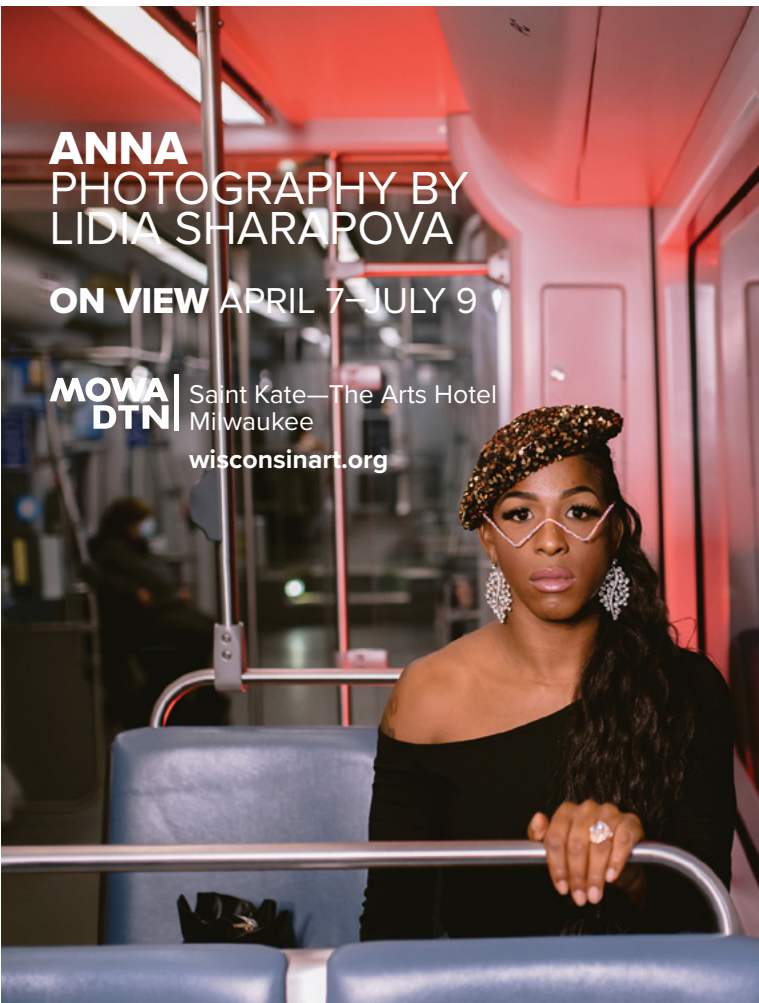
Emi: I just have no fucking clue how I identify anymore. Which is why I’m like—I’m queer. I’m a queer woman. I don’t know what that means. I am a rural queer, which makes a huge difference to me. I do not belong in the city. It’s not for me. I had to grow up in that hell, and go to college in that hell, and I am never going back. I just literally cannot do it. One of the problems when we lived in Brooklyn was this constant threat of violence. Just for being queer—Hannah and I both would cross dress a lot of the time, and that was weird for people around us. You know, it’s just like constant slurs on the street and constant creepy people coming out of the shadows trying to act like they want to threaten you. It gets old. It gets to where you’re constantly tense on the streets trying to function.

SHOSHANA (SHE/HER OR THEY/THEM)

I identify as a queer trans woman. And I’m kinda still—probably always will be—working out my relationship with gender. I use both she and they pronouns, but these days I prefer she. I use the words “queer,” “sapphic,” “pansexual,” and “bisexual” to describe my sexuality pretty interchangeably depending on context. I’m also Jewish, of Ashkenazi descent, which is an important part of who I am. My identity exists in a lot of liminal spaces. I live in the border region of womanhood and also in the border region of whiteness.

Being in rural spaces, especially living and working on farms, gave me context and permission to embrace my queerness, both in sexuality and gender. Nature is very queer, and seeing that play out as often as you do on a farm—from crops that sprout intersex flowers to livestock displaying gender-defying behaviors and having gay sex—really helps every kind of identity feel natural and normal and precedented in all of existence.

Rural queer living has its unique challenges, but it’s also filled with wonderful blessings. It’s tough to cobble together my trans health care from medical tourism to Atlanta and the West Coast. And yet, when a hormone refill gets delayed in the mail, there’s a well-established underground local network of support to help me out in the interim. The queer community in rural spaces can be less visible to outsiders, but it feels especially tight and supportive. A friend once put it really well: “Rural queers have better conflict resolution skills than urban queers simply



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Pamela (she/her).



Emi (she/her) & Hannah (she/her).

because we have to. We can't afford to fracture our community because of a break-up, so we learn how to work things out and communicate better."

RUFUS (THEY/THEM)

It can be an interesting project to name my queer identity. There is dynamism involved—in my experience and knowledge of myself, and in the continual refinement and discovery of language. Transmasculine genderqueer dyke daddy is how I would describe myself at this time. My pronouns are they/them. I am white, and my roots are Eastern European. I am an artist, dancer, and first-year flower farmer.

As rural queers, it is often not safe for us to be open about who we are. We keep our heads down and try to go about our days as best we can. When I first started seeking the queers out here, there were very few folks who were out and visible. Feeling profoundly isolated, I fled to the city whenever I could to have access to community. In recent years, the climate in our area has begun to shift. Not only are the queers becoming more visible, but more seem to be moving here because they feel welcome. What gives me the most hope are the vibrant, brave, and resilient queer youth who are springing up and working passionately for social justice, and who are fighting on behalf of those in the community who do not yet have the support and safety to be visible.

CASSIE (SHE/HER)

I lived a very straight life for a super-long time, and my story is mostly just that I wanted to be a mom. So I unknowingly ignored a lot of things in order to be a mom. Now my kids aren't as tiny any more, and you start hearing other voices and learning things about yourself. It's really interesting because I farm with my ex who is a cisgender male, and the vision for the farm is to try and do it together, but I don't really know how queer I can build this space because we're sharing it. And how that affects his heart essentially.

Me coming out was a surprise discovery that's been really freeing for the both of us. So on the whole, it's amicable. We've attracted a really queer workforce, so I'm able to be 100% who I am on my farm at all times. And so are the people that work here. So that's really great. My ex in a way feels like "you get to do this cool thing where you're part of this new community" and in his head he thinks it's really easy. And I'm like, it's kind of hard to come out when you're 42. I think he sees how, even with the crew, he sees how tight-knit queer community is and how there's just something different about queer spaces and queer community with the way that people feel comfortable and connect that's very different than straight spaces.

PAMELA (SHE/HER)

My pronouns are she/her and "hard femme" resonates most with me. Moving to rural west Michigan from the SF Bay Area was a huge shift. Building community has been slower than I imagined. It's been four years, and I feel like I am just figuring things out and finding my path here. Excited about having an arts, wellness + sustainability non-profit in the works. It has been eye opening to be around so many people who are not concerned with human rights and climate justice. Sometimes it's difficult to stay open to having hard conversations with folks of opposing views. I feel this is some of the slow and steady work that is essential.

Do I feel safe? As a cis-gender person, I have a pass that a lot of other queers do not. This is obvious when I'm visiting my usual farm supply stores with genderqueer or trans friends. Folks who would generally chat with me solo are not as friendly or outgoing. These are the moments I



Sam (he/him or they/them).

remember that even though I pass, I am politically an outlier. My minivan with her Bernie Sanders bumper sticker has gotten me some engine revs and stink eye around town, but mostly I feel safe.

FL MORRIS (SHE/HER)

I use she/her pronouns, and sometimes I question, why? I am gender ambiguous in all the senses, so really my gender is "butch." I love women and identify as a dyke. It's been an interesting journey to be the way I am in small-town, rural farm country. I started working on our special piece of land (located within the traditional territory of the Ho-Chunk People) in the late summer of 2007. The first few years, most neighbors ignored me aside from distant neighborly waves. As I grew my market farm business, managed our land with respect, added many types of livestock, built a high tunnel and propagation greenhouse, and created a generally picturesque veggie and cut flower farm year-after-year in the valley below our road, local folks started to feel compelled to stop in and chat with me. They often told stories of how my farm reminded me of their grandparents'. I was often the first queer/non-cisgender person my neighbors had ever met.

Things are pretty stable out here right now, 15 years deep. I feel generally respected in my community and have found the safe places to get what I need and people to call community. Right now the farm and my life is in a period of transition. The way I was growing annual vegetables on a small scale turned out to be a pathway to long-term, extremely low wages for myself. This year I continue to grow certified organic hemp for and with our farmers' co-op, have a small vegetable garden to feed myself and a handful of families, and I am growing custom cut flowers for a wedding. I have started a queer-branded construction company in an attempt to build a more solid foundation of personal wealth to support my big dreams and ideas, and the expense of farming. I am especially excited to provide alternative remodeling solutions for queer, women-identified, and BIPOC homeowners. ■

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ISLAM FAITH FAMILY

Queer Muslim Gifts in Love

Vica-Etta Steel explores queerness in Islam through two local queer Muslims, **Dr. Katrina Daly Thompson** and **QQ**, who remains anonymous.

AS WE WALK INTO the stories of Dr. Katrina Daly Thompson (they/them) and another queer Muslim leader, QQ (she/her), who wishes to remain anonymous, we begin by bringing forward two gifts they offered from faith to queer, and from queer to faith. Katrina offers this teaching from Islam: “Everywhere you look, there is the face of God,” while QQ offers another teaching: “If you can’t change something with your voice, try to change it with your hands. If you can’t change something with your hands, try to change it within your heart.” Both people queerly walk in their own understandings of their faith and queerness.

For QQ, family is core. She was raised and remains in a loving Muslim family. And while she needs a degree of anonymity, she feels that they accept her queerness “without us talking about it in a way where it’s like ‘we love you no matter what.’” QQ speaks of comfort

among younger people in her family and that “among older people there are hints of them wanting to know more, wanting to be educated.” QQ spoke about how her “mom watched a documentary about a trans youth in Egypt, and she was talking to me about it, about how, no matter what, a human is a human, and it’s none of our business how someone feels or how someone wants to live their life, and that that is the whole basis of our religion.”

Katrina, Evjue Bascom Professor in the Humanities at UW-Madison, and also an author, whose most recent title is *Muslims on the Margins: Creating Queer Religious Community in North America* is a later convert to Islam, with a background in loving Atheism with a strong interest in Buddhism. Katrina’s childhood might seem like it could not be more different from QQ’s. Their family was non-religious, but as a youth they joined a friend in a Chris-

tian youth group. For them, that group was “mostly social,” but even so, they were “drawn to some of the spiritual aspects in a way that I only realized later in life.”

As they grew up, Katrina drifted away from the Christian community they had been part of and “didn’t see myself as religious at all.” They did “develop a kind of academic interest in Buddhism,” but it wasn’t until they were done with graduate school and in their first job that they began to seek out faith again. They had “heard some vague things about Unitarian Universalism (UU) churches that I thought might fit with my feminism and be welcoming of me as a queer person.” They joined a UU church “and that became a really important community for me.”

They continued to develop their understanding in faith while in Tanzania doing research. Katrina says, “I spent the summer of 2009 there doing research, and while I was there I ended up getting involved with a Muslim who asked me to convert to Islam.” Their initial reaction? “I balked at this. I imagined that becoming Muslim meant having to give up my ideals as a feminist and hiding my queerness. But I was committed to that relationship, so I agreed to explore Islam.” Leaning into their academic training and heart, Katrina “just started reading as much as I could about Islam and Googling things like ‘Islam and feminism,’ ‘Islam and queer,’ and so on. I discovered, to my surprise, that there was quite a bit of scholarship among American Muslims who were arguing that Islam does not forbid homosexuality.” And in their research, Katrina also discovered that there are groups of queer Muslims and Muslim feminists. Later they would participate in and develop queer faith communities. They spoke with their then-partner and “shared what I was learning and said ‘if I converted, this would be my approach to Islam, are you comfortable with that?’” Katrina still struggled with this decision because, “With my atheism, how could I be a Muslim if I didn’t believe in God?” The answer to that question came with the young adult UU group they were part of. The group regularly went out to visit different worship spaces, and on one visit to a megachurch, “one of the songs that we sang mentioned God. I remember initially feeling a little bit uncomfortable, but the rest of the words were really beautiful, and so I just did this mental translation of substituting Love or The Universe or different terms that are more real to me for God. And then the song

made perfect sense, and was really beautiful and touching. So I realized after that, that it wasn’t that I didn’t believe in God; it was that I didn’t believe in this notion of an anthropomorphized white guy in the sky.” For Katrina, this realization meant that they “could believe in God. I could be a Muslim even if my conception of God might be different” from that of the Muslims they knew in Tanzania.

QQ came into her queer identity at 22, when she “suddenly felt these emotions” that were “so natural, so fulfilling and just pure.” The experience was “really special in that my Muslim faith wasn’t questioned by my sudden realization of my true identity, in fact it was strengthened because I couldn’t imagine that something so straightforward, something so powerful, could be a sin.” Can you feel the gift she gives to faith in this pure love? QQ names the gift religion gave her beside the gift that queer gives to faith, as queered understanding helps lift faith from human limits, naming that she is “an incredibly lucky person to be Muslim and to be queer in this time period because there are so many resources that have guided me and helped root out that internalized homophobia that I might have felt because of my religion.” As she came into her own queerness, QQ sought an understanding of why Islam seemed to be against all the beauty that she felt in her queer relationship, noting, “I think my first step was really dissecting culture away from religion, trying to figure out what was something that was sourced out of humanity and those directions that were straight from God.” In taking this approach, going directly to the source, she “found a lot of reassurance that my feelings were validated and were real.” As she read more she found that in “the Qur’an I was able to justify my existence as a human being, as someone who was worthy of being all of who I am.”

In her study, QQ came to understand that “the bigger picture is that God is very forgiving. God is more understanding than we are, and isn’t a vengeful deity. The scripture and the traditions of the prophet reassure me that being queer is worthy.”

As QQ reflected on the question of the



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.

gifts she brings to faith, rooted in family and queerness, she said, “I think it’s made me love God more.” She roots her love of God in community with “my trans friends or my gay friends or asexual friends,” and in her own growing understanding of her queerness. She felt “such awe of how magnificent it is to be part of such a diverse and beautiful human species where we have such a capacity for love that it transcends even our own minds and our

“I imagined that becoming Muslim meant having to give up my ideals as a feminist and hiding my queerness. But I was committed to that relationship, so I agreed to explore Islam.”

own understandings. He created all of this, and he created me, and he created my queerness.”

Katrina took me into some of the work that they did in developing their book on queer-inclusive Muslim groups. They shared many stories but one that stood out reinforced the gifts that queer brings to faith. Katrina names that there are arguments in Muslim communities that criticize progressive and queer understandings as just people who chose to “bend their interpretation of their religion to match the things they already believe” like the idea that “homosexuality is allowed” or

that “it’s okay for men and women to pray together.” But Katrina rebuts these arguments, saying, “My research shows that a lot of people who come into these communities don’t initially believe those things.” People Katrina interviewed said things like, “The first time I prayed next to someone whose gender was different than mine, I felt weird, you know? It’s not something that I was comfortable with but over time, doing it made me feel comfortable and made me realize that there’s nothing wrong with it. It’s not a sin.” And in this work, Katrina names this gift of “people who talked about that embodied experience of being near someone who is different from them helping them to change their beliefs. It’s experience leading to belief rather than belief leading to different practices.”

Katrina names the gift queer and inclusive spaces bring to faith, saying “the most common word in the Qur’an is ‘compassion.’ Every single verse starts with, ‘In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most caring.’ And so Muslims who take a more inclusive approach to Muslim community really focus on that and remind us that God is a compassionate figure, that the Universe is compassionate and therefore we should all be compassionate to one another.” Compassion is our calling, and we are each to work, according to our own abilities, toward love. ■



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Nicholas Ryan & Maddy McKeown.

Brewing Something Ancient into Something New

Herbiery founder Nicholas Ryan and business partner **Maddy McKeown** share their path to and vision for Madison's newest trans-owned, herb-focused, hops-free brewery.

FOOD & DINING | BEER | SMALL BUSINESSES | TRANS & NONBINARY

HERBIERY ENDEAVORS TO EXPLORE the possibility of beer brewed without hops, and we remain one of the only breweries worldwide to do so. That's right, we don't use the one ingredient most people associate with beer. This is purely a flavor choice as hops can be complementary to herbs but tend to steal the show. We want herbs to be center stage. Eschewing hops also means that a lot of people who don't like beer, if what they really don't like is hops, tend to like Herbiery beer. Our hearts beat faster when people tell us that.

You see, Herbiery has always been a form of expression, an explora-

tion of possibility, a rediscovery of the past, and a reimagination of the future. Our ingredients are widely available and not new. We take these forgotten ingredients and filter them through a modern brewing process in partnership with local area breweries like Karben4 and Delta Beer Lab. Contract production is a core part of our brand and a way we foster community in the industry while finding less capital intensive ways to exist and to grow. This process allows us to focus on revitalizing methods long abandoned in commercial brewing, like steeping herbs in the boiling process, roasting seeds and roots to caramelize and effervesce,

and gently infusing flowers into cooler liquids to preserve their volatile oils and aromatic expressions.

Drawing from the origins of beer, Herbiery forges a new path forward in the modern beer industry, creating space for underrepresented communities in our welcoming taproom and unexplored flavor possibilities in our cans and kegs. Maddy and Nicholas embody the Herbiery brand with a total commitment to our ever-evolving truths as individuals and beer people.

CORE VALUES

Herbiery operates with the commitment to four core values:

- **Queerness / Integrity in Self and Opposition** *Creating a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals will create a safe and welcoming space for all.*
- **Autonomy** *Herbiery will give others the autonomy to make mistakes and the support to learn from them.*
- **Continuous Learning** *Herbiery is committed to continuing education at all times and acknowledges that education happens all around us.*
- **Nature** *The natural is something we cultivate inside ourselves and, through our actions, in our immediate surroundings.*

Each recipe for Herbiery's beer is personally developed by Herbiery's founder Nicholas, drawing inspiration from their long history of homebrewing and the abundance of the natural world. As with any experimental process, not all recipes or home brews lead to success, and even the smallest of changes can produce enormously different outcomes. Through this process, Nicholas and Maddy commit themselves to continuous trial and error, the willingness to fail, and the autonomy to make mistakes, as core tenets of the Herbiery process. In turn, we extend this autonomy to the community around us. As a centuries-old practice, the collective cultural knowledge of brewing beer will never be held by a single individual. Rather, those who embark on the journey of brewing must rely on the knowledge of those around them and remain committed to continuous learning. Continuous learning is the taproot of Herbiery and will be cradled and supported through educational opportunities for our community, customers, employees, and beyond.

The upcoming Herbiery taproom will hopefully be an extension of this attitude. A comfortable space for people, especially queer people, to be and exist together.

Herbiery means beer created with a reckless commitment to regional grain and local herbal ingredient sourcing, growing these ingredients in-house when possible. Regional grain means partnering with malt houses like Maltwerks in Minnesota and Sugar Creek Malting Company in Indiana. We don't believe it's possible to brew, or drink, the same beer twice so every batch is unique. Quality and uniformity are not synonymous. We can try to recreate flavors for a consistent experience, but we are always willing to follow our hearts, hunches, and curiosity. This means our beers are individuals, just like each person drinking them, just like us.

NICHOLAS' STORY

Herbiery really started in 2016. This was a time when Nicholas Ryan was reflecting on who they were and who they wanted to be in the world. A time when the stirrings of truth were bubbling up in the hidden spring at the center of their being. At this time, Nicholas was living with their two parents in North Central NJ and studying herbalism at the Herbal

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Nicholas was realizing they were queer, and slowly realizing they've always been transgender.

Academy of New England. Around this time was when they brewed their first beer; a ginger beer brewed without hops. This beer turned out so good that Nicholas knew they had to keep chasing new and interesting flavors; raspberries from their parents' backyard, yarrow from the meadows nearby, and any other herbs which smelled or tasted good. Nicholas brewed and brewed and never with hops. Nicholas's parents helped with the brewing and the drinking. There were a lot of reasons to brew without hops: opening up new pathways in an industry stuck in its ways, curiosity about flavor possibilities, and a reconnection with old ways of doing things. Brewing without hops ended up being a way to rewire associations with a brewing culture which never opened itself to Nicholas in any way that felt inviting. Beer was ubiquitous in their experience but as an ever present background radiation that could use some updating like lawns (why do we not grow food in our front yards?). Rediscovering ancient and mystical ways of brewing felt fresh and exciting.

These brewing traditions were affirming too. Nicholas was realizing they were queer, and slowly realizing they've always been transgender. Always been; to put it this way is to recognize all the ways and the moments that indicated this from their early life onwards. Memories of alienation when their desire to hang out with "the girls" was met with chastisement from adults and ridicule from peers. They began enacting a facade of 'boyness.' Watching other students in school and mimicking their movements and tonality. Acting rather than being. Always seeking time alone to recharge from the exhausting act of wearing this mask. Recognition of others who were being othered and creating space to share with those marginalized kids was part of the way Nicholas dealt with their ostracization. Sitting alone at lunch led to sitting with the other people who sat alone and didn't want to talk. The upcoming Herbiery taproom will hopefully be an extension of this attitude. A comfortable space for people, especially queer people, to be and exist together. Nicholas wore the mask well and lived with it for a long time. Second nature

is a scary thing and not knowing what they were running from made it easier over time to think they were just an anxious boy. Never knowing that girlhood was an option.

Like so many people, the pandemic provided an intense time for self-reflection removed from the need to perform a gender in public. This led Nicholas to more fully grow into an acceptance of themselves. They had used drinking in the past as a coping mechanism to escape the deep-seeded trauma of acting as a type of person they didn't want to be. Nicholas found moderation in drinking alongside their medical transition. Being able to access HRT and transition publicly was life saving for Nicholas. They have consequently been able to engage with drinking as an enjoyable act rather than a coping mechanism. Learning that pre-industrial brewers in many, often indigenous, brewing cultures, through our modern lens on gender, were women or femme-coded people felt warm and inviting as a mystical pathway towards feeling at home in this craft. This questioning of long-held beliefs in gender complemented Nicholas's questioning of the long-held belief that hops are a necessary or required ingredient in beer. Friends and family were saying, "I don't like beer but I like this," "I've never tasted anything like this before," and "I would buy this." In 2018, after two years of intense herbal study and beery experimentation, Nicholas moved to Madison and incorporated Herbiery.

MADDY'S STORY

Maddy never pictured joining the beer industry, but through a serendipitous turn of events, the opportunity to join Herbiery was one they couldn't pass up. In November of 2022, for the second time in their four years in Madison, they found themselves trudging through a corporate tech job, feeling uninspired and disconnected from the community. Simultaneously, they were taking the nerve wracking first steps toward a medical transition, researching hormone replacement therapy and surgeries, setting up appointments with doctors, and collecting insights from friends who'd already taken these steps. They had first come out as nonbinary a year before, after time spent in isolation during the pandemic allowed them to deconstruct the assigned gender they had been performing day-to-day for most of my life. After much consideration and research, they felt ready to take the next steps in their own path to claim and connect with their transness.

They had known of Nicholas' Herbiery project for a few years, but when they heard Nicholas was opening a taproom and looking for help, they couldn't shake the idea of joining them. For days after they heard the news, they struggled to focus on their desk job and talked about the opportunity to any friends who would listen. Understandably, Maddy was apprehensive to leave their job that provided the stable income, health insurance, and the flexibility they would need to continue pursuing their medical transition. However, their curiosity eventually won, and they met with Nicholas on a Friday in November to talk about Herbiery, the taproom space, and what they were looking for in a business partner.

Maddy was hooked immediately. Nicholas' excitement was contagious and the opportunity checked a lot of the boxes that had been missing in previous roles. They wanted to be involved, but just needed to figure out how they could make it work while keeping their current job for as long as possible. Maddy and Nicholas set up a meeting for the following Thursday, and they walked away with a lot to consider. Could they justify giving up the stability of their corporate job for the uncertainty of joining a small business? Would they struggle to progress in their transition if they lost the health insurance tied to their job? On the other hand, would it be possible to experience the full joy of their medical transition in a job where their nonbinary identity went unacknowledged?

The following Monday, Maddy's burden of deciding between joining

Herbiery or staying at their corporate job disappeared, as their company laid off more than 300 people, including Maddy. They struggled to keep from smiling in the meeting where the company's director delivered the news. Under any other circumstances, they would have been devastated, but the universe seemed to align perfectly, pointing them toward Herbiery. Thanks to a generous severance, they now had the time, income buffer, and two months of health insurance coverage necessary to comfortably dedicate their time to Herbiery and transition into their new role.

Almost six months in, they never question whether it was the right choice. Getting to work every day with someone that celebrates queer and trans identities has reaffirmed Maddy's commitment to themselves and continues to root them in the Madison community. As Herbiery continues to grow with new beers, partnerships with bars and restaurants, and a physical location, they are eager to witness the evolution of Nicholas and Maddy as individuals and a collective alongside it.

HERBIERY ORIGINS

Nicholas and Maddy met through mutual friends in the winter of 2018, around the same time that Nicholas was researching brewery permits and working at Ale Asylum, and shortly after Maddy moved to Madison. It would be four more years before they would work together on Herbiery. For those years, Nicholas managed the business alone, through the coronavirus pandemic and a rapidly changing beer industry landscape, but this proved to be unsustainable for the company and the health of its dedicated founder. In the spring of 2022, Nicholas set their sights on opening a physical location for Herbiery, as a space to root the beer and our values in Madison's community. In the fall of 2022, with 2023 right around the corner, Maddy and Nicholas reconnected and began collaborating to manage the business' retail sales, production, and eventual taproom opening.



TAPROOM & WHAT'S NEXT

After working diligently for the past year, they are excited to open Herbiery's first physical location this spring at 2015 Winnebago Street, Suite 101, in Madison. The Herbiery Taproom is a modest space—just 900 square feet—and exudes warmth and whimsy, to welcome anyone who may step in. A mural from local artist Audifax adorns the west wall and exudes a sense of connection to the whimsical Wisconsin landscape. Lavender bar stools, comfortable green patio chairs, a floral couch and lounge chairs, and honeycomb yellow table tops under a sky blue ceiling and soft lighting. A riverine bar, tastefully dyed blue and made from the wood of ash trees. Taproom offerings include eight Herbiery taps and two rotating guest taps. In addition to beer, the taproom offers a rotating list of three seasonal, homemade mocktails, sourced from the finest local ingredients. As for food, Herbiery plans to offer snacks and small plates, including vegetarian options. ■



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If you have been waiting for an invitation, here it is. These **queer third spaces & other food-related businesses**, are ready to see us.

Madison-area LGBTQ-owned Food & Beverage Businesses

- The Baked Lab

The Baker's Table

Cafe Social

Caracas Arepas & Empanadas

D-Bar Bakery

Cargo Coffee

D'Vino

Daisy Cafe & Cupcakery

Delta Beer Lab
- Fair Trade Coffee House

FIVE Nightclub

Fromagination

Giant Jones

Greenbush Bar

Harvest & The Old Fashioned

Herbiery Brewing

Java Cat

Mariner's Inn & Betty Lou Cruises

Mediterranean Hookah Lounge
- Michael's Frozen Custard

Migrants

Simply Served Personal Chef

The Shamrock Bar & Grille

Square Wine Co.

Stubborn Mule Catering

Willalby's Cafe

WOOF'S

Restaurants & Third Spaces Around the State

- Allen Creek CoffeeHouse

Bee Charmer

Big Punch Farm

Cash & Olive's Pub

Dotty's Bar & Bistro

Great Northern Distilling

Hamburger Mary's
- Horseradish Kitchen

Luna Circle Farm

Millie's Coffee and Eatery

Pyramid Event Venue

Todo Postres

FOR LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS, third space locations provide an opportunity to be ourselves in a way we don't always get to be in other areas of our lives. Over the past three years of folks staying closer to home, many of our third spaces have weathered the storm and managed to stay afloat buoyed by a combination of innovation, government loans, and vital community-driven support.

The locations on this list have done their best to balance public health risk with personal safety. For some that means you can now purchase in various locations, online, or in person depending on your needs. For those of us with situations that require us to continue using accommodations such as drive-thru, pickup, and services received in isolation, businesses are still working to meet those needs.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Is there another business you want to see included? Please let us know at contact@ourliveswisconsin.com.



If you are ready to get back into meeting, dating, dancing, and experiencing the art and culture that adds enjoyment to life in a city, please use this list to start with LGBTQ-owned and managed businesses in the Madison area and beyond.

ESTABLISHMENTS

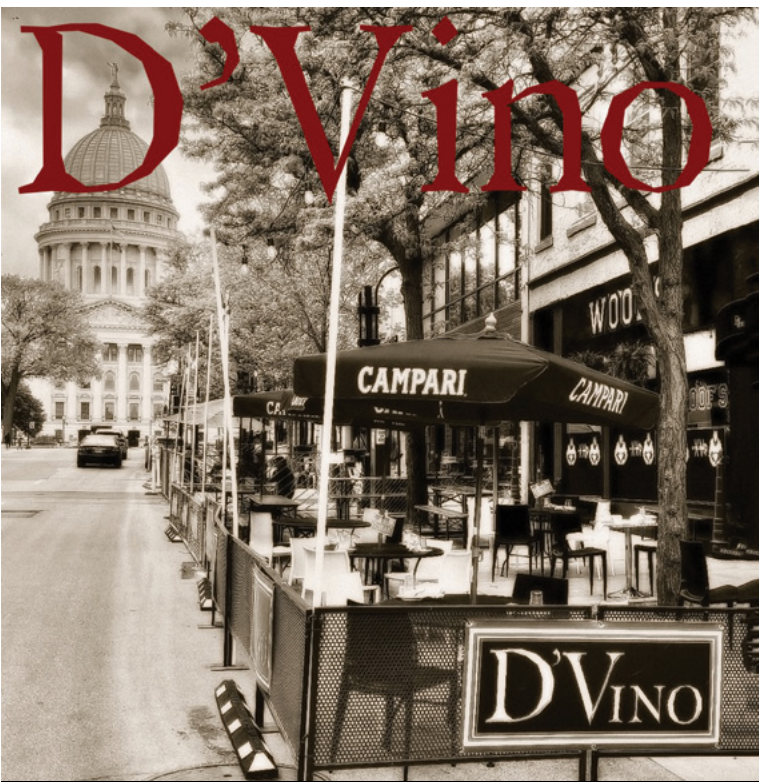
THE BAKED LAB **100 S. Baldwin Street, Suite 202, Madison** On the second floor of the Madison Enterprise Center is the Baked Lab. It is the brain- (and sweat-) child of Shawn Bolduc. Cooking feels like a mysterious art to a lot of folks but Shawn is on a mission to correct that problem. The other part of Baked Lab is the "Lab" portion where those interested can sign up for classes that seek to offer lessons and also good times.

THE BAKER'S TABLE **Sun Prairie** Gavin Logan is the baker behind the pies, cakes, cookies, and other treats that you can purchase at the Sun Prairie Farmers' Market. Logan does not have a brick-and-mortar location, but a menu can be found on Facebook.

CAFÉ SOCIAL **102 N. Bedford Street, Madison** Partners Omar Lopez and Doug Swenson co-founded the coffee shop located on the ground floor of the Lark building on Bedford Street (on the edge of UW-Madison's campus) specializing in single-origin Arabica coffee beans sourced from a family farm in Armenia, Quindio, Colombia. Unfortunately, early this year Omar passed away, but Doug has continued the business that they built together in honor of Omar's dream.

CARACAS AREPAS & EMPANADAS **Madison** Caracas Empanadas and Caracas Arepas are food carts owned by Luis Dompablo and his partner in life and business, David Piovanetti. Priding themselves on fresh, local, authentic ingredients, they produce delicious food from Dompablo's Venezuelan culture (including addictive and mouth-watering sauces like their green guacaca). You can purchase their food weekdays on Library Mall. They are among the local producers who were selected as founding members of Madison's future Public Market which was planned for 2023 but stalled due to city funding issues. Funding has now been secured and the project plans to open 2025.

CARGO COFFEE **750 East Washington Avenue, Madison & 1309 South Park Street, Madison** Lynn Lee co-owns Cargo Coffee with his twin brother, Lindsey. Their globally sourced coffee beans are locally roasted, and the shop's decor reflects a vintage charm with oversized maps and aviation/culinary themed antiques. The East Washington location is now hosting a monthly Hip-Hop/R&B artist showcase along with many other pay-what-you-can musical acts.



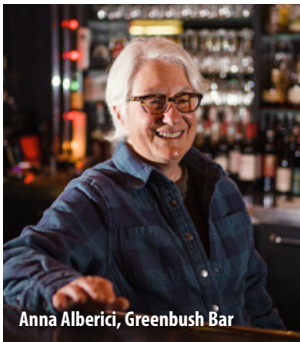
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D-BAR BAKERY **Madison** D•Bar Bakery is a home bakery settled conveniently in Madison. Dustin Barman loves bringing your ideas and creative thoughts to life in a way that builds community and enhances your gathering. Offerings range from light summer tarts to traditional tiered wedding cakes or beautiful, themed cakes for any occasion.

D'VINO **116 King Street, Madison** Traditional Italian fare is on the menu at D'Vino. They are open for dining with a standard menu Wednesday–Saturday evenings, brunch is available on Saturdays and Sundays, and they also have a Sunday supper. Reservations can be made on their website through OpenTable.

DAISY CAFE **2827 Atwood Avenue, Madison** Kathy Brooks co-owns the cafe in Madison's Atwood neighborhood. The menu includes gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options. It's a great place to meet for lunch or brunch where you can get one of their specialty egg stratas with varieties including french toast, chorizo pepper jack, or a seasonal offering.

DELTA BEER LAB **167 East Badger Road, Madison** Brewer Tim "Pio" Piotrowski is getting excited for upcoming collaborations and summer brews like Sal's Pale Ale (Salvatore's Tomato Pies), a Double IPA for Pride (Giant Jones Brewing), Black is Beautiful (Black IPA supporting legal reform and defense), a Session IPA (with CORP and Trek Bicycle), and a Rye Lager (Stalzy's Deli & Bakery). Our Milwaukee readers can also expect to start seeing delicious Delta Beer Lab brews on the shelves of their local retailers soon.

FAIR TRADE COFFEE HOUSE **418 State Street, Madison** The coffee shop was purchased by co-owners Casey Thompson and Thomas Beckwith-Thompson in 2017. It is both a hub for students studying and an evening gathering place that's an alternative to bars. They prioritize serving fair trade-certified coffee and also have baked goods, personal-sized quiches, and other light fare.

FIVE NIGHTCLUB **5 Applegate Court, Madison** Since 1998, FIVE Nightclub, owned by Dave Eick, has served patrons drinks and entertainment in the club just off Fish Hatchery Road. A community-supported revival in 2015 rejuvenated the club, and it remains a central hub of LGBTQ celebrations. They host groups and hold various events including drag shows, pageants, Latin Night, line dancing, fundraisers, and variety shows.

FROMAGINATION **12 South Carroll Street, Madison** Fromagination is Madison's downtown cheesemonger, owned by Ken Monteleone. The specialty cheese shop features dozens of artisanal Wisconsin cheeses and more from around the world. Customers can use the website to access ordering, class registrations, cheese boards, gifts, and catering options.

GIANT JONES **931 East Main Street, Madison** Jessica and Erika Jones started their brewing company in 2018 to bring big beers to Wisconsin's brewing scene. Their craft beers are certified organic and pack a punch at 7% or more ABV. Their taproom is open Wednesday–Saturday evenings, and you can find on their website a sizable list of additional places to enjoy their brews on tap or to-go.

GREENBUSH BAR **914 Regent Street, Madison** The basement bar in the Italian Workmen's Club in Madison's Greenbush neighborhood is steeped in Sicilian family history. Owner Anna Alberici has shared her family's recipes in the cozy basement restaurant since 1993 where you can find pizza, pasta, and cocktails. The dining room is open Thursday and Saturday evenings by reservation only. Curbside pickup is still available Wednesday–Saturday evenings.

HARVEST & THE OLD FASHIONED **21 & 23 N Pinckney Street, Madison** Tami Lax focuses on Wisconsin food and seasonal fare in these neighboring restaurants on Madison's capitol square. Since 2000, Harvest menus have centered farm-to-table dishes in an upscale atmosphere, but the restaurant has struggled to operate since the pandemic. The Old Fashioned, managed by Lax's partner Jennifer DeBolt, has a 'Sconnie-casual menu that features famous cheese curds. They are open Monday–Saturday from lunch through dinner.

JAVA CAT COFFEE HOUSE **4221 Lien Road, Madison** Relocated this year due to redevelopment at their previous location, the coffee shop owned by Renee Raspiller offers coffee that is fair trade, organic, and roasted in Madison by Just Coffee. They also will soon resume selling their house made gelato along with sandwiches and baked goods.

MARINER'S INN & BETTY LOU CRUISES **5339 Lighthouse Bay Drive, Madison** In 2000 Robert von Rutenberg joined his brothers Jack and Bill to carry on the family businesses of waterfront dining and boat tours



on Lake Mendota. Captain Bill's and NauTiGal have now ceased operations, but Mariner's Inn is still serving dinner five nights a week. The bar opens early for happy hour. Betty Lou Cruises will operate six days a week from May 26 through October 15.

MEDITERRANEAN HOOKAH LOUNGE **77 Sirloin Strip, Madison** Lebanese culture and a chill atmosphere are the core of the culture co-owners Tommy Hanna and brother Simon bring to the Capitol View Heights neighborhood where you can find belly dancers, hookah in assorted flavors, karaoke nights, and authentic Lebanese cuisine. The lounge is open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings for smoking, cocktails, and appetizers. Don't miss out on karaoke on weekends.

MICHAEL'S FROZEN CUSTARD **3826 Atwood Avenue, Madison** Michael Dix has been making frozen custard for more than 30 years. His custard shop has a vintage soda shop vibe and offers cones, sundaes, and shakes as well as burgers, dogs, and fries. The Schroeder Road location has been demolished to make way for a residential project.

MIGRANTS **2601 W Beltline Hwy, Ste 106, Madison** Executive Chef Oscar Villarreal's menu offers tacos, burritos, vegetarian, vegan, and brunch items, killer queso, and an array of salsas in a variety of textures and heat. The name of the restaurant is a nod to a familial history of migrant farmers who traveled from Texas, through the Midwest, and back again doing the work needed to supply America with produce.

SHAMROCK BAR & GRILLE **117 West Main Street, Madison** The Shamrock is technically Madison's oldest gay bar. The original bar began in 1985, and since 2013 owner Bob Mahr has worked to keep his downtown bar's drink specials affordable and the food menu accessible, including a popular brunch menu that features the "Shamosa" that's more turbo-charged than a classic mimosa. Yes, it is a gay bar, but that doesn't mean you can't go there for some classic Wisconsin pastimes. Open seven days a week, happy hour (3–7), Friday fish fry, and Packers games are all on tap.

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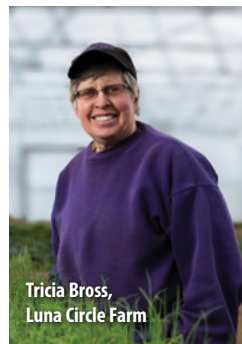
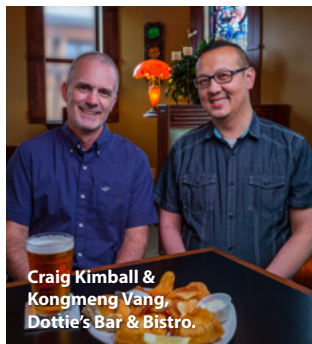
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Kickapoo

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Fresh Fruit,
Chocolate & Espresso

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Yarns, Accessories
& Classes

*We use local produce
and cheese*



SIMPLY SERVED PERSONAL CHEF **McFarland** J Moe prepares meals, offers cooking lessons one-on-one or for groups, serves food for special events, and sources seasonal ingredients for omnivores or those with gluten-free or vegan palates. As a personal chef, J does everything from shopping for ingredients to preparing food in your home, cleaning the kitchen, and storing meals in your fridge or freezer.

SQUARE WINE CO. **1 East Main Street, Madison** Andrea Hillsey's enthusiasm for wine is equal to her depth of knowledge about the vintages she carries from small family growers around the world. She's committed to teaching consumers about wine appreciation and pairing. You can join them for Friday night tastings (RSVP required) or sign up for the wine club for a monthly bottle with an accompanying food pairing recipe.

STUBBORN MULE CATERING **Madison** Co-owned by Ryan Meueller, Stubborn Mule Catering focuses on creating unique events. Menus are always different, and they bring fresh ideas to catering large events or personal chef services. When possible, they source ingredients from farmers' markets and base menus off of local, seasonal ingredients.

WILLALBY'S CAFE **1351 Williamson Street, Madison** Owner Nate Prince took over Willalby's in 2010 after working there for a decade. The diner is a long-time institution on Williamson Street known for its vegan-friendly breakfasts and giant buttermilk pancakes that are among the best in town.

WOOF'S **114 King Street, Madison** Dino Maniaci's King Street bar has served patrons since 2008 with an industrial vibe unlike anything in the city. It offers a variety of activities and events as well as dart/pool leagues and leather nights. If you are already downtown, do as their website suggests, and stay downtown to check them out.

AROUND THE STATE

As *Our Lives* looks to have a more statewide reach, we are including a locations outside of Madison. Want to see your business on our list? Please let us know by contacting contact@ourliveswisconsin.com.

ALLEN CREEK COFFEEHOUSE **Evansville** Allen Creek CoffeeHouse is a new venture opened in April of this year by Tommy Hanna (Mediterranean Hookah Lounge). Seated next to Allen Creek in downtown Evansville, they have espresso and specialty coffees featuring beans from Rusty Dog Coffee in Madison, Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream, sandwiches, and fresh baked goods.

BEE CHARMER **Brooklyn** Ask Mary Celley anything about bees, and she will bring her many years of experience and education in horticulture to explain why different honey has different flavor or how you can successfully keep bees at home. The honey bee enthusiast has been known for selling raw organic honey, candles, beeswax, heirloom tomatoes, pumpkins, squash, and ambrosia sweet corn at the Dane County Farmers' Market.

BIG PUNCH FARM **Edgerton** Liv and Wendi are queer farmers on small land in a small town. They are passionate about growing fresh, organic, and affordable veggies and addressing food insecurity where possible. Wendi faces disabilities that make it impossible to hold a typical job, and Liv faces chronic pain issues. They find that their love for one another and farming accommodates them, so they can value personal health while retaining some financial independence. This year they are exploring direct sales to CSAs and eateries including Millies and Cash & Olives Pub.

CASH & OLIVES PUB **Cambridge** Courtney Sargent and Jen O'Branovich have moved into what was formerly The Sports Page Bar & Grill—literally. They live upstairs with their dogs Cash & Olive. The pizza has stayed from the previous business, but there is now delivery as well as other items on the menu that are not available elsewhere in Cambridge.

DOTTIE'S BAR & BISTRO **1200 Main Street, Cross Plains** Craig Kimball and his partner Kongmeng Vang talked for years about opening up their own place, and a vacancy at the former Coach's Club in Cross Plains gave them that opportunity. Named after Craig's mother, Dottie's mixes Louisiana comfort food and decor with Wisconsin sports memorabilia. Make it a destination for Friday fish fry or stop by on your way to American Players Theater. You can also rent the upstairs banquet room for private events.

GREAT NORTHERN DISTILLING **1011 2nd Street, Stevens Point** Proprietor Brian Cummins is hiring, furnishing, and otherwise preparing to get Great Northern's new building open to the public. They will have a tasting room, event space, and a dog-friendly patio. Spirits available include grain-free Vodka from local potatoes, gin, bourbon, rye, coffee liquor, barrel-aged rum made with organic sugar, and a small annual run of brandy made by distilling wine from neighboring Sunset Point Winery. The Main Grain Bakery will supply flatbreads, herb crackers, and soft pretzels that will be served with a fondue.

HAMBURGER MARY'S **730-734 South 5th Street, Milwaukee** Hamburger Mary's is a burger joint with a one-of-a-kind menu and entertainment. Known for an open-minded atmosphere and eclectic drag shows, Mary's has become a staple of the LGBT community



since the first restaurant in San Francisco in 1972 and now has locations across the country. The stars of the Mary's menu are the gourmet half-pound burgers with your choice of beef, chicken breast, or Beyond Burger.

HORSERADISH KITCHEN + MARKET **505 West Water Street, Princeton** What started in 2015 as the cutest little yellow awning-clad food truck serving specialty sandwiches has evolved into a brick-and-mortar restaurant with a full kitchen. Matt Trotter describes the food as "lighter, fresher, healthier" fare. June through August the Parlor Music moves outdoors for "Sunday Sessions" on the porch where you can view the Fox River and adjacent nature preserve.

LUNA CIRCLE FARM **Rio** It's easy to spot the stand with the purple awning at the Dane County Farmers' Market. Owner Tricia Bross brings lifelong farming experience to her work, along with more than a quarter century of experience specializing in organic vegetables. This USDA-certified Organic farm grows an array too wide to list, but some vegetables have been cut from the rotation due to inconsistent availability of labor and climate change-driven increases in pest activity.

MILLIE'S COFFEE & EATERY **214 W. Main Street, Cambridge** Courtney Sargent and Jen O'Branovich originally had a vision of opening a supper club, but the COVID crisis caused them to delay and rethink their plan. They serve breakfast all day with brioche sandwiches, salads, and crumpets. Millie's focuses on sourcing ingredients locally, putting a priority on buying from producers led by women, people of color, and LGBT community members including produce from Big Punch Farm. Open seven days a week for dine-in, take-out, and delivery.

PYRAMID EVENT VENUE **117 S. Main Street, Lake Mills** Childhood besties Jillian and Eli started this business to bring a little piece of city living to Lake Mills. Pyramid provides live entertainment nearly every evening including monthly drag shows and drag bingo, karaoke, and a full range of live music in every genre. The location has housed a pizza business for many years, and they continue to offer award-winning pizza baked in a well-seasoned, 40-year-old oven, plus pasta and salads. The spicy cheese curd pizza is their most popular dish.

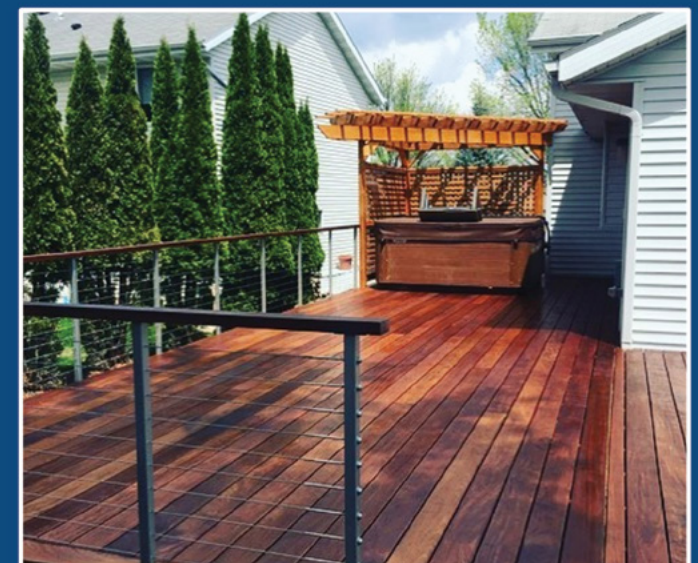
TODO POSTRES **958 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee** Pedro Garcia-Rios & Jesus Bisoso run a Latin bakery offering traditional items as well as custom sweet temptations for all occasions. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so their Tik Tok could practically fill volumes. Check it out to see their mouthwatering flan, tres leches, and beautiful occasion cakes made for an eclectic clientele.

OTHER NOTABLE CHANGES

CHEF SCOTTY **Florida** A man who has seen and done it all, seemingly, in food. He has built successful empires of restaurants, cafes, and nightclubs, catered to the rich and famous, and been awarded countless awards and commendations for his work. We briefly had him back in Wisconsin, but Scott Wagner has now moved on to new and different things.

GRASSROOTS FARM **Monroe** For years, FL Morris has been committed to leading a more equitable and just way of growing and sharing food. Since she purchased land with her mother in 2007, FL has grown just about everything, from her first garlic crops to squash to peppers, and most recently, hemp for CBD production. She has ceased food distribution at this time to start a construction business: Butch Hollow Builders.

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Wisconsin Pride

This moving, feature-length documentary was inspired by late historian Richard Wagner's accounts of LGBTQ Wisconsinites and produced by PBS Wisconsin's Andy Soth.

LGBTQ ARCHIVES | LGBTQ HISTORY PROJECT | WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We define ourselves as a society by the stories we tell. If we don't tell the stories of LGBT history, then we're basically erasing them, as if they didn't exist.

—R. Richard (Dick) Wagner

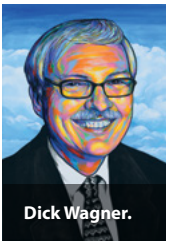
THIS BEGINS WISCONSIN PRIDE—the forthcoming two-hour documentary by PBS Wisconsin in partnership with the Wisconsin Historical Society telling the personal stories of Two-Spirit*, trans, lesbian, and gay Wisconsinites across the decades.

And, it's no wonder Dick's words open the documentary, since his two-volume book series published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press chronicling the history of queer Wisconsinites was the impetus, inspiration, and primary source of stories for the program. The first volume, *We've Been Here All Along* features stories from the time of Oscar Wilde in 1895 until the Stonewall riots of 1969. The second volume, *Coming Out, Moving Forward* begins with the post-Stonewall era through 2000.

Like the book series, *Wisconsin Pride* is divided into pre-Stonewall and post-Stonewall hour-long segments, though when it premieres on June 20, the entire documentary will be shown all the way through.

"This really goes to the singular dedication of Dick Wagner to

*Indigenous people possessing both feminine and masculine qualities.



produce a two-volume history. It was an enormous writing task, but it was also a tremendous research task—and before that, a tremendous collection task," said *Wisconsin Pride* producer and PBS Wisconsin reporter/producer Andy Soth.

"We often do documentaries that accompany the books published by the Wisconsin Historical Society, so it's a natural connection. When we heard about their commitment to publish Dick's books, we started to look for ways to produce them as a documentary."

But *Wisconsin Pride* didn't start as an in-house project. There was a nationwide call for proposals, and Andy's proposal won him the opportunity to produce it with the help of an LGBTQ advisory board. As a cis, straight ally, Andy knew he needed to work closely with the queer community in order to have access, representation, and an authentic voice.

He turned to me, his queer friend affiliated with *Our Lives* to help him put together the advisory board. The formal advisory board is noted in bold type; the others are affiliate advisors:

- **Ariel Beaujot**, PhD, Associate, Professor of History at UW-LaCrosse;
- **Jenny Derocher**, Associate Librarian and archivist at LaCrosse Public Library;
- **Robyn Di Giacinto**, independent filmmaker, Milwaukee;

- **Patrick Farabaugh**, Publisher of *Our Lives* magazine;
- **Virginia Harrison**, Copy Editor of *Our Lives* magazine;
- **JoAnne Lehman**, Senior Editor in the Office of the Gender and Women's Studies Library at UW-Madison;
- **Víctor Macías-González**, PhD, Professor of History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at UW-LaCrosse;
- **Scott Seyforth**, PhD, co-founder of UW-Madison's LGBTQ Archives; and
- **Kristen Whitson**, MLS, archivist and co-author of *We Will Always Be Here: A Guide for Exploring and Understanding LGBTQ+ Activism in Wisconsin*.

The advisory board met in early February of 2020 to discuss the potential content and approach of the documentary. When the pandemic hit, there was a pause in the research and development, then the board met remotely and continued to discuss and advise the PBS Wisconsin production team on the script, stories, and early versions of the program.

The result is a moving, diverse, and honest look at many LGBTQ stories from around the state and throughout history.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ARCHIVES

One of the major sources of materials for the documentary came from the UW-Madison LGBTQ Archives.

Madison LGBTQ+ Archive co-founder Scott Seyforth and his then-research assistant Kristen Whitson provided documents, images, and even audio for inclusion in the documentary. They were two of the many historians interviewed for the documentary as well.

Seyforth said, "Donations to LGBTQ+ archives help stories get told. People writing history or making documentaries turn to archival institutions for material. The more we can provide material for creators to use, the easier it is to tell local LGBTQ+ stories. Until recently, local archival institutions have not typically collected LGBTQ+ material. There are lots

of gaps in the kinds of LGBTQ+ material held in local institutions. Now is a good time to provide material to help represent local LGBTQ+ lives."

Whitson, in her current role as an image researcher and rights coordinator for PBS Wisconsin, said, "I got to see firsthand how many tiny decisions go into making up a full, lush, beautiful production: every

"We wanted to tell both modern history stories and older history stories—and even reaching back to pre-written history stories by including a story about the Two-Spirit tradition and native culture."

note, word, camera move, image is carefully considered. This team in particular has been thoughtful and respectful in their approach, engaging many members of the LGBTQ+ community from around the state. I was impressed by their earnest desire to represent this history well."

"There were certain stories that Dick covered in his books that were profiles of really interesting people, but you didn't necessarily find the conflict in the story or how it's shaped as a story," said Soth. "All the stories were compelling in that they were people who lived their lives kind of against the grain, and against wide social acceptance, but that was more prominent for certain people than others. So that conflict, and looking at how they adapted and were able to—in many cases—live their true authentic lives despite those challenges, those were the stories we chose."

THE POWER OF HEARING OUR STORIES TOLD

Whitson reflected on how powerful it is to learn the stories of queer Wisconsinites throughout history. She said, "In working on *Wisconsin Pride*, what deeply moves me about every story and every segment is

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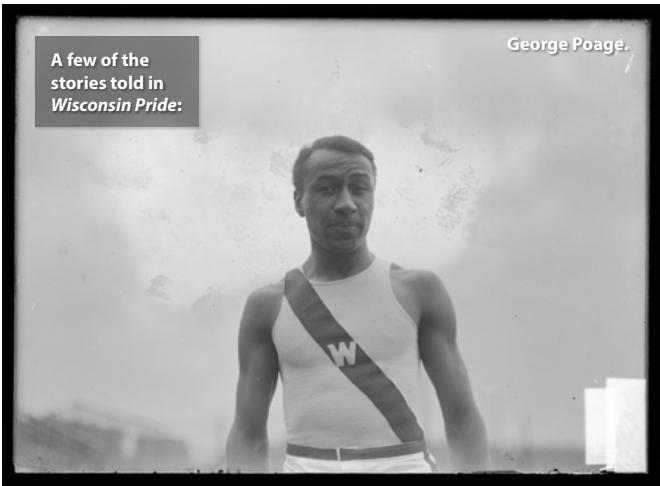
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Phoebe González & Jamal James, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 2022. Photo by Liz Lauren.



the determination LGBTQ+ Wisconsinites have displayed in living their lives throughout the centuries. LGBTQ+ have always been here and always will be, and Wisconsinites have always found a way to live their authentic truths, whether quietly or out loud. We have been relentless in pushing this state forward (state motto pun intended)."

"It's especially wonderful to see LGBTQ+ viewers see *themselves* represented," Whitson said. The first hour opens with a focus on Indigenous Two-Spirit people and includes several stories of LGBTQ+ people of color, which are stories told even less often than queer white stories. It was an important focus of the production team to highlight that history especially, and I've been glad to see that the effort is having its intended effect: accurate, clear, inclusive representation."

Soth said, "We wanted to tell both modern history stories and older history stories—and even reaching back to pre-written history stories

by including a story about the Two-Spirit tradition and native culture. I'm so happy we found Kai Pyle, an emerging scholar returning to UW-Madison who researched and wrote about early Milwaukee's Black and native transman Ralph Kerwenio."

Pyle, a Two-Spirit scholar, said in the documentary, "If you are living in North America, you're living on Indigenous land, and you need to know the history of the land you're living on. The history of Two-Spirit people is an important part of that." They go on to talk about the way in which Two-Spirit people were respected and even revered by their tribes, seen to have special skills and gifts. "Historically, Two Spirit people have been an important part of our communities," they said.

PROGRAM SUMMARY FROM PBS WISCONSIN

Here's how PBS Wisconsin describes the program: "The first hour of



the film explores how diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are a normal part of the human experience. The documentary opens with Indigenous people prior to Wisconsin's European colonization, and continues through the 19th and 20th centuries. This half of the documentary considers how being different from the mainstream could provide a unique perspective that enabled LGBTQ+ people to contribute in ways others could not imagine.

"Even in a closeted era, LGBTQ+ Wisconsinites found each other, created community, mentored each other and achieved great things.

"*Wisconsin Pride* also features and celebrates R. Richard Wagner's work as a historian and author. Wagner, who passed away in 2021, is featured in the documentary and his two-volume history from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press provided guidance and inspiration. Wagner was an activist, historian, gay rights leader, elected official, and

"We often do not tell the local stories that created the LGBTQ+ mass movement. It was moving to see some of those local stories being held up in *Wisconsin Pride*."

public servant who worked for the state of Wisconsin for 33 years. "The second hour of the film explores how forward-looking Wisconsinites challenged LGBTQ+ harassment and injustice in visionary ways, long before these efforts received national attention. Through organized protest, an independent press and gay bar-centered social networks, a movement grew that helped build a coalition for legislative LGBTQ+ rights. Embracing and celebrating Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ history is vital for protecting these hard-won human rights and expanding them to all."

THE MAKING OF THE DOCUMENTARY

Soth shares creative credit with Grant Fenster, co-writer and video editor, and Jon Hornbacher, the creative director. Soth said, they are "a great team to work with who solved the creative challenges with aplomb to create a story that is both emotionally moving and moves along."

Soth said the production team is indebted to Milwaukee-based Wisconsin LGBTQ History Project producer Michail Takach who was really committed to telling stories like Milwaukee's early gay bar, the Black Night, and the Josie Carter story.

In the documentary, Takach said, "Eight years before Stonewall, The Black Nite Bar was the scene of the first LGBTQ uprising in Wisconsin history. The heroine of The Black Nite uprising was Josie Carter, an African-American, gender non-conforming queen of color."

Gay bars were unmarked, underground safe spaces to gather. "They went there to find community. They went there to find love, to

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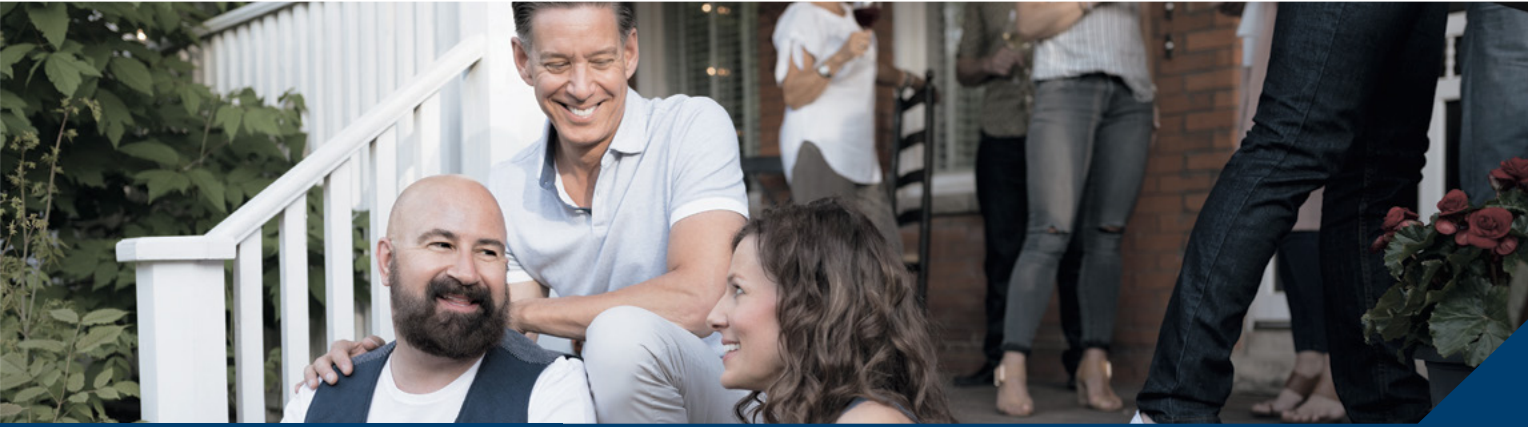
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find hope. They went there to not feel alone,” said Takach.

Víctor Macías-González added, “You make friends, develop networks, and gradually begin to develop knowledge of what the gay world is. Learning to become gay if you will.”

“The Black Nite uprising was the first in a series of dominoes that fell that really advanced Wisconsin on the national landscape in terms of gay rights, gay protections, and gay awareness,” said Takach.

In thinking about the people who contributed to the documentary with archival artifacts, stories, and interviews, Soth said, “It was both surprising and not surprising the passion of those people who had dug into this

Wisconsin Pride also features and celebrates R. Richard Wagner’s work as a historian and author. Wagner, who passed away in 2021, is featured in the documentary and his two-volume history from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press provided guidance and inspiration.

history, without whom we couldn’t have done this program.”

Reflecting on his own experience with creating documentaries in the past versus the one that became *Wisconsin Pride*, he said, “We’re so driven by a mission, those of us who document history. People are drawn to history for many reasons, but the real kind of personal connection—I’m thinking of Scott Seyforth and Michail Takach—when you’re talking to them, beyond just getting the facts out, they speak about history with such passion.”

He went on to say, “I’ve talked to a lot of historians for projects over the years, and they’re often dispassionate; there’s often a bit of distance from the subject. But Seyforth and Takach and others go at this with the same spirit as those who were in the front lines in protest. Their mis-

sion, their struggle, is to tell these stories just as the struggle of earlier LGBTQ people was to get recognized and to have equal rights. It seems like that same passion inspires people like Scott and Michail to make sure these stories are recorded and remembered.”

Those interviewed for the documentary were:

- **Ashley Brown**, Historian, UW-Madison
- **David Clarenbach**, Former Wisconsin Assembly Member
- **Patrick Farabaugh**, Publisher, *Our Lives* magazine
- **Will Fellows**, Historian and Author
- **Judy Greenspan**, Social Justice Activist
- **Víctor Macías-González**, Historian, UW-LaCrosse
- **Audrey Mouser Elegbede**, Cultural Anthropologist
- **Josie Osborne**, Professor of Art, UW-Milwaukee
- **Mary O’Sullivan**, Editor, *Leaping La Crosse News*
- **Kai Pyle**, Two-Spirit Scholar
- **Larry Reed**, Cooksville Archivist
- **Scott Seyforth**, Co-founder, Madison LGBTQ Archive
- **Brice Smith**, Historian and Author
- **Michail Takach**, LGBTQ Wisconsin History Project Archivist and Author
- **R. Richard (Dick) Wagner**, Author, Historian, Community Leader, and Public Servant
- **Kristen Whitson**, Archivist and Author

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL; STORIES AS LIVED EXAMPLES FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW

Soth is keenly aware that many viewers will be coming to the program with viewpoints and histories vastly different from those reflected in the documentary.

“This is a history program, and the past informs the present. History can educate people; that which some segments of the population have difficulty accepting—because it doesn’t match with their lived experience; I think those people can benefit from some of our historical stories; stories like those of Ralph Kerwenio and Josie Carter. I hope people discover those stories and get a broader perspective,” he said. “For some, it can be hard to come up to speed with how gender is being redefined and its definitions are being opened up. These stories have always existed, and we’re only now recognizing it and helping support it as a society.”

In the documentary, UW-Madison historian Ashley Brown said historically, “Homosexuality very often has been something that society has viewed as shameful. And there can be a tremendous silence.”

Soth said publicly telling the stories of individual lives helps them become examples for others, where they can see themselves in history. “If you take a more macro view of history—such as political or military history—and then you hear these small, individual stories in *Wisconsin Pride*, you may wonder why they are important. I have an appreciation of the story of the individual, of those who are not well-known, but their lives become examples. They lived history and ran counter to their times,” he said.

A wonderful example of the personal influence of the lived history on present-day LGBTQ people comes from Josie Osborne, interviewed for *Wisconsin Pride* about the founders of the Layton School of Art & Design (later the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design) lesbian couple Miriam Frink and Charlotte Partridge.

“Mary Louise Schumacher, the art reporter for years at the *Journal Sentinel* who is now a producer, referred me to Josie Osborne, who has a professional (art) connection, a Milwaukee connection, and an identity connection as a queer artist,” said Soth. “But what didn’t make it into the documentary, is that as a child Josie lived next door to Miriam Frink



and Charlotte Partridge. She didn’t know they were a couple then—she learned their story later—but she has great memories of their hospitality and going to their house for tea and seeing their art. She knew them as matronly, older women, but when she was coming out, she learned from her mother that they were lesbians, and that helped her with her own process.” They became living examples for her.

Seyforth said, “We often do not tell the local stories that created the LGBTQ+ mass movement. It was moving to see some of those local stories being held up in *Wisconsin Pride*. I hope this project will lead to continued exploration of local LGBTQ+ history in general, including on local television,” said Seyforth. “There are so many inspiring local stories. This is just a beginning.”

In the documentary, author and historian Will Fellows, reminds us, “It’s not just LGBTQ history or queer history. It’s also just *Wisconsin* history.”

Only a few of the stories told in *Wisconsin Pride* were mentioned here. Be sure and attend a pre-screening (see below for details), catch a broadcast of it on your local PBS station, or download it from pbswisconsin.org later this summer.

You’ll learn something, you’ll feel moved or inspired, and you’ll feel Wisconsin pride. ■

How to Watch Wisconsin Pride

The first public screening of the first hour of *Wisconsin Pride* occurred in Green Bay on April 5 at the GSAFE Statewide Conference on LGBTQ+ Youth.

Future Public Screenings

Friday, June 9, 7:00 p.m.: Milwaukee
Saturday, June 17, 7:00 p.m.: Madison
Friday, July 14: Rhinelander
Sunday, July 30: Mineral Point
Fall 2023: La Crosse, Appleton, and Eau Claire

Go to pbswisconsin.org/events for details on locations and times.

Supplemental Web Content and Streaming

The *Wisconsin Pride* website pbswisconsin.org/wisconsin-pride goes live June 1. The website will include links to the full two hours of the documentary, visual and written essays exploring topics about Wisconsin’s LGBTQ+ history, blog posts that offer additional insight into the documentary, and a resource section that provides additional context for this project.

Broadcast Premiere Date

Watch the entire two-hour documentary on your local PBS station throughout Wisconsin at 7:00 pm on Saturday, June 20.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT THEATER TELEVISION DRAG

Madison's Own Paul Lynde

Comedian, actor and game show savant, **Michael Bruno** has been consistently proving that gay could play anywhere—as long as it was good—since the 1970s.

SOME PEOPLE live life to the fullest, and Madison's own Michael Bruno is no exception. I'm choosing to profile his contributions to the early gay scene of Madison in the 1970s, when queer visibility in the arts was limited to outlandish comedic characters, or self-hating, closet-hugging, depressed queens.

This Madison native was all about theater from day one. "The arts saved my life. The theater brought a huge dose of adrenaline into my creative life, gave me confidence, opened my eyes, opened my mind, and gave me a much more compassionate view of humanity. I am very blessed to have the arts as an integral part of my life," said Bruno.

As soon as he graduated high school in 1973, he got perhaps the role of a lifetime in the Madison Theatre Guild production of Mart Crowley's "The Boys in the Band" as the limp-wristed character of Emory. Of course, such an uber-gay stage play being performed in the most liberal city in Wisconsin,



attracted the attention of the local LGBT bars and business owners. Their sponsorship and promotion helped to propel the production to a highly successful run. Those who saw the show fell in love, not only with his characterization of the gayest character ever seen onstage, but with the man as well. Thus began a friendship with Rodney Scheel, the owner of the Back Door bar, which developed into a lifelong friendship/partnership that promoted queer culture in Madcit.

Bruno soon worked as the popular door guy at the Back Door, and was an integral part of creating performances, contests, and outrageous productions for the Hotel Washington complex and specifically Rod's bar. His Mr. Rod's contest became a destination

show for Chicago's leading bar owners, and forged new opportunities and relationships within the LGBT community in Wisconsin and Illinois at the time.

I met Michael Bruno at the Going My Way bar in downtown Madison located at 111

West Main Street. I had a drag queen friend named Billy Van Lonen who introduced us. I was starstruck because I knew of his comedy team Harry & Bruno which were very popular in town as well as on tour. He was out and had no filter, and I admired that!

Did you know that the Miss Gay Madison pageant as we now know it was started by Michael Bruno? It was held at 111 West (the renamed Going My Way). It had new ownership and the venue wanted to get in on the show crowd that both Milwaukee and Chicago were enjoying at the time. I was convinced to enter the contest by friends, Bruno was super encouraging, and I was eager to make good because of the high regard in which I held him. I ended up winning the Miss Gay Madison contest of 1980.

Michael then started producing epic drag events that changed expectations about what a show could be. He gathered together people, including me, to do "The Fairy Lewis in Labor Dragathon." It was an outrageous take on telethons. Under his guidance, we had queens taking pledges on the phone bank in the back of the stage! It also lent itself to his stand-up talents as Fairy Lewis, and provided a spotlight for others to shine. More shows followed including his infamous take on "The Gong Show" which featured judges like his mother, Mama B, and local celebrity news people who wanted to be a part of anything he did. These were great times for queer expression. The pre-AIDS club era was booming.

In between his comedy gigs, wet jockey shorts contests held at Rod's, and participation in all aspects of the Madison theater scene, Bruno was a creative force. With the kind of talent and energy as immense as his, Madison in the early 80s lacked the challenges that he loved to take. He had already proven that gay could play anywhere—as long as it was good! Striking out for LA in 1983 with his boyfriend at the time, he left his hometown behind to see if he could work his magic in Hollywood. Lives like his are the ones that should be in a book, stage production, or even a film.

Bruno's LGBT accessibility and star power still continue to this day. He and his husband Jim live in Madison and are still in the thick of gay life. Right before the pandemic hit, his production company started work on a play

documenting his wildly incredible life, and while it has been on hold for a bit, I think there is a need for these stories, this kind of joy, and this kind of person.

The play will tell the life story of Michael Bruno from his early comedy days in Madison as half of the comedy team Harry & Bruno and then follow his experiences in Hollywood as a game show contestant coordinator, gossip columnist for *Nightlife* magazine, to the executive producer of many AIDS benefits for Aid for AIDS in West Hollywood. It will also highlight the journey of his road back home to Madison, his creation of WhoopDeDoo Productions, and his eventual job as the TV host of Bruno's Best Bets and Backstage with Bruno on WISC-TV, Madison's local CBS affiliate station. The production will use multimedia that showcases the numerous past projects that he has been involved in. His appearance on the game show *Body Language*, where he was a four-day champion appearing with Didi Conn and Abby Dalton, led to his job as a contestant coordinator on the game show *High Rollers* with Wink Martindale, and his jobs as talent coordinator on the TV shows *Love Connection* with Chuck Woolery and *Love Stories* with Kristian Alfonso.

Currently you can catch him on "Showbiz Buzz with Bruno" on Apple Podcasts presented by Mad's Theatre. ■

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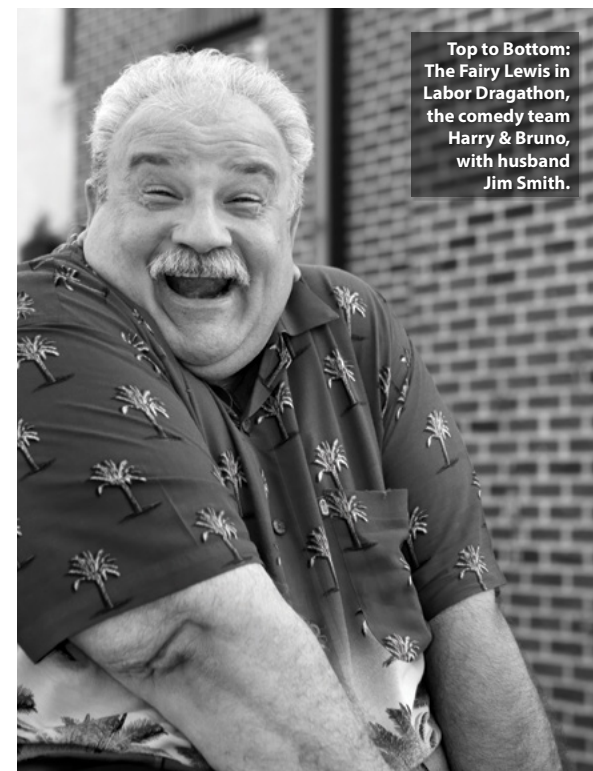


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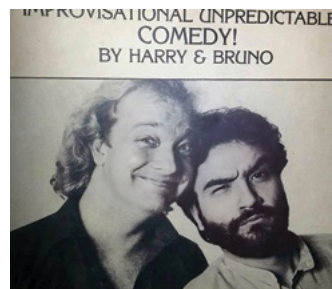
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Top to Bottom:
The Fairy Lewis in
Labor Dragathon,
the comedy team
Harry & Bruno,
with husband
Jim Smith.





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Moving Past Fear

Frederick Harris looks at how ideology and the media invoke fear toward our community and offers ways to protect your mental health in the face of it.

A FEW WEEKS AGO I was meeting with a teenage patient who's been expressing their fears about their future. She stated, "I am scared I will not be able to play sports professionally because I am transgender." In this country, we are currently dealing with my patient's fear.

Right now, something that should have been celebrated as LGBTQ+ progress is being scrutinized. Dylan Mulvaney, a trans influencer, signed an endorsement deal with Nike.

Caitlyn Jenner, furious over the Nike endorsement, lashed out stating, "The sneaker giant is going 'so woke' by throwing money at the trans influencer, but not Olympic hero Allyson Felix." Caitlyn continued, "As someone that grew up in awe of what Phil Knight did, it is a shame to see such an iconic American company go so woke!"

Of course, Caitlyn's statements were among others voicing their opinions through social media. Sharon Davies, an Olympic Medalist subscribing to a trans-exclusionary radical feminist (TERF) ideology, said, "Women are being treated with total disdain at the moment, particularly in the world of sport where physiology makes so much difference."

HISTORY REPEATING

What Mulvaney is currently experiencing is nothing new. Marginalized communities in this country continue to experience hatred and are ridiculed because of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Ideology and media have been used for centuries to perpetuate disdain toward the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and social media has come to provide a platform to promote and continue that cycle of oppression.

Fear typically correlates with a personal feeling or emotion. On a bigger scale, we must realize that fear can cause societal division. Fear can influence groups, communities, countries, and even the world. It can consume, depress, lead to poor decision-making, and make us prone to knee-jerk reactions. In its worst form,

fear can incite hatred and violence. Members of our society have allowed ideology and media to incite fear among the masses, which continues to lead to hatred and violence, especially in BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities.

The truth of the matter is that fear is a phobia that causes people to avoid changing their circumstances due to being extremely afraid of the unknown. As a species, we have been



taught and conditioned not to do well with change because it interferes with our autonomy. It can make us feel we've lost control over our territory. In this country, fear has changed perceptions and political beliefs based on which group has what power.

CONSEQUENCES OF INVOKING FEAR WITHIN A SOCIETY

The movie *Birth of a Nation* depicts slavery in a halcyon light. It presents blacks as good for little but subservient labor, and shows them, during Reconstruction, to have been goaded by the Radical Republicans into asserting an abusive dominion over Southern whites. One of the depictions was the fear among whites that freed slaves would coerce white women into sexual relations, which legally sanctioned excessive and vengeful violence toward blacks.

In 2013 Donald Trump stated, "Sadly, the overwhelming amount of violent crime in our major cities is committed by Blacks and Hispanics." A tough subject must be discussed. The terrorist attack of 9/11 led to increased hate crimes against American Muslims. During this time, I was a college sophomore in an international residential hall. My roommate was from Malaysia, whose national religion is Islam. I remember the entire dorm being evacuated and all our rooms searched by police with dogs. Once my roommate and I returned to our room, we realized his side of the room was ransacked entirely. My side of the room wasn't touched. My roommate returned to Malaysia for the remainder of the semester as soon as possible.

Just over the past three years, ideology and media created hysteria about COVID-19, which in turn targeted the Asian communities, and hate crimes against them increased substantially. Hate crimes targeting LGBTQ+ individuals continue to grow as well. The long history of violence against our LGBTQ+ communities is becoming increasingly well-understood, but it shows no signs of stopping. In fact, in the first half of 2019 alone, at least 11 black transgender women were murdered. In 2018, at least 26 transgender people were murdered, most black women. Their deaths highlight the increased risk that many of us face.

These incidents have occurred in this country to communities that have been identified and labeled as "a reason to fear and to be afraid of them." Hatred appears to be cyclical when targeting marginalized communities. It appears that whichever minority group exhibits any progression, the majority becomes overtaken by the "phobia" of fear that their power is being taken. Over the past few years, the transgender community has become a hyper-targeted group to fear. The lack of understanding and knowledge among those who are fearful of change promotes violence, bigotry, and division.

THE SETBACK IS REAL

February 2, 2009 marked another historical moment for the LGBTQ+ community. *RuPaul's Drag Race* premiered. Fifteen seasons later, the show continues with high ratings, spin-offs, and talented individuals/representation of our community. RuPaul utilized media like others have been for centuries, but to educate and provide knowledge to the communities that

fear us. There are so many great avenues that *Drag Race* has created to instill confidence and self-worth in LGBTQ+ individuals. Representation on television, movies, music, and fashion continues to keep moving us forward.

The terms floating around the media today about trans individuals are "Physiology" and "Biologically." Some like Caitlyn Jenner believe that even though an individual identifies as one gender, they should not be able to have the same liberties as the gender they belong to. Again, this is another example of one social group feeling threatened with their power and control will be taken by another. As history has displayed repeatedly, you only need a few to jump on a bandwagon to ostracize a community, promote hate, and rationalize the violence inflicted on the targeted group.

Last year I attended a mental health meeting at a school where one of the teachers raised a concern about gender in elementary school. The teacher explained that a second-grade transgirl wanted to be addressed by female pronouns among her peers. The district instructed the teacher to follow their policies, which was to contact all the school's parents to make them aware and get their permission to move forward with the student's request. It was mentioned that the teacher would have to provide a "lesson" to the students in her classroom, but only if all the parents consented. This caused the teacher distress. She explained that the district was not protecting all students. By sending all the parents letters, the school was basically outing this student, damaging and diminishing their self-worth and courage.

BREAKING THE CYCLE, ENSURING OUR SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH

As a community, we have the right to be treated like everyone else. Creating unsafe spaces, invoking fear, and promoting violence just to make us scared of being our TRUE selves must STOP! Breaking the cycle of oppression and violence has not been easy to change for centuries. Ideology and media can also be used to promote change—like this magazine does. Using media more positively to educate and encourage individuals about LGBTQ communities is incredibly beneficial.

Instead of invoking fear in people, which leads to violence, provide solutions to help diminish fear and create change. Advocate for public policies that affirm LGBTQ persons as equal citizens under the law.

Extensive training with experienced professionals who specialize in trauma, mental health, and the LGBTQ communities (continually throughout the year) should be provided for police, medical, and mental health personnel, teachers, and administrators in rec-

ognizing hate-crime victimization and cultural competency related to LGBTQ+ communities. Providing training and education allows these professionals to become more aware of how to show up within our community, which builds rapport and fosters a trusting relationship.

Anti-bullying and educational programs for children, adolescents, and adults who are most likely to commit anti-LGBTQ hate crimes could improve the social climate for LGBTQ people and reduce anti-LGBTQ hate crimes.

To have to be fearful of being harmed by someone daily causes tons of mental distress, untrustworthiness, and isolation. As a community, we must always keep ourselves physically and mentally safe. I typically encourage my clients to always be aware of their surroundings. Sometimes getting too comfortable allows danger to present itself. Wherever you are, make sure you know specific street names and possibly a landmark in the area in case you need to call for help. Try to avoid spaces with little light and little action from people. If possible, travel in pairs or in groups.

Self-care is promoted daily at my clinic for staff and clients. Self-care activities can range from physical activities, such as exercising and eating healthy, to mental activities, such as reading a book or practicing mindfulness, to spiritual or social activities, such as praying or catching lunch with a friend. Putting your mental health first during this horrific social climate with LGBTQ communities is very important. Trauma or re-trauma can occur while watching, listening to, and reading all the media surrounding the violence and hate toward LGBTQ communities. Seeking a mental health professional for psychotherapy creates a safe place to process what you are experiencing. It allows you to receive support and learn how to develop coping mechanisms through rough times.

We will weather this storm as we have many others as a community. Change places so much fear in people, but their fear is not because of change; it's the lack of understanding and the unknown. I hope that providing the resources to educate those who are fearful will create a better understanding and an embracing of the unknown. Remember, do not make someone a priority that makes you an option! ■



FREDERICK HARRIS is the Founder and Clinical Director of New Beginnings Counseling Center. He began his career 19 years ago as a case manager at a maximum-security prison providing services to incarcerated men of color and reunifying them with their families. His direct, warm, and honest approach has been effective in building and maintaining therapeutic relationships.

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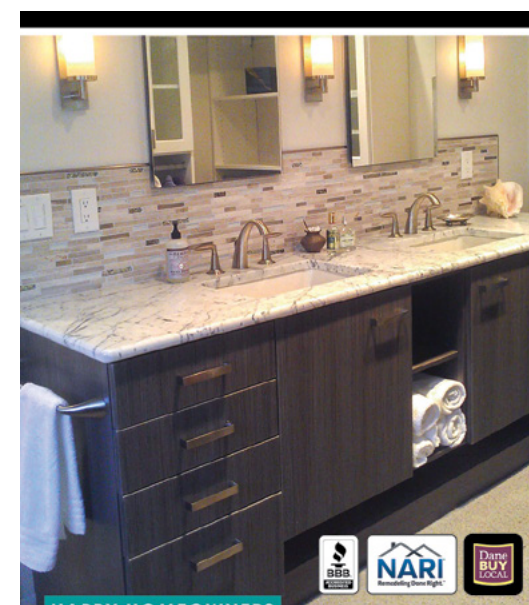


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Java Cat is Back

Displaced due to redevelopment, **Java Cat Coffee House** has now relocated on the east side and is open for business.

TEN YEARS AGO we wrote about Java Cat at their original location. If you are unfamiliar you can find an homage to the 3918 Monona Drive building (photos along with a set of door keys) hung just inside the door of the new location at 4221 Lien Road. The move seems to have energized the proprietor, Renee Raspiller, but she admits that as she gets older the hard work doesn't get any easier. She describes it as a labor of love for the community and still tries to learn the names of as many customers as possible with a smile and a welcoming demeanor that make her immediately likable.

The cafe's familiar collection of cat-themed decor adorns the new spot, and you can still get beans provided by local roasters Just Coffee Cooperative, but the overall feeling is brighter with white paint all around, and high ceilings above the bar. Natural wood throughout the building softens the light and fills the space with warm tones. Next to the iconic Java Cat statue, you can even find a surprisingly playable house guitar sitting in front of a section of slatted wall. The slatted walls allow for art to be easily installed and rotated as needed.

The Lien Road building (which was formerly Legacy House Imports Gift Shop and Tea Room) began as a house erected in 1941 on what was then a family farm. There were additions made in the 1980s and early 2000s to enlarge the house and ultimately make the

The space has several possibilities and could allow for additional seating, yard games, fire pits, a dog-friendly section, and larger outdoor gatherings.

structure 400 square feet larger than the former Java Cat location. The increased space allows for two accessible, all-gender restrooms and seating for 48 split between a large main space with smaller tables and a rear area with a long table that can be used for group gatherings. This all wraps around a central kitchen.

At the time of our interview, the kitchen had been gutted and rebuilt to purpose, but the gelato equipment had not yet been installed for production. The refrigerated case for displaying and dispensing the house-made specialty flavors. The offering of gelato is a distinction you will often hear made by Java Cat fans. Renee's former partner fell in love with it on a trip to Italy and couldn't find anything similar once returning home. Some time, and a trip to Baltimore later, Renee acquired the skills to make the dessert in a fashion that would not otherwise be available locally made.

With the time of warm weather finally upon us you can soon enjoy your treat in the outdoor area behind the building. The space has several



possibilities and could allow for additional seating, yard games, fire pits, a dog-friendly section, and larger outdoor gatherings. Permits are being explored for music and potential alcohol sales. There is so much new possibility that you could almost give up being disappointed at the loss of the drive-thru. ■

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Written by Doug Rowe. Photos by Samantha Rae Waldron.

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TRANS GSAFE ART YOUTH

My Beauty Is My Fight

Joey Drouin is an artist and activist who sees the beauty in others, even when others don't see the beauty in trans people, like Joey. Joey's answer is to remain optimistic, even in the face of regressive anti-trans legislation.

I AM AN ARTIST. My media is mostly acrylic paints, but being an artist means so much more than putting something on a canvas. Being an artist means I see the world in a completely different light, all the time. Instead of just seeing a person standing, I notice the angle of their body, the intensity of their shadow, the way shapes overlap on their face. I notice subtle changes in hues and value, how one thing can appear to be in front of another. I notice the way other people present themselves to an artistic world. I cannot escape from being an artist.

I would not be the artist I am today without influence from thousands of other artists before me. My favorite musician, David Byrne, has a quote that I think about often because it really resonates with me. During his Broadway show, he takes a break from singing and addresses the audience directly, saying, "Objectively, I could never figure out why looking at a person should be any more interesting than looking at any other thing: a bicycle, or a beautiful sunset, or a nice bag of potato chips. But yeah, looking at people, that's the best."

Looking at people is one of my favorite hobbies. I can never stop observing people, seeing not only their bodies but their minds, their stories. I see beauty. I see joy. Everything in my life has led me to learn how to

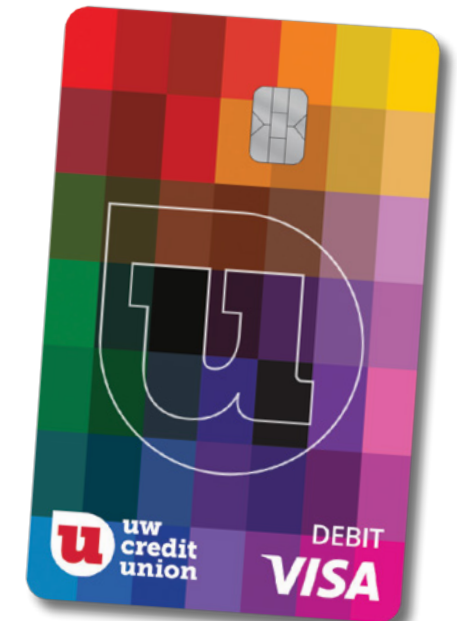


see, feel, and promote joy. I cannot see the world in this way and not see how beautiful it is. Every blue winding river and sunlight-soaked day, every human, regardless of color, shape, parts, or ability; all of it is beauty and all of it is joy.

While I see beauty, and the people who I love see beauty, some do not. Unfortunately, it seems that only the latter's voices are amplified in the media. Social media and news outlets are flooded with stories about the negative societal consequences that come with being LGBTQ+, especially being trans. Seemingly non-stop headlines of people being murdered, murdering others. There has also been a sharp increase in anti-trans legislation in the past few months and years. The reasoning for these bills, the ones that rob us of health-care, is that it will shield children and protect them. Human rights and societal progress are being taken away in the name of protecting children from

the ugliness that is the LGBTQ+ community. But I am a child, too. And I am not ugly. I am not protected by those who write these bills, those who say they only intend to save me. The ones who actually protect me, the ones that show me beauty and allow me to cultivate my own, are my loving friends and family. This includes my chosen family I have found on GSAFE's Youth Activist Council. Throughout the past two years of Zoom meetings and weekend retreats with young people from all over Wisconsin, I have grown so much as an activist and person. Just as YAC has grown since I joined in its inaugural year, I have grown into my gender and sexuality, as well as my optimistic view of the world and future.

Optimism fuels my life and my fight. Because of those who claim to protect me while really harming thousands of young people, I must be my own protector. I need to further my own life, because they will not do it for me. My happiness is their downfall. This is why I am joyful. This is why I can't help but see beauty everywhere I look. This is why I am an artist. Because no matter how hard some people try to devolve and regress, we will still be here and we will still be fighting, creating, producing joy and beauty. My joy, my beauty is my fight. I don't plan on giving up my fight. ■



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