



Show your *Pride!*

Saying 'I do' long after 'I love you'

By Lisa Neff

Staff writer

Most engagements in the United States last about 13 to 18 months. My "engagement," after 21 years, ends on Aug. 16 in a simple ceremony in a canyon near White Pines Forest State Park in Mount Morris, Illinois.

That's not far, going west, from where Connie's family resides and not far, going northeast, from where most of my family resides.

And Mount Morris is 87 miles from Rock Island, Illinois, where Connie and I met in December 1992 — she was working at a bookstore and I was reporting for a daily newspaper. Remember those days? We were wearing flannel and listening to grunge, cheering the "Year of the Woman" and awaiting Bill Clinton's first inauguration.

Being political junkies, it would be fitting if Connie and I got married with another Clinton in office, but we don't want to wait two more years.

We've waited.

And waited.

And waited enough.

Now we're "brides." It seems strange to use that term, because we've been "spouses" for so many years.

And much of the wedding planning seems so foreign. I figure lesbians in my generation tuned out and turned off on dreams of white weddings and princess brides by about 6 years old, maybe even 5, which is when I got my first ball glove.

We'll be barefoot and wearing pants on our wedding day, but we are "brides."

One of the conversations with our much-appreciated and helpful wedding consultant went like:

Consultant: What colors or specific types of flowers would you like for the ceremony?

Me: We like the minimalist approach.

Connie: White and black?

Consultant: Would you like a table for a unity ceremony?

Me: No.

Consultant: Would you like to rent a microphone or speakers for the ceremony?

Connie: No.

Consultant: A DJ or wedding music?

Us: No. No.

She asked about the brides making a grand entrance in a horse-drawn carriage. No.

She asked about flowers. We said just for our moms and the matron of honor, who would have been a maid of honor had we been able to legally wed two decades ago.

When we came to the question of scattering rose petals in the aisle, we said "yes" — in part to say "yes" to something, but also to give the kids something to do.

When Connie and I met, we had one niece to dote on, Anna, the first daughter of Connie's older sister. We now have 11 nieces and nephews, more than a reminder of the big transformations that have taken place over two decades — in our personal lives and in the public arena.

In one way, waiting to wed has been a positive, because we can share the day with the kids, who are growing up knowing us as Aunt Lisa and Aunt Connie and loving us, understanding who we are to one another



PHOTO: COURTESY
Photobooth: Lisa Neff, left, and Connie Wolgast in 1993.



PHOTO: COURTESY
Photobooth: Lisa Neff and Connie Wolgast in 2014.



PHOTO: COURTESY

AFTER 21 YEARS, FINALLY A CAKE: The couple said "yes" to the wedding cake but nixed many of the other traditional elements of a wedding.

and appreciating our relationship. No judgment. No laboriously processing the gay thing.

Last fall, Connie and I went to Puerto Rico for my brother's wedding. We don't dance too often, but the DJ played Elvis' "Can't Help Falling in Love" and who can resist? My 4-year-old niece Pippa was on the dance floor, in a circle of kids. She looked up and saw Connie and I, clapped her hands to her cheeks and said, "Awwwww."

Not too long ago, after some back-seat contemplation on a drive, she inquired of 50-year-old Aunt Lisa, "After you're married, who is going to have the baby?"

Pippa will help us with the sand ceremony, which we want, but I'm not sure we made arrangements. And there are roles for the others — 12-year-old Jackie will recite "Sunshine on my Shoulders," Anna, now 22, and John, 14, will act as ushers, the youngest will scatter those rose petals and 10-year-old Madeline will play a wedding march.

We're planning this celebration long-distance from Florida and, since Connie's name doesn't confirm our same-sex couple status, we've had to come out as a lesbian couple at each turn.

So far, we've encountered enthusiasm.

I talked with one wedding photographer in Rockford, Illinois, who said, "You can't see it but I'm giving you the high-five."

Another photographer, after some confusion about "two brides," said, "Cool, that's so trendy."

We nixed a lot of typical wedding traditions, but not the cake — which is white cake, vanilla buttercream frosting, black piping and multi-layered. It's perhaps the most elegant-looking item we've ever purchased as a couple.

We did say no, however, to a topper out of concern that we could mistakenly end up with a bride and groom instead of a bride and bride.

We haven't met our officiant, who was hired through the White Pines service.

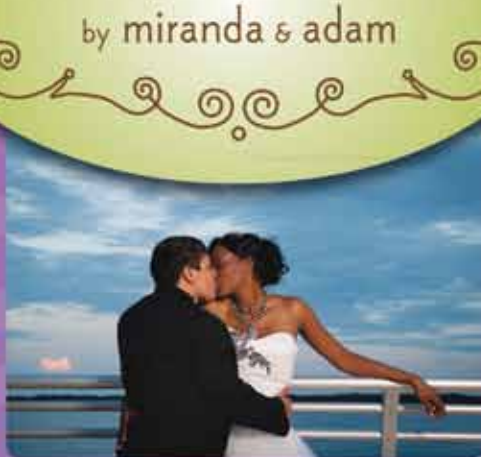
For years, I've been reporting on the discrimination couples faced as they made plans for a wedding day, and before that the "commitment ceremony," and before that the "unity service." So I had some anxiety when reaching out to the minister and asking her if she was fine marrying a lesbian couple.

She responded with a blessing and an agreement that marriage equality has been a long-time coming.

And so, we are working on the details of our ceremony, replacing the references to the "groom" and reworking the passages that sound as if Connie and I became engaged maybe 13 just months ago, like the average couple we are not.



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PrideFest workshop focuses on 'feminine gender' presentation

PrideFest, at 4 p.m. on June 7, will feature a presentation on the Stonewall Stage about "feminine gender" presentation. Led by local filmmaker and transwoman Ashley Altadonna and Tool Shed owner Laura Stuart, the presentation will explore "options in make-up, clothing choices, body language, transition-related products, and more."

WiG recently connected with Altadonna to learn more about the program.

You'll be presenting on the Stonewall Stage, one of the more intimate settings at PrideFest. What can people who attend expect from the talk? Ashley Altadonna: We'll be hosting an honest conversation about the challenges of female presentation. We'll have useful tips for the participants on clothing choices, hair styling, voice modification and products like gaffs and breast forms.

regular basis, or is this event a one-of-a-kind experience for PrideFest goers? I have done several presentations on trans issues before, but this is my first time presenting on this particular topic. I'll be doing another presentation on transgender sex topics at The Tool Shed later, in the fall.

It seems there has been an increase, at least online, in resources and retailers catering to LGBT customers and our fashion preferences and styles. Still a relatively small number, but an increase. Are there some resources you'd like to recommend? One of the best ways to find out about fashion resources is to connect with other members of the community. One of my goals with this event is to help facilitate those connections. For local transition-related needs, The Tool Shed has a wide selection of products and an LGBT-positive setting

says the targeted audience will be people assigned male at birth who are exploring feminine and/or female presentation, but everyone is welcome. What would you like the "others" in the audience to take away from the presentation? I hope others take away a great appreciation for the challenges facing those beginning their transitions and that they can be an additional source of support for the trans community.

You'll be presenting the program after a drag makeover involving the Miltown Kings and before a performance by Funkin Wassels comedy troupe. Do you plan on catching these shows? What's your favorite element of PrideFest? I'm certainly hoping to catch the Miltown Kings. My favorite activity at PrideFest is people watching.

Besides preparing for this presentation, what are you working on these days? I'm finishing my documentary Making the Cut, which looks at trans health issues and the insurance industry and what it means to be trans and male or female bodied in our culture. More about the film can be found at www.tallladypictures.com.

—Lisa Neff

SPEAKING OF PRIDE



6.8 percent of Americans over the age of 18 — roughly 15 to 16 million people — self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

Do you do these presentations on a regular basis, or is this event a one-of-a-kind experience for PrideFest goers? I have done several presentations on trans issues before, but this is my first time presenting on this particular topic. I'll be doing another presentation on transgender sex topics at The Tool Shed later, in the fall.

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Meanwhile in Mecca: an illustrated story of San Francisco

"It's an odd thing, but everyone who disappears is said to be seen at San Francisco. It must be a delightful city, and possess all the attractions of the world."
— Oscar Wilde

By Lisa Neff

Staff writer

The place "has always been a refuge for anyone to come to, whatever status in society. For people, intellectuals, pseudo-intellectuals, for lonely people. For every walk of life."

Wendy MacNaughton is referring to the San Francisco Public Library, maybe not a stop on every vacationers itinerary, but the population of the library "mirrors the population we have in SF" — from Arab-American to Vietnamese-American

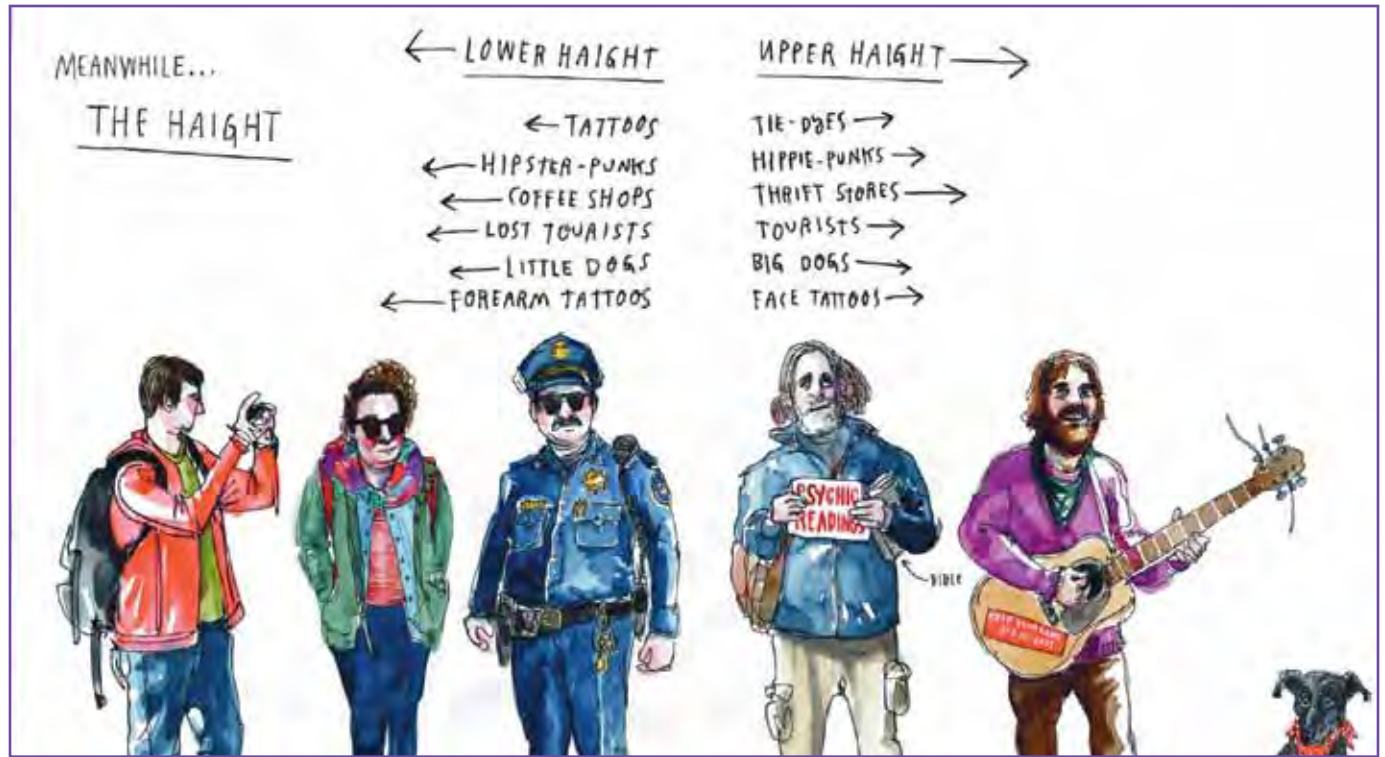
People line up to enter before the library opens. It's free and inside there's a cafe, a literacy center, international center, teen center, environmental center, arts center and an unprecedented program for serving the homeless. Oh, and books.

This generally is not the kind of information found in a tourism brochure from a chamber of commerce or visitors bureau. But it is the type of information found in *Meanwhile in San Francisco: The City in Its Own Words* from Chronicle Books.

"Meanwhile" is graphic journalism, an illustrated, street-smart collection from MacNaughton, a New York Time-best-selling artist. Readers might have seen her work in the Times or the Wall Street Journal or her other book, *The Essential Scratch and Sniff Guide to Becoming a Wine Expert*.

When Pride month comes around, we think of "Holy New York" and the Stonewall riots, but also of "Holy San Francisco," where queer people from around the nation found something much more valuable than gold under that famous fog.

How many of us already have been? But still we think to make a pilgrimage back to the bay.



IMAGES: CHRONICLE BOOKS/WENDY MACNAUGHTON

A page from *Meanwhile in San Francisco: The City in Its Own Words*, graphic journalism by Wendy MacNaughton.

And we keep it in our hearts through literature.

MacNaughton's book, at just 176 pages and fully illustrated, is as delightful as a sunny afternoon on the Presidio. "The drawings are mine, but the words came from people living and working in San Francisco," she says.

She spent hours getting to know the drivers and the passengers on MUNI, studying Giants fans, visiting with the game players of Chinatown, figuring out the character of the lower Haight and the upper Haight, and appreciating the hard work of the vendors at the San Francisco Civic Center farmer's market. Tourists might browse the market

in 10 minutes, but for the vendors, the day begins as early as 2 a.m.

Visitors might have heard about the great bison of the great Golden Gate Park, who first arrived in 1890, or thereabouts. Well, MacNaughton, in just two pages, introduces them with affection and humor, including "Unnamed Cow" or "UC" for short, who "was a gift from Diane Feinstein's husband about 30 years ago."

The bison's daily routine: "Graze, ruminate, eat grain, graze, sleep, retreat."

There is a map to Dolores Park at the western edge of the Mission District, useful for a visitor who wants to know the "cruising area" or the visitor who wants to avoid the

bushes. The "truffle guy" is marked on the map, as is a "naked guy nearly," "gay beach lite" and "lesbians — butch, femme, young, old, all checking out the endless line for the bathroom."

The book is not intended as a comprehensive portrayal of San Francisco. MacNaughton says, "It's only a small handful of the huge number of communities to be found in The City, on every steep street, behind every gated door, in every grassy park. These are the stories of San Francisco daily life. This is what happens in the meanwhile."

The meanwhile in our mecca.

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My brother shouldn't be judged for who he loves.

Imagine More Spotlight: Joshua Robinson

I don't think it would be a surprise for me to say telling people about my sexuality was the hardest part. Even to this day it can still be nerve wracking to have that conversation with certain people, but I don't want it to be something I keep from people intentionally. I couldn't if I wanted to. I've found that people are much more open minded than I gave them credit for.

Coming out to my family was definitely the scariest experience of my life. I was a junior in high school when I told them; my dad and I were having a deep conversation and he asked me. I thought, if I don't tell him the truth while he is extending me the opportunity, when will I ever? I didn't know if the chance would present itself again, so I was honest. Luckily my dad told my mom so I didn't have to handle all of that; but, I had to tell my sister. I was more scared to tell her than anyone, not for any particular reason; it was just the unknown that frightened me. You don't

know how someone will respond. Will they support you? Will they disown you? Are you a disappointment? Those kinds of things cross your mind. But I found out I didn't have to worry about those things with my sister.

Love is a powerful force in my family. They love me, which will always be the same. It wasn't until I got older that it became more important to have the support of loved ones to thrive. I've got incredibly accepting, generous, and intellectual friends and family who are the backbone of my entire existence. It's cliché, but I literally couldn't have made it this far without them.

Being featured on the Acceptance Journeys billboard has been an amazing opportunity and experience. It's been a lot like coming out all over again. I'm elated that I got to share this journey with my sister. I don't think there is anyone who I would have rather done it with. I know a lot of people, but I don't know that many of them would have been

willing to be on that billboard, plastered everywhere for the world to see, and she just did it. The situations that led to me coming out to my sister brought us even closer together.

As a member of the LGBT community, I just want my journey to make someone else's easier. All I want for myself and the members of the LGBT community, and the world really, is to be happy and respectful of one another. It is going to take for everyone to change how we think, act, and care for each other for acceptance and tolerance to prevail. It's the key to everyone's happiness.

Imagine More is a program of Diverse and Resilient that uses social media, marketing, and events to encourage LGBT people to imagine and expect a world that is truly accepting.



Joshua Robinson is a part of Diverse and Resilient's Acceptance Journeys social marketing campaign to promote love and acceptance of LGBT people in Milwaukee.



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Green Bay's Joannes Park hosts PrideAlive on July 12

PrideAlive, a family-friendly festival held each July in Green Bay, returns to the city's Joannes Park from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sat., July 12. The free, one-day community festival, designed to promote community, diversity and equality, is the third largest of its kind in Wisconsin.

The event features 10 acts of live entertainment, including celebrity guests, the Northeast Wisconsin LGBT History Project, exhibits, more than 50 local vendors, demonstrations, artists, civic information, food, drink, and a family atmosphere.

Although a headliner had not been announced as of press time, the festival's organizers said s/he is a recent Grammy Award-winning artist.

PrideAlive has averaged 3,000 attendees and has operated in the black throughout each of its six-years in existence, according to a press release from Rainbow Over Wisconsin.

To donate, volunteer for, or become a sponsor of the event, contact Jeff Hunter at 920-360-3601 or send email to hunterphoenix55@gmail.com.

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PHOTO: PRIDEALIVE

About 2,000 people enjoyed last year's PrideAlive, including the celebrants above.



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Major jeweler introduces 'Love Equally' rings

By Matthew Reddin

Contributing writer

Among the many traditions surrounding marriage, one of the first involves a trip to the jewelry store.

That can be a more complicated trip for same-sex couples, especially if they're looking for rings that differ from the traditional. While a few independent companies have begun offering rings specifically designed for same-sex engagements and weddings, no major jewelry company had followed suit until Diamond Nexus, a Wisconsin-based online jewelry company, unveiled its "Love Equally" collection of rings tailored for lesbian and gay couples.

But company CEO Gary LaCourt wanted to do more than simply market to LGBT couples. He signed on as a partner with PrideFest's "Plus 1" campaign, which is raising money to support the ACLU of Wisconsin's marriage-equality lawsuit. PrideFest attendees have the opportunity to donate an additional dollar to the campaign when they purchase their festival tickets. Diamond Nexus will then match every dollar donated up to \$10,000.

During the festival, Diamond Nexus is also sponsoring a celebratory commitment ceremony for the four couples named in the ACLU lawsuit, using rings from the Love Equally collection.

LaCourt says he was inspired to launch the company's marriage equality initiatives after a conversation with close friend Wes Shaver, a member of PrideFest's board. When the topic of marriage equality came up, LaCourt realized that no major jewelry store — including his — had yet committed to producing a line of jewelry designed for same-sex couples.

Diamond Nexus had processed many custom orders for same-sex couples. But his company had nothing unique to offer that would make a statement about equality or reflect the trends his designers detected in orders requested by same-sex couples. His online store



LOVE EQUALLY

also lacked a designated and welcoming area where same-sex couples could shop.

LaCourt's decision was largely business-driven, to be sure. But a major reason for launching the Love Equally collection was to fulfill what LaCourt calls "a moral responsibility" to support a cause he believed in.

"The jewelry business is all about celebrating other people's milestones," he says. "It's cool to be in a business (that's) about things that signify love to people," he says.

He wants his company to embrace all people who are celebrating their love, he adds.

The Love Equally collection is available on Diamond Nexus' website, in a special section accessible from the site's home page. LaCourt says his designers are continually tweaking their offerings to better reflect what same-sex couples want.

"Nobody's really figured out if there's a certain look or not," he says. Some sort of defining style is about two years away, by his designers' estimates.

Couples seem divided into two groups: one that wants rings with obvious LGBT symbolism, and another that wants subtler bands.

For now the collection is primarily a variety of minimalist rings, with a few more elaborate options.

There's no discernible "same-sex ring" identifier as of yet, but purchasing rings from the Love Equally collection does allow couples to buy their rings together, with substantial savings.

Diamond Nexus as a company is built on innovation, often for social causes. Their whole pro-

cess is designed to circumvent the diamond industry's notorious mining operations, lethal to both the environment and workers themselves. The company uses only lab-created diamonds, made of 100-percent carbon and chemically identical to natural diamonds. Also used are diamond stimulants, which are similar to cubic zirconium, but with a different chemical makeup.

LaCourt says the company's diamond stimulants are just as vibrant as real diamonds, and lack some of the flaws of cubic zirconium due to a superior production process and a special

protective coating. The company makes lab-created diamonds for consumers who still want real diamonds without being complicit in cartel mining practices.

"How a diamond gets on a woman's finger is not a pleasant story," he says, "We want to be more than just a piece of jewelry."

It may still have some tweaks to work out, but Diamond Nexus' Love Equally collection marks a similar step in the right direction for an important social issue — one that a business focusing on love can't ignore for long.



PHOTO: COURTESY
Gary LaCourt.

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Washington Heights has neighborhood pride

By Michael Muckian

Contributing writer

When Terri Coughlin sat down to breakfast with friends on Sat., May 17, it wasn't so much a social gathering the celebration of a one-of-a-kind Milwaukee legacy.

Coughlin and her friends had gathered at McBob's Pub & Grill, the well-known west side watering hole at 4919 W. North Ave., before setting off on Historic Milwaukee's 2014 Spaces & Traces tour of famous homes and businesses in Washington Heights.

The friends were excited because it was the first Spaces & Traces tour of their neighborhood. They were also excited to represent their group, the Washington Heights Rainbow Association, the oldest LGBT neighborhood association in the greater Milwaukee area.

WHRA began 19 years ago to provide respite and a welcoming environment for gay and lesbian residents of Washington Heights, a geographic area bounded by North Avenue and Vliet Street on the north and south and Washington Park and 60th Street on the east and west. Since its early days, WHRA has expanded its membership to include straight residents. The group also takes on fundraising and service projects to improve the neighborhood.

WHRA currently has 110 names on its email list, which includes current residents as well as people who have left the neighborhood but want to remain connected to it.

"When I returned to Milwaukee from Ohio and moved to Washington Heights 11 years ago, there were four or five rainbow associations around the city," says Coughlin, WHRA's president. She's not aware of any such associations remaining in the city, although just west of Milwaukee, the Wauwatosa Rainbow Association is active.

Coughlin says its her group's commitment and camaraderie that have helped keep the volunteer-run WHRA afloat. It also helps that a lot of lesbian and gay singles, couples and families live in the neighborhood.

"There are quite a few LGBTs here," Coughlin says. "It helps our neighbors understand that we're just like everyone else. When you hear that a neighborhood has a rainbow association, it helps you decide where you might want to live if you are gay or lesbian."

People are drawn to Washington Heights for its beautifully restored homes and vintage houses in need of renovation. A small business revival over the past decade has added a vibrant buzz to the neighborhood. Among the area's residents is Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, who has a home on Washington Boulevard.

A group of neighbors decided to start the association nearly 20 years ago during a backyard barbecue at a home on 56th Street. WHRA began as a social group, but eventually took on a social-service mission.

With funds raised through rummage sales and at a volunteer-staffed booth at Pride-

Fest (where you'll see them again this year), the association began to fund neighborhood activities and eventually moved on to support other causes, Coughlin says.

"We support one of the summer concerts each year at Washington Park, have given to the local Lutheran church and provided kids' costumes for the neighborhood Halloween 'spooktacular,'" says Coughlin, who also serves on the Cream City Foundation Board. "We've also contributed to Elena's House for people living with HIV/AIDS and the LGBT film festival."

As the summer progresses, Coughlin anticipates a surge in activities, many of which will promote WHRA and its mission.

"I have never lived in an area with so many neighborhood gatherings," Coughlin says. "Did you know that Washington Heights is the number one neighborhood for block parties in the city?"

This summer, members will deliver reusable canvas grocery bags to residents, both to support the neighborhood's "green" initiative and to raise the group's visibility. Such efforts are typical for the group, which has an active relationship with the Washington Heights Neighborhood Association.

Coughlin hopes LGBT people in other neighborhoods will be inspired by WHRA's success to form more rainbow associations in Milwaukee.



PHOTO: MAX SIKER

Terri Coughlin and Barbara Hayden stand in front of a vintage houses included in a May 17 Spaces & Traces tour of Washington Heights.

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The North Woods takes pride in its gangster past

By Michael Muckian

Contributing writer

Minocqua resident Bryon Black speaks with a mixture of pride and caution about one of his most prized possessions — a .25 caliber Colt pistol. The black nickel-plated Colt, tucked neatly into a black ankle holster, was given to Black's grandfather, Ted Blazkowski, by "Skinny" Mazurka, a driver for gangster Al Capone. The gun was taken as payment for Mazurka's bar tab.

Mazurka had taken the train to the northern Wisconsin resort area in the early 1930s. He spent an evening drinking at Blazkowski's tavern, the Sportsman's Bar (now known as The Longshot) in neighboring Woodruff. When it came time to settle up, Capone's henchman realized he'd lost his wallet.

"He gave my grandfather the only thing of value he had — his gun — to settle his debt," Black says.

Anecdotes about legendary gangsters are sprinkled throughout Wisconsin's North Woods like so many empty shell casings. Ironically, the area's gangster past is a source of pride to residents. Family histories in the area are loaded with tales of Capone, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson and many of the lesser lights of Chicago's organized crime scene of the 1920s and '30s. The criminals were area celebrities.

GANGSTERS next page



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GANGSTERS from prior page

A NORTHWOODS HIDEOUT

From Rhinelander in the south to Hurley in the north, from Eagle River in the east to Al Capone's fortified hideout in west Wisconsin town of Couderay, the North Woods is rife with lore involving gangsters on vacation or hiding out from the law. They helped grateful local concessionaires survive Prohibition and the Great Depression.

Their gambling, prostitution and bloody shootouts with Federal agents added darker shades to the otherwise pastoral vacation destinations.

Chicago's vacationing gangsters didn't introduce gambling and prostitution to the North Woods — credit for that goes to lusty loggers and randy railroaders who arrived earlier with an appetite for indulgence. As enterprising businessmen, however, the gangsters recognized opportunities when they saw them, capitalizing on the area's remoteness to provide them with a safe and entertaining haven.

The passage on Jan. 17, 1920 of the Volstead Act, which started Prohibition, is credited to giving rise to organized crime. It also helped bolster the attractiveness of the Wisconsin's northern resorts as an integral link in alcohol's illicit distribution chain. Whiskey from Canada was often brought to the U.S. by seaplanes, which landed on any of the region's 2,300 lakes. The whiskey, along with local bootleg spirits, was ferried by truck to Milwaukee, Chicago and points south.

The area's remoteness and relative difficulty to traverse in the early 20th century also gave the gangsters extra escape time in the face of Federal officers, supported by a well-honed early warning system of locals who appreciated the money the hoodlums spread around the resorts, says Woody Woodruff, a local merchant and member of the Minocqua Chamber of Commerce executive committee.

"To a country drowning in the Depression, they were seen a little bit like Robin Hoods in the way they fought the authorities and the banks," Woodruff said.

A BROTHEL IN EVERY TOWN

Today, there's no official "gangster trail" through the nearly contiguous communities of Manitowish Waters, Arbor Vitae, Woodruff and Minocqua that formed the epicenter of gangster activity. However, Woodruff and other locals are happy to point out establishments that had past connections to gambling and prostitution. In addition to Norwood Pines Supper Club (10171 Hwy. 70, Minocqua), which had a small prostitution operation and today boasts its own 1930s-era ghost named "Edgar," popular locations include the following sites:

- **The Belle Isle** (501 Front St., Minocqua), now a restaurant and bar, started life in the 1890s as The Minocqua, a restaurant and hotel that was popular among Chicago's underworld. The stop was so popular, in fact, that earlier owners installed a series of direct telephone lines to the Arlington Park Racetrack in the Chicago suburbs so gamblers could keep tabs on their horses.

- **Trixie's**, once located on the lakeside site now home to BJ's Sport Shop (917 Hwy. 51 N., Minocqua), was considered the finest brothel in Wisconsin's north woods. The destination was popular among locals and visitors alike, according to reports of the times. Legend has it that when Trixie died, city fathers would not allow her remains to be buried in the church cemetery. A local resident reportedly rowed her body out to Jossart Island in Lake Minocqua and buried Trixie with her diamonds and jewels. Thus far, Trixie's treasures have not been recovered.

- **Ma Bailey's**, now a private residence (8591 Woodruff Rd., Woodruff), was the area's other leading brothel. Margaret Bailey and her husband, Vaudevillian Bill Bailey, developed the original structure by moving four separate outbuildings located on the site of a former logging camp together to form a single building, then added to it over time. While husband Bill toured, "Ma" Bailey ran

her house of ill repute, reportedly appearing behind the bar in a nurse's uniform. Bill Bailey died in 1937. Ma Bailey, charged by Federal authorities with tax evasion in 1945, settled her debts, sold her business and bought another bar nearby. She eventually returned to her native Nebraska and died in the 1950s.

SHOOTOUT AT LITTLE BO

The area's most notorious location is also its best known. **Little Bohemia** (142 Hwy. 51 S., Manitowish Waters), built in 1915 and taken over by Czech immigrant Emil Wanatka Sr. in 1927, was a favorite among travelers, including gangsters John Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson. The pair, along with eight others, descended on the resort on Little Star Lake on Friday, April 20, 1934, offering Wanatka \$500 for three days of food and lodging. That weekend, the gangsters and their molls relaxed, played cards, read magazines and behaved like other guests.

By Sunday night, a cadre of heavily armed FBI agents alerted to Dillinger's presence had gathered at **Voss Birchwood Lodge** (311 Voss Rd., Manitowish Waters) a mile south of Little Bohemia preparing to apprehend or kill the gangsters. However, all did not go according to plan. Three departing guests, mistaken by agents for Dillinger's men

as they approached the FBI roadblock at Little Bohemia's gates, were gunned down by mistake. The gunfire alerted the gangsters, who safely fled along the lakeshore as the FBI pumped bullets and lobbed teargas grenades into the lodge occupied only by Wanatka and his family.

The bullet holes are still visible in the walls and windows of Little Bohemia, used as one of the settings for the 2009 film *Public Enemies* starring Johnny Depp, which still operates as a restaurant. Glass cases display personal artifacts the Dillinger gang in its haste left behind, including clothing, shoes, purses, suitcases a shotgun, a machine gun and personal items, including aspirin and Ex Lax.

"That just shows you that Dillinger was not a regular kind of guy," says Woodruff. Despite the pun, what Woodruff said was true. In this part of Wisconsin, Dillinger is not a guy at all, but a genuine legend.

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Does marriage change sex for male couples?

By Scott Bane

Special to WiG

With a federal judge striking down Oregon's anti-marriage equality constitutional amendment; another federal judge doing the same in Pennsylvania; and the litigation *Wolf v. Walker* working its way through Wisconsin's federal courts, marriage equality is expanding one state, one lawsuit at a time. Against this backdrop, I've thought about the question: Does marriage change sex?

My partner and I exchanged wedding bands as gifts before we got married, and one of the first things we did was to put the rings on, take our clothes off and have sex. (Don't worry this was at home in our bedroom, not at the Macy's jewelry counter.) The prospect of getting married thrilled us, and we wanted to express this somehow.

Then the night we married, which we did in New York State, after a celebratory dinner with family and friends, we were both lying in bed, giddy from the exhilarating rush of the day and unable to sleep. Even though we had been together for nearly 18 years and are both middle aged men, we suddenly became stereotypical newlyweds on our wedding night: Once again, we had sex.

My husband and I have a satisfying sex life fueled by desire and love. But it has changed over time. The heady early days of our youth have given way to the more restrained sexual rhythms of middle age. I suspect there's probably not too much differ-



ence between LGBT and straight people in this regard.

But getting married changed things for me. It rekindled experimentation and adventurousness. I've thought on several occasions: If I'm not willing to express my deepest sexual desires with my husband, then with whom can I express them? And if not now, when?

Did I need a ring, a piece of paper, and a joint tax return to get to this point? Apparently, I did. But my husband did not. What can I say? People are different.

I'm not advocating turning clock back to before the sexual

revolution. Sexual experimentation, when done safely, can be a great thing. The men and women with whom I had sex over the years helped me figure out that when my partner, now husband, came along, he was the real thing.

But my experience does make me wonder if, for some people, it's in the context of marriage that they most come alive sexually.

For me, getting married upped the ante. I've long found that an intimate, loving relationship is a living, breathing thing, which can either grow or wither. So in the event that my husband and

I are given another 20 years together, and if we're able to continue to nurture our love, commitment and desire, you'll have to come ask me again how it went.

But for the moment, increased sexual intimacy has been one of the pleasant and unexpected surprises that I've found in our connubial bed.

Scott Bane is a New York City-based freelance writer who's currently working on a book about the relationship between Harvard scholar F.O. Matthiessen and painter Russell Cheney.

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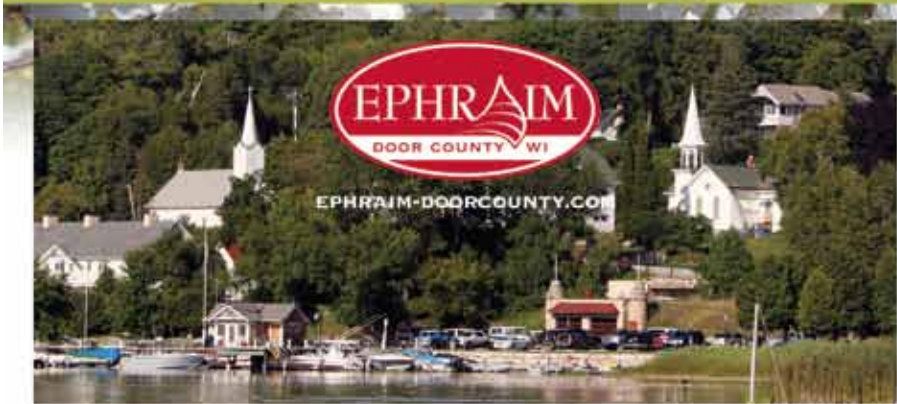
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***A message about New Testing Technology**

NEW HIV TESTING THIS YEAR AT PRIDEFEST. (In previous years, an oral test was used that provided an initial result in 20 minutes.) This year's test is a fingerstick blood test that provides an initial result in 15 minutes. Although the oral swab was a good test, Kathleen Krchnavek from the Wisconsin Division of Public Health states that there are distinct advantages to moving to the fingerstick blood test. *"The blood test identifies HIV infection earlier than the oral test. This is important. We are trying to prevent giving a negative test result to someone who is actually HIV positive."* The new test only requires a drop of blood, is easy to use, and provides results sooner than the previous test.

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Group supports interracial gay couples' relationships

By Louis Weisberg

Staff writer

In the 1980s, when D.A. Leonard and his partner went out together to the gay bars in Milwaukee, they'd breeze by the doorman with a friendly "hello," he said.

But when Leonard's partner Michael Ross, who is African American, went out alone or with black friends, the welcome was less than cordial.

"We could walk right in as a couple," said Leonard, who describes himself as Caucasian or Euro-American. "But if Michael and I went separately, he had to pay a cover charge and show an ID."

Leonard said both he and Michael played on the LaCage softball team, and the doorman was captain of the team. But even though the doorman was Michael's teammate, he'd make him pay a cover charge and show legal identification when he showed up at the club without Leonard.

In 1983, Leonard joined the Milwaukee chapter of Black and White Men Together, a nationwide network for interracial gay couples and gay men interested in interracial relationships. Milwaukee members of BWMT met with bar owners to change discriminatory cover fees and carding policies.

BLENDING BACKGROUNDS

In addition to advocating for LGBT rights and fighting racism, the group also offers

opportunities for gay black and white men to meet each other, socialize and examine the effects of racial differences — and racism — on their relationships.

Dealing with societal homophobia and racism is challenging enough, but interracial gay couples must also learn to bridge cultural differences that can divide them in ways they might not even realize. The National Association of Black and White Men Together was founded in part to support such couples.

For the first time since 1987, the association will hold its national conference in Milwaukee this year — from July 9 to 12 at the DoubleTree by Hilton downtown. Planned activities include presentations, workshops, an art fair and breakout sessions that divide participants into groups by race to discuss specific issues from their points of view. Past issues have included social inequities and interracial communications.

Later, the two groups combine and compare notes.

Sometimes, the differences in perception surrounding the same topics are strikingly different, said Mark Behar, a Milwaukeean who serves as national co-chair of the group. Behar served on Gov. Tony Earl's Council on Lesbian & Gay Issues in the mid-1980s and was one of the city's earliest

RACE next page

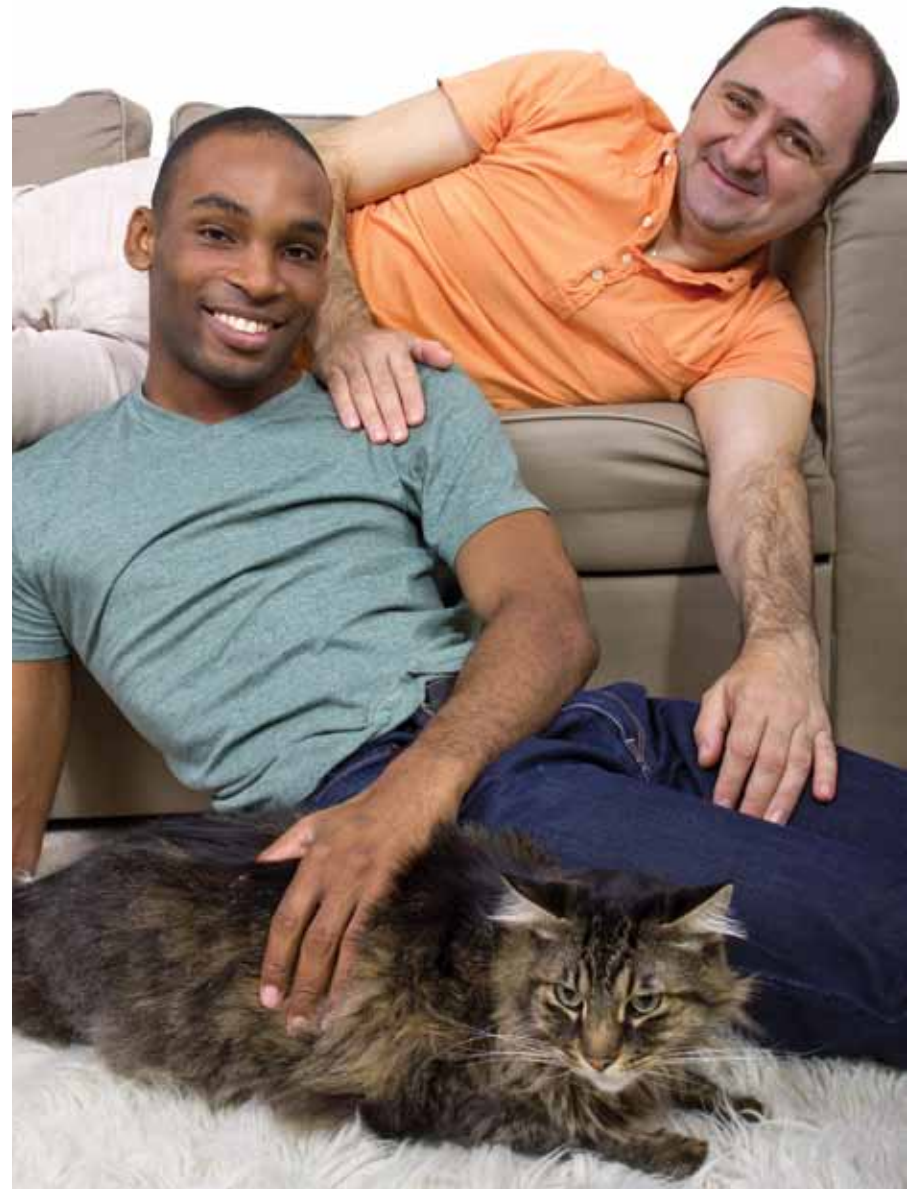


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RACE from prior page

AIDS activists.

NABWMT was founded in 1980 to draw attention to racism "and to try to manage it in a positive and constructive way," Behar said. The local chapters provide social activities, such as bowling nights, and provide support for the myriad challenges interracial couples can face.

"There's more to interracial relationships than just being with someone of a different racial background," Behar said.

Behar, who is Jewish, has had several relationships with African-American men. He said the cultural differences are sometimes glaring.

"If I take a (black) partner to a family gathering, it's Jewish interrogation at high speed," Behar said. "Unless someone is acculturated to that, the reaction is, 'Wow, that's really intense.'"

"In the Jewish community, asking someone about his background is a way to relate," Behar explained. "In the black community, all the personal questions seem threatening. (Black families) typically will not interrogate you. There's a lot of communication, but nothing has to do with you, which sets up a little dissonance."

Behar became drawn to the gay African-American community because he found it more welcoming. Black men seemed friendlier and easier to talk to, he said, unlike "white men, who gave you incredible attitude and seemed uptight."

COVERT RACISM

BWMT operates a booth at PrideFest in the Health and Wellness area. Last year, volunteers who staffed the booth asked people questions about intimate partner violence and discovered what Behar described as a startling lack of awareness.

"We could not find anyone to analyze the data, because it didn't go through an institutional review board," Behar said.

"But about 50 percent of the respondents said something to the effect that if they or a friend had evidence of intimate

partner violence, they didn't feel it necessary for them to intervene," he said. "They didn't know how to give their friend advice. About half the people said if it didn't affect them, they didn't need to know about it."

As a result of that finding, this year's convention will address that issue, among many others.

Changes in society and the rise of digital communications have changed the group somewhat and eroded its membership, said Darryl G. Fore, a Cleveland member of the national association. He said that today's racism is more covert, giving many young people the false impression that it no longer affects their lives, he said. At the same time, young people have turned to meeting people online and no longer see the need for getting together in person.

"A lot of gay organizations are finding they have dwindling membership in person, but online we have a huge membership," Fore said. "Our Facebook page has over 9,000 people. But it's very difficult to get people to actually come to conventions in person."

At the group's peak in the late 1980s and 1990s, there were chapters all over the country as well as in Canada and Brazil, according to Fore. Only about 100 men show up for conferences, compared with 300 to 400 during the group's heyday, he lamented.

About 1,000 members of the group have succumbed to old age. Four were victims of serial killer Jeffery Dahmer, Leonard said.

Fore regrets that more people aren't aware of the organization's rich history and are missing out on the "family reunion" atmosphere of its conferences. He also regrets that gay men are ignoring the very real problem of racism in society because it's so much less overt than 20 years ago. Many of the prominent gay couples making the news today are interracial, which lulls young people into believing they're living in a post-racial society, Fore suggests.

One example of covert racism that Fore points to came up at a conference when the group divided into caucuses based on race:

For the first time since 1987, the National Association of Black and White Men Together will hold its national conference in Milwaukee this year — from July 9 to 12 at the DoubleTree by Hilton downtown. On the agenda are workshops, presentations and social activities.

the fantasies that some gay white men entertain about black men. The subject provided an "aha" moment for the group.

"Some people were perpetuating gross stereotypes about African Americans, even as the same men thought of themselves as not racist because they were members of

the group," Fore said.

While in many respects racism seems to have morphed into classism, its the underlying racism that's still dragging the nation down, Fore suggests. He points to the unprecedented attacks on President Barack Obama.

"A lot of the things our president is facing today may be racially motivated," Fore said. "In general, not everyone knows that. They believe that it's something else — that it's maybe due to political inadequacy. They don't understand that there's a system in this country that's very difficult to break when it comes to racial inequities. The work is never done. Often times the media spins things in a way that ignores the undercurrent of racism at work."

Fore and the other members of NABWMT said they'd continue to use the group to promote awareness of such societal problems, just as they'll continue to provide opportunities for black and white men to meet, socialize and engage in fun activities.

The group also participates in civic activities, such as raising money for food banks.

Membership in the national group is only \$20 a year. Nine administrators oversee an approval process to ensure members are genuinely interested in interracial relationships and support the group's mission of fighting racism and homophobia.

For info, go to <http://www.nabwmt.org/>.

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Hip-hop trio performing at PrideFest promotes positive messages for kids

By Michael Muckian

Contributing writer

The Figureheads is one of Wisconsin's most popular hip-hop groups, but songs about ganstas and 'hos won't be found on the trio's playlist.

Unlike other hip-hop artists, The Figureheads play to a much younger demographic — as young as kindergarten age — with songs that promote positive thoughts, confidence and acceptance of self and others.

On June 8, the Milwaukee-based group makes its fourth consecutive PrideFest appearance, with an interactive performance of music and dance at 4 p.m. on Sunday, June 8, on the festival's Children's & Family Stage.

"The purpose of our shows is, firstly, to activate the pure fun of a collective aesthetic experience, a moment to celebrate the joy that runs through our lives in the form of relationships and art, learning and loving," says vocalist Jeremy Bryan, one of the group's three co-founders.

But there is more to a Figureheads performance. Bryan, along with fellow cofounders vocalist Greg Marshall and multi-instrumentalist Dave Olson develop catchy beats and rhythms to present lyrics that promote making good decisions, discovering one's voice and celebrating family and friendship. The result is a joyful noise that all present can share, wrapped around positive messages that help kids in the audience develop positive attitudes.

"We never planned to create music for kids," Marshall says. "It happened because we were working with kids, and as we tried to help them, it only made sense to connect through music."

Marshall's backstory includes stints as a volunteer with the Milwaukee Rescue Mis-

sion, serving an internship with Chicago's Breakthrough inner-city youth program, and working as a therapist for children with autism at Madison's Integrated Development Services. He's also working on a Master's degree with Trinity International University and serves as a creative consultant to various nonprofit organizations.

Bryan, who's enrolled in a UWM master's program, also has a history of working with children. He's helped kids with special needs as well as kids in transitional housing situations.

Olson, a St. Paul, Minnesota, native who holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology from Bethel University, has extensive experience counseling disabled kids and runaway teens with drug problems.

Olson has diastrophic dwarfism, a bone-and-cartilage disorder that results in shortened stature. The condition, he says, enables him to better relate to many of the children with whom the group works.

The Minnesota native helped pioneer the techno and early electronic music scene in Minnesota and is the co-developer of HiPass, a Minneapolis record label that has international distribution. A producer and engineer of multiple award-winning albums, he serves as the Figureheads' graphic and Web designer and technician.

The Figureheads has become increasingly popular since its founding in 2005. The trio has performed more than 700 concerts before more than 100,000 people nationwide. They also have won awards from the Parents' Choice Organization, the International Songwriting Competition and the Wisconsin Area Music Industry.

"The messages we impart tend to focus on body regulation and body knowledge, a



PHOTO: COURTESY

The Figureheads.

self-awareness that involves getting your energy level in a just-right place so learning is optimal," says Bryan. "That's a fancy way to say that we have dances associated with some songs and a lot of movement during the shows."

Few audiences are as responsive as a roomful of kids. They have fewer inhibitions about getting up and dancing, belting out choruses and making a lot of noise — all of which the three musicians love to see. The hip-hop nature of the music makes it more accessible to all kids, who embrace the combination of meter and meaning that such music employs.

"We find ways to make hip-hop accessible to rural, suburban and urban audiences,"

Bryan says. "The key to each audience is the same — authenticity conveyed through personal stories and anecdotes between songs, as well as sharing passionately what we consider really good music."


The Figureheads' interaction with so many different kinds of social-service agencies has broadened the scope of its musical messaging.

"We wanted the community to be our record label," Marshall says. "We believed that if what we did was valuable to the community, the community would invest in it. That's what happened."

And the community has had a good time making that investment.

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Callen Harty hopes his 'Queer Life' will help heal others facing same challenges

By Michael Muckian

Contributing writer

Callen Harty didn't know he was gay while growing up in the Lafayette County community of Shullsburg. The realization came while he was a student at UW-Platteville in 1978. He ended his last relationship with a woman and embraced who he really was.

Today, the Madison-based author, playwright, director, photographer and activist takes life in stride. He also writes about it, both in plays for Madison's Broom Street Theater and, most recently, in *My Queer Life* — a 30-year compilation of poems, essays and blog posts released in December 2013.

Harty, 56, has a lot to say about many things. He looked both forward and backward in discussing his "queer life" with me.

Has your life lived up to your expectations? Compiling the material for *My Queer Life* caused me to look deeper at the totality

of my life and what I have done with it. I moved from a young man afraid of being gay to a man who is open about every aspect of his life— from my sexuality to my alcohol and drug abuse recovery to my child sex-abuse survival. I knew when I was in second or third grade sitting at the feet of my Great Aunt Leona and listening to her recite her poetry that I, too, wanted to be a writer, and I have succeeded at that. I didn't know that I would win awards as a queer activist and as a sex-abuse survivor and would cofound organizations that have made an impact on the world. I didn't know I would spend more than 30 years in the theater as an actor, director and playwright. I didn't know that I would find a life partner with whom I have already spent 23 of my years. My life has unfolded in unexpected ways and I have generally followed my heart where it leads me.

American society has become more accepting of LGBT people. How would you

evaluate the progress society has made?

I think it's important to have a sense of history so that we can measure where we are against where we were. We have made progress, but we are not where we need to be. We can't get complacent just because 17 states and a handful of countries allow gay and lesbian marriage. People are still getting beaten, bullied and killed because of their real or perceived identities. There are 29 states in which you can still be fired simply for being gay. There are draconian laws being passed in places like Russia, Nigeria and Brunei that are setting our movement back in some ways to the Dark Ages.

How well has the LGBT community risen to the challenges of life in the mainstream?

Sometimes we have a hard time looking at ourselves with a critical eye. When a famous gay person makes a mistake, we sometimes fall all over ourselves to make excuses for the behavior instead of holding them accountable as we would others. But

it feels like, for the most part, the majority of queer folks have integrated just fine into society while still being out. When I was growing up we integrated by staying in the closet, even marrying, so that others would not know who we were. Queer people are much less afraid of being out and straight people are much more comfortable with us in general.

What is the next leg of the LGBT journey? I think the journey simply requires more time. The younger generation really doesn't care about whether someone is queer or not, and with that attitude becoming more prevalent as they grow older, things will continue to get better. By the time they are my age, I am hopeful things will be much better. Between now and then we must continue to fight for gender equity laws, eliminate discriminatory laws, and educate, educate, educate. The key is to continue to teach our fellow citizens who we

HARTY next page

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PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Callen Harty with anti-racist activist Arno Michaelis at the release party for "My Queer Life" at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center.

HARTY from prior page

are and what it means to be queer.

Yours has been a very public gay life. Why was that important to you? I came out only 10 years after Stonewall. There were still not a lot of out people and even fewer heroes or role models for a young man like me at the time. I felt I had to do what I could. I believed what Harvey Milk said about every gay man and lesbian needing to come out, because if that happened pretty soon everyone in America would realize they knew someone who was gay. Then the struggle for rights would have meaning for

those allies fighting for their sons, daughters, neighbors and co-workers who they realize are just regular folks who happen to like someone of the same gender. I strongly believe we have to do the same for bi- and trans people who are still greatly misunderstood by the majority.

What role have your writings played in revealing and defining your identity? Writing is my therapy. Writing is where I turn to explore myself and my place in the world. Without the ability to process my life through writing, I may never have come out of the closet. I was initially scared to talk to others about being gay, but I could dialogue

in an essay, play or poem. Once I was out, I could use the platform of the theater to espouse my point of view. Many of my plays have been political, as I have always been a political animal. I have written about my queer experience, but I have also written plays critical of the government and society in general. The other motif is spiritual. Many of my plays and other works explore religious and philosophical themes. I think part of the work of art is to explore that relentless search for meaning in our existence.

Your next book, *Empty Playground: A Survivor's Story*, explores your personal experience as a sexually abused child. Was this a personal catharsis? In 2010, I wrote the play *Invisible Boy*, which was an autobiographical drama based upon my childhood sex abuse and survival. I decided I needed to write it after suffering a life-threatening heart attack. My thought about it was that I would offer my experience of abuse and healing as a way to help others. I didn't know that it would happen, but that play was a catharsis for me as well. It was incredibly healing on a personal level in ways that I hadn't expected. But it also had a profound impact on others. I've been invited to speak about my abuse and survival many times. In the fall I'm going to be presenting at the 14th annual MaleSurvivor international conference in Newark, New Jersey, for male survivors of sexual trauma. There is a hunger out there for survivor stories, especially from men who have been

abused. While the play reached several hundred people, a thousand more have viewed the video online. I felt that writing a book relating my story might have the potential to reach even more people. I'm doing it for those who need to know they are not alone, that despite the pain and horror of their abuse they can come out on the other side of it and live a healthy and productive life.

In terms of an artist, a gay man and a human being, what legacy do you want to leave behind? I would like my legacy to be something that I've strived for my entire life — the old adage that I leave the world a better place than it was when I entered it. I hope that I've succeeded in some small way. As for an epitaph — which, by the way, I'm hoping won't be written for many years yet — I think a simple one would work best: "He lived."

ON THE AIR

Callen Harty will be interviewed on *Queery*, the LGBT program on Madison's WORT 89.9 FM at 7 p.m. on June 4. At 7 p.m. on June 10, Harty will read from and sign his book at OutReach, Madison's LGBT center, 600 Williamson St. Half the proceeds of all the books sold will be donated to OutReach. You can purchase the book at www.callenharty.com/books



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 An illustration of a woman with a large, green, beehive-shaped hairstyle. She is wearing a purple top and has a friendly expression.



PHOTO: HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE/FICKR

U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, joins in a news conference for the "Millennial Meetup" in Washington, D.C., last fall. Republican leaders say they know they need to listen to and understand young members of the party. A growing number of those young people back marriage equality.

By Lisa Neff
Staff writer

Reform the platform — that's the million-dollar message from the millennials involved in the Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry.

The group, affiliated with the nationwide Freedom to Marry campaign, announced earlier this spring that by the 2016 Republican National Convention it hopes to have persuaded GOP leaders and delegates

to replace anti-gay language in the party platform with respectful and unifying language.

"It's time to modernize the Republican Party," said Tyler Deaton, campaign manager for Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry. "Our aim is to make the national platform less divisive toward gay people and their families — and more focused on unifying all conservatives around our core beliefs of freedom, family and limited

government."

At the Republican National Convention in Tampa in 2012, delegates adopted a platform that called for a U.S. constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman, affirmed support for the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act and objected to the repeal of the ban against openly gay members of the military.

Republicans Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan lost the race for the White House that

November, and the GOP went through a process of self-analysis that revealed the party must improve its standing with young people, women and minorities, including gays.

"We do need to make sure young people do not see the Party as totally intolerant of alternative points of view," the party's post-election Growth and Opportunity Project stated. "Already, there is a generational difference within the conservative movement about issues involving the treatment and the rights of gays. If our party is not welcoming and inclusive, young people and increasingly other voters will continue to tune us out."

Since then, there's been colossal change, especially on the issue of marriage equality and gay families. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the U.S. Defense of Marriage Act provision that had barred federal recognition of same-sex marriages. Gay couples can now marry in 19 states plus the District of Columbia. Marriage equality lawsuits are pending in another 29 states, including Wisconsin, as well as the territory of Puerto Rico.

In the past year, there have been some bipartisan votes on the issue in some of the states that recently adopted marriage equality. And in April, the Nevada Republican Party dropped statements on marriage from the state platform, which is in the running to host the 2016 GOP Convention.

"The Republican Party in Nevada is doing something that I think we're going to see a lot more of, which is appealing to the things that unite Republican voters across the country — the bread-and-butter issues," said Jeff Cook-McCormac, adviser to the American Unity Fund, which is building GOP support for LGBT civil rights.

A poll conducted by Pew earlier this year found that 61 percent of Republicans under the age of 30 support marriage equality. A poll for The New York Times and CBS News found that a majority of Republicans under 45 also support marriage equality.

"The future of the party is clear on the

GOP next page

"I hope everyone has a great time at this year's PrideFest!"

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IN THE RUNNING

Three openly gay men are running for Congress in 2014: Dan Innis, who faces former Congressman Frank C. Guinta in a primary to challenge Democratic Rep. Carol Shea-Porter in New Hampshire; Richard Tisei, who seeks a rematch with Rep. John F. Tierney in Massachusetts; and Carl DeMaio, who is challenging Democratic Rep. Scott Peters. Innis and Tisei are endorsed by the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Victory Fund-endorsed congressional candidate Richard Tisei of Massachusetts.

GOP from prior page

marriage issue — a seismic shift is already underway in support of the freedom to marry," Deaton said.

Later this spring and throughout the summer, the Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry will take its Reform the Platform campaign to New Hampshire, Iowa, Nevada and South Carolina — states that traditionally have early presidential primaries.

The New York-based Freedom to Marry campaign is responsible for funding the three-year Reform the Platform effort. The organization played a key role in convincing Democratic leaders and delegates to endorse marriage equality in that party's

2012 platform.

The Young Conservatives have drafted language for the 2016 Republican National Party platform, even though the 2016 convention does not have a home. In part, the draft reads, "We believe that marriage matters both as a religious institution and as a fundamental, personal freedom. Because marriage — rooted in love and lifelong commitment — is one of the foundations of civil society, as marriage thrives, so our nation thrives. We recognize that there are diverse and sincerely held views on civil marriage within the party, and that support for allowing same-sex couples the freedom to marry has grown substantially in our own party. Given this journey that so many

Americans, including Republicans, are on, we encourage and welcome a thoughtful conversation among Republicans about the meaning and importance of marriage and commit our party to respect for all families and fairness and freedom for all Americans."

For now, Republican National Committee spokeswoman Kirsten Kukowski maintains that the national platform "stands for traditional marriage" and potential changes to that position won't come up for two years.

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Oregon, No. 18, Pennsylvania, No. 19 and No. 20?

By Lisa Neff

Staff writer

As same-sex couples said "I do" in Oregon and Pennsylvania, the newest states in the equality lineup, speculation turned to guessing at No. 20.

Will it be Utah? Nevada? Arkansas? Virginia? Kentucky? Idaho? Judges in those states have overturned bans on same-sex marriage, but the rulings were put on hold pending appeals.

Or might it be Florida, where on July 2 a Miami judge is set to hear a challenge to the state constitutional amendment barring same-sex marriage.

Or one of the other 23 states, including Wisconsin, where same-sex couples have sued to overturn anti-gay amendments or statutes denying same-sex couples the freedom to marry?

Oregon's ban crumbled on May 19. Even before U.S. District Judge Michael McShane issued his ruling, state officials had vowed there would be no appeal — they hadn't even defended the ban in court.

Pennsylvania's ban toppled on May 20, with Gov. Tom Corbett announcing on May 21 that there would be no appeal of the decision from U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III.

Jones wrote in his ruling, "In the 60 years since Brown was decided, 'separate' has

thankfully faded into history and only 'equal' remains. Similarly, in future generations the label same-sex marriage will be abandoned, to be replaced simply by marriage. We are a better people than what these laws represent, and it is time to discard them into the ash heap of history."

In the same week, Florida's lawsuit was marked up for a hearing and Utah was ordered to recognize the marriages of the more than 1,300 gay couples who said "I do" before the U.S. Supreme Court paused the wedding march while the lawsuit runs its course.

"It seems that every passing day brings LGBT Americans a new victory in our unwavering march toward justice," said Chad Griffin of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT civil rights group.

The legalization of gay marriage in Oregon created a block of equality states on the Pacific coast.

And Pennsylvania was the last state in the Northeast to bar gay marriage.

The decision not to appeal the ruling in Pennsylvania could send a message to other Republican governors who have cited an obligation or best-interest in defending their state's anti-gay bans, including Scott Walker in Wisconsin.

"Gov. Corbett's decision not to waste taxpayers' money defending the indefensible denial of the freedom to marry even one day longer is the right decision for Pennsylvania, for families and for the country — and one more big step forward to celebrate," said Evan Wolfson of the Freedom to Marry. "Pennsylvania is showing the country that when gay couples share in the freedom to marry, it's joy, love, security, and happiness and a stronger community for everyone, and



PHOTO: AP PHOTO/THE OREGONIAN, MICHAEL LLOYD

Burt Boehm, right, and Richard Glenn, of Portland, Oregon, celebrate their marriage at the Melody Ballroom May 19.

no one loses. And this latest decision by a Republican governor not to try to keep gay couples from marrying is additional proof that all of America is ready for the freedom to marry."

Corbett, in not pursuing an appeal, joined other Republicans in withdrawing a defense of marriage equality bans in court, including Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada, Chris Christie of New Jersey and former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, who refused to defend Prop 8.

"Given the high legal threshold set forth by Judge Jones in this case, the case is

extremely unlikely to succeed on appeal," said Corbett in a statement. "Therefore, after review of the opinion and on the advice of the Commonwealth legal team, I have decided not to appeal Judge Jones' decision."

With same-sex marriage legal in 19 states and the District of Columbia, 44 percent of Americans live in an equality state.

Bans are the target of lawsuits in 30 other states.

IN THE POLLS

A March poll for The Washington Post and ABC News found 59 percent of Americans support marriage rights for gay couples.

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Since coming out on the air, Kidd O'Shea's career has flourished



PHOTO: WMYX

Elizabeth Kay and Kidd O'Shea co-host *Morning Mix* on WMYX.

By Matthew Reddin

Contributing writer

Out Milwaukee radio personality Kidd O'Shea's spent more than half his life on the air in Milwaukee, which is particularly surprising considering he's only 34 years old. He got his start in high school after shadowing a radio DJ during his freshman year.

The job is literally a dream come true for O'Shea, the current co-host of WMYX's *Morning Mix* and weekend lifestyles reporter for WISN.

O'Shea says he was born with broadcast media in his blood. He knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a TV and

radio personality, he says. So did his siblings, who had to endure his make-believe broadcasts every night at the dining room table.

When he was looking for a way into the business, every TV reporter told him the same thing: Start in radio. So he did, managing to secure a nighttime gig on WKTI as his first major show (his actual first show was on a local polka station).

He stayed at that job there from 1996 to 2004, when he made the switch over to WMYX — a terrifying prospect at the time. "I felt like I was leaving the station that raised me," he says. He remembers calling

his mother on the way home, convinced that he was making the worst decision of his life. But he now knows it's turned out to be one of the best, and he's stuck with the *Mix* ever since.

O'Shea says his show, which he's co-hosted with Elizabeth Kay for the past five years, isn't reinventing the wheel. It's a traditional 5-to-9 broadcast for the morning commute. The two hosts focus on two or three big entertainment or showbiz news items each morning and take calls from Milwaukeeans who have an opinion to share.

O'Shea says his goal is to provide a light-hearted start to the day, an escape for peo-

ple who might be dreading the day ahead.

"We don't focus on big-world, scary things, because people see that all day," he says. "We try to keep things fun. ... Liz and I have two goals — to be No. 1 and have a relatable show."

That means no inside jokes and a local flavor that keeps listeners tuning in. Maintaining an audience is more competitive than ever, as terrestrial radio competes with satellite stations and the ubiquitous iPod. O'Shea says radio is still the most listened-to medium out there, despite the alternatives. But there's more pressure than ever to keep creating compelling, original content.

Occasionally, however, the content is more important than popularity and ratings. Two years ago, after Barack Obama publicly announced his support for same-sex marriage on ABC News, O'Shea brought it up on air while publicly identifying as a gay man for the first time on the show. He says he'd always been genuine about it in his private life, having come out at 18. But he'd just never broached the subject on the show, and he'd felt the moment was right.

"I had to ask, 'Why don't these people I spend every morning with know yet?'" he says.

O'Shea says he got an outpouring of support from callers after the announcement, and he's never looked back. Perhaps the most important consequence of his coming out on the radio came a year later, when a 17-year-old listener called in to the show, struggling to come out to his parents and looking for O'Shea's advice. The call sparked an hours-long on-air dialogue during which O'Shea gave the caller and other teens in the same situation advice from his own coming-out experience. It was advice that proved successful, with the listener calling back the next day to confirm the conversation had gone well. O'Shea received a personal email from one of the parents involved, thanking him for his help.

"Even if that's the only good thing that came out of it, coming out on air was worth it," O'Shea says.

O'Shea doesn't know what's ahead for him and the show — he and the station have talked about the possibility of syndication, though mostly in the abstract. But he says he's just glad to have the opportunity to remain on the air, doing his dream job: "There's nothing like doing radio in your hometown."

SPEAKING OF PRIDE

NATURAL BEHAVIOR

Homosexual behavior has been observed in 1,500 animal species and is most widespread among animals with a complex herd life. The entire species of the dwarf chimpanzee is bisexual.

SOURCE: SCIENCE DAILY



FruitFest is Madison at its most colorful and kooky

By Jay Rath

Contributing writer

Now in its fifth year, Madison's annual FruitFest promises food, family fun, and headline musical guest Debbie Gibson. The '80s icon says she's looking forward to the free June 14 event.

"Of course! It's an honor to be invited and I hope you're all ready to 'Shake Your Love,' " says Gibson, referring to her 1987 single. "And with a name like FruitFest? Come on. It appears we all have the same sense of humor."

"FruitFest is a great addition to the roster of events the city hosts each year," says Madison Mayor Paul Soglin. "Whether you come to listen to the music, enjoy the delicious food, have a beverage with friends or join in the Fruit Loop, our city extends a warm welcome."

FruitFest celebrates music, diversity, community and art. Last year around 2,000 attended, some traveling 90 miles. It takes place in the capital's east-central area, on the 900 block of Williamson Street, known to locals as "Willy Street." This year, for the first time, the street will be closed for the event.

"Our community on the east side is defi-

nately rich with the LGBT community," says lead organizer Corey Gresen, owner of Plan B, which bills itself as Madison's "hottest gay lesbian bisexual transgender bar and dance club."

Since the 1960s, the district's triumvirate of neighborhoods has been known for its counter-culture sensibilities - and for public celebrations.

"The Willy Street-Atwood-Marquette area has had festivals for like 40 years," says Gresen. "Now FruitFest is just one of those other things that has grown into a tradition within that community, and people look forward to it because it's not just for adults. We also do a lot of kid stuff."

"It's a good time," agrees Steve Starkey, executive director of Madison's OutReach LGBT Community Center. "We've had a presence there for a couple of years, and we're going to be there again. It tends to be a younger crowd, but one thing I like is that it's not a drunk-fest. It's just people outside, getting together and enjoying summer."

Reflecting FruitFest's emphasis on all the arts, it will serve as a fundraiser for the "Madison Love Project." It's a non-profit venture to commission a mural similar to those of the Baltimore Love Project, a



PHOTO: COURTESY

FruitFest headliner Debbie Gibson

series of 20 murals in that city spelling out "LOVE" in gigantic shadows.

"Madison loves to celebrate, and Fruit-

Fest is one of Madison's most celebratory events," says Anne Katz, executive director of Madison-based Arts Wisconsin, the state arts advocacy organization. "It's great fun for all."

Establishing FruitFest as a tradition took time. After living in Chicago and Los Angeles, Gresen - a Wausau native - was a little disappointed when he moved to Madison seven years ago.

"There was (LGBTQ) community but it was a little fractured, it seemed like, by the bars," he recalls. "I just wanted to do something that would bring people together, for free, and enjoy music and talent and our community, with kids and parents."

Fruitfest began modestly, in the parking lot of Plan B, 924 Williamson St. "We have yet to make any money on the event in five years," says Gresen. "It's pretty much break-even or a little less. But we have a lot more corporate sponsorships now. The first couple years were hard, because we were getting established."

Gresen remembers that sponsors wondered, "What's going on? Is this going to be a passing fad?" I think they were worried at first about the legitimacy of FruitFest." This

FRUITFEST next page

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PHOTOS: PATRICK FARABAUGH/OUR LIVES

Pictures of revelers enjoying last year's FruitFest.

FRUITFEST from prior page

year's sponsors include Absolut Vodka, UW Credit Union, Alliant Energy, Mini (Cooper) of Madison and the UW Credit Union.

"We'll have a lot more art vendors, food vendors and food options, too," he says. "They were also a little hesitant early on, but now FruitFest is like any other festival."

Well, not exactly like any other. One of FruitFest's more whimsical attractions is the Fruit Loop, a 5K run through the Marquette neighborhood. Participants are invited to dress as different kinds of fruit. Around 150 took part last year.

Another highlight is FruitFest's "Star-Fruit" karaoke competition. Auditions are on Wednesdays at Plan B, with semifinals the Wednesday before the festival. The day of the event, contestants perform before a judge on the main stage. Professional musical guests during the day will include: Color Me Once; Irene Keenan, Jr.; God-des and She; and Hillary Barnes and Sandy Eichel.

But the main musical feature is of course Debbie Gibson. She was scheduled to appear last year but had to cancel. "I have passed through [Madison] a few times and recall the quaintness when on a theater tour," she says. "I remember going to the antique shops. I look forward to seeing more this time!"

She was once the youngest artist to write, produce and perform a No. 1 single - "Foolish Beat" in 1988. But younger fans

will likely know Gibson from her appearance in Katy Perry's 2011 music video, "Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)" Gibson has become a popular performer at Pride celebrations.

"The LGBT community supported me from day one, when 'Only in My Dreams' came out in the clubs," she recalls. "Also in my work on Broadway. You have all been the most fun, most discerning and most loyal audience for 27 electric years."

A meet-and-greet area will be staged for Gibson fans. There's no rain date for the event, but a few showers won't bother some.


"Last year, putting on rainbow eye makeup for Fruitfest was a highlight of my summer," says Carmen Hotvedt, a violence prevention specialist with University of Wisconsin-Madison Health Services.

"There was something sparkly and fabulous about dancing in the rain to Martha Wash singing 'It's Raining Men,' and then heading into Plan B for the rest of the rainy afternoon," she says. "I welcome this LGBTQ music festival and its other activities, like the fun run, to my neighborhood."

"Summer Camp Bingo," a popular fundraiser for the Madison-based AIDS Network, will not be featured this year, owing to scheduling difficulties.

FruitFest is free and open to the public. There will be an after-party at Plan B featuring the band Dev; cover for that is \$20. For more information, visit FruitFest Madison on Facebook.

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With pride and determination, transgender man overcomes barriers to achieve goals

By Loree Cook-Daniels

Special to WiG

Joey's story

He would have been the first person in his family to graduate from high school, but an insurmountable barrier stood in his way: four credits of gym class. The school would not give him a private place to change, and he couldn't stand feeling like a "pervert" — a boy in the girls' locker room. He gave up the diploma instead.

Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the Transgender Discrimination Study, a groundbreaking study of 6,450 transgender people was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Published in 2011, it still stands as our most comprehensive look at the lives of transgender and gender non-conforming people in the U.S.

Its scope is breathtaking. Examining health, employment, family life, housing, public accommodations, identification documents, police and incarceration, and much more, the study's authors concluded: "Transgender and gender non-conforming people face injustice at every turn — in childhood homes, in school systems that promise to shelter and educate,

in harsh and exclusionary workplaces, at the grocery store, the hotel front desk, in doctors' offices and emergency rooms, before judges and at the hands of landlords, police officers, health care workers and other service providers."

The report's findings about education shed light on many of the other health and income disparities transgender people face. People who expressed a non-traditional gender in grades K-12 experienced very high rates of harassment (78 percent), physical assault (35 percent) and sexual violence (12 percent), from both student peers and staff. Six percent were expelled because of their gender identity or expression, and 15 percent left school or college because of the harassment they experienced.

Those statistics are reflected in Joey Clark's story.

"I went to two different high schools and at each one I was picked on a lot. I was picked on verbally for being different, and other students would spread rumors about me. A few would try to physically hurt me, but I was able to protect myself in that way. I did not know at all how to protect myself emotionally. They

called me a lesbian and a freak, and I didn't even know how to explain what I was at that time in my life."

The statistics show that trans kids who drop out of high school end up with high rates of homelessness (48 percent), more involvement in sex work or other work in the underground economy, and — probably because of that — they're far more likely to experience incarceration. Trans drop-outs also have higher rates of HIV, use more drugs and alcohol, and more often attempt suicide than do trans people who manage to get their high school diploma.

Probably because he was so committed to being "a good father," Joey followed a different path. "I never want my kids to use me not getting a diploma as an excuse," he said, "so I started taking my tests and received my high school equivalency diploma the year after I would have graduated."

He tried to go on to tech school, but many of his high school tormentors had moved there, too. "I was the talk of the school. Lots of people could not wait to point and tell anyone they could that I was born with female parts, but they did not say it that nice. I found myself not being able to stand up yet."

Here's where Joey's story illustrates another finding of *Injustice at Every Turn*: Despite their traumatic experiences in high school, many more transgender people end up returning to college. Injustice notes, "Respondents reported considerably higher rates of educational attainment than the general population, with 47 percent receiving a college or graduate degree, compared to only 27 percent of the general population."

Tired of dead-end jobs and wanting to teach his two children the importance of education, Joey tried again. With the help of what he calls an "amazing" counselor and his local transgender support group, he figured out "not only what I wanted in life, but also how to feel 'safe and valuable.'" He not only re-enrolled in tech school, but took on leadership roles as well. He helped start the LGBT Club on campus, became its president, and then stepped up to preside over the student senate.

On May 17, 2014, Joey graduated from Moraine Park Technical College with an associate's degree in Criminal Justice/Corrections and a GPA of 3.25. Besides continuing to be a great dad to his kids, his



PHOTO: COURTESY

Joey Clark on his graduation day.

goal is to continue on to get his bachelor's degree and work in or run an LGBT center in the Fond du Lac/Oshkosh area. He is also deeply committed to "doing all I can to help my transgender family to be happy and achieve equal rights."

This PrideFest, Joey will be FORGE's chief "free hug-

ger." Come by FORGE's booth to receive your free hug sticker and congratulate Joey on his achievements.

Loree Cook-Daniels is policy and program director of FORGE, a national resource for transgender and elderly LGBT people that's headquartered in Milwaukee.

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PrideFest Milwaukee
June 6-8 at Henry W. Maier Festival Park

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Your guide to **PrideFest 2014**



June 6 - 8



PrideFest 2014 — new additions and old favorites

By **Matthew Reddin**

Contributing writer

Every June, the volunteers organizing PrideFest give themselves a simple challenge: Make this event better than last year's.

They appear to be on track to achieve that goal again this year. The LGBT-focused kickoff to the summer festival season has expanded farther across the grounds than in recent memory, while maintaining the same core attractions that have made it a beloved part of Milwaukee summers for LGBT people, their allies and music lovers throughout the Midwest.

Festival co-producer Kate Sherry says that expansion isn't the only change to the 2014 festival, but it's the one visitors are going to notice first. The festival space, which usually takes up about half of the Summerfest grounds, is stretching a little to both the north and south, giving PrideFest the use of the U.S. Cellular stage for the first time and taking advantage of more of the Harley stage area than in previous years. It's a development she says is as exciting as it is practical: "We'd technically been paying for both areas without having the ability to use them for a while, so now we are taking that opportunity to grow just that little bit more."

The U.S. Cellular expansion has resulted in the creation of the new Rainbow Stage, a renamed version of last year's Multi-cultural Stage. Sherry says the inaugural line-up for the stage is packed to the brim. On opening night, it hosts a group of R&B-esque DJs and singers, on Saturday it offers a retro evening with DJs spinning songs from the 1980s Milwaukee scene, and on Sunday the stage features a Latin night that includes everything from music and dancing to drag and comedy.

On the other end of the park, the festival has moved the educational Stonewall Stage into the expanded Harley space. The stage is sure to be a draw this year, thanks to an appearance on Sunday by the ACLU of Wisconsin and the four couples on whose behalf the group has filed a marriage

equality lawsuit seeking to strike down the state's same-sex marriage ban. Also on the schedule at the Stonewall Stage are a discussion about how last year's repeal of DOMA will affect lesbian and gay families and an appearance by local filmmaker and transgender woman Ashley Altadonna and Tool Shed owner Laura Stuart to talk about female gender presentation.

Nearby, Sherry says, the popular *Wom!nz Spot Lounge*, established at Pride 2012, remains a hotspot for relaxing while listening to great music. This year, the lounge will open restaurant space below it for the first time. This year's performers include Milwaukee-based lesbian musician Lezy Dezy, who'll blend a mix of acoustic rock, folk and hip hop Sunday evening.

PrideFest's older features have all gotten mini-facelifts, too. The youth area now expands back into a stage by the basketball court. The always-important health and wellness area remains prominently at the festival entrance, this year offering even more efficient HIV testing than ever, thanks to a new fingerstick test that produces results in 15 minutes. And Sherry says the ever-popular dance pavilion is going to top last year with a more spectacular design and lineup, including a takeover by the DJs of *Scarlet Bar* in Chicago on Friday and performances by internationally renowned DJs Reid Stefan and Hector Fonseca on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

One other important thing hasn't changed from last year: the price. That's thanks in part to the success of last year's event.

"Every dollar spent at PrideFest is reinvested directly in the festival experience," Sherry says. "Last year's attendance allowed us to not only maintain last year's pricing for our community, but expand in new and innovative directions."

What direction's next? The answer very much depends on how this year's festival goes and which of its new and returning attractions make the Milwaukee LGBT community proudest.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

THE STARS LINE UP: Headliners this year include, clockwise, Lisa Lampanelli, Bruce Vilanch, Macy Gray and Steve Grand. Also included are Sandra Bernhard, Cazwell and Big Freedia, who are interviewed in this section. Go to wisconsin Gazette.com to check out our interviews with Steve Grand and Macy Gray, which appeared in our May 1 and May 15 issues, respectively.

Please don't feed the bigots with your attention

Georgia Henry

Special to WiG

Happy PrideFest 2014!!! PFLAG would like to wish each and every one of you a joyful experience filled with friends, laughter, memories and most of all a safe time. We, along with other groups who have joined with us, will again be outside the PrideFest gates welcoming you and wishing you a good time.

Unfortunately, there will be protesters at the gate claiming they are there to "save" you by saying things that you would not say to anyone you are trying to "save." Over the years, we have learned a few things about handling them, such as:

- Do not make eye contact with them. This will give them an opening to dialog AT you.
- Do not engage. This just eggs them on spew out their beliefs — not facts, just what they believe.
- Take their literature if it is offered and then tear

it in half and toss it into the garbage (please don't drop it on the ground). Tearing it in half or quarters is very important, because we have seen the protestors pick it out of the garbage and reuse it. EWWW! You can also hand the literature to any of the welcoming folks, and we will be happy to dispose of it for you.

Navigating the protestors is easier if you know there are people like us waiting to welcome you with hugs and kind words. We want you to have a wonderful PrideFest experience so that you will come back year after year.

Watch for our signs of welcome and have a great time!

Georgia Henry is the president of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays' Milwaukee's chapter.



PHOTO: DAVE LAUERSDORF

TURN AWAY: Every year, evangelical protesters like the one above, stand at PrideFest's gates trying to engage visitors in conversation. PFLAG Milwaukee urges visitors to ignore them.

PrideFest Milwaukee 2014 Schedule

Friday, June 6 - Sunday, June 8 at Henry Maier Festival Park



FRIDAY, JUNE 6

3:00 P.M.

D Fusion Radio
A DJ Mr. Fingers
J This Is It Jukebox

3:30 P.M.

K Ritchie "Rich" St. James of Ravyn Entertainment Presents 2014 Turn About Show

4:00 P.M.

D DJ Leo
A Spitfire / DJ L Boogie
H Elena Garcia
H Sweet Music

5:00 P.M.

J Thank Goodness It's Pride (TGIF at PrideFest)
D Trannika's Most Wanted
K PrideFest 2014 Opening Ceremonies
F Eliza Hanson
A DJ Eleazar

5:30 P.M.

K Miltown Kings

6:00 P.M.

D Trannika Rex - Host
D DJ Katy (DJs of Scarlet)
F Astor Street Dance Studio
A Cordj Sherman w/Butterfly & The Line Dance Junkies
H Alyce Hart
H The Remedies
G Youth Area Dance Party

7:00 P.M.

J Laugh @ The Loft - featuring Alex Corona and Tanya Atkinson
F Jordin Baas
K Emcee - Bruce Vilanch
A Rodney Poe/ DJ Ultimate

7:15 P.M.

K Chad Michaels

7:30 P.M.

D DJ Luna (DJ's of Scarlet)

8:00 P.M.

J Lezy Dezy
F The Upside
A DJ Blade
H Rocket Paloma
H Amanda Suckow

8:30 P.M.

F The Acoustic Orchard
K Cream City Cabaret

9:00 P.M.

J Roxie Beane
D DJ Scotty T (DJ's of Scarlet)
A Shanna Marie / DJ XXL
H Eryn Woods

9:45 P.M.

K BJ Daniels Revue

10:00 P.M.

J Elena & Saborinque
H Conversations
H Lashes and Stashes
D Cazwell w/ Traver Rains

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

12:00 P.M.

D Fusion Radio
K The Acoustic Orchard featuring Malori Reichenberger
H Conversations
H Conversations
A DJ Kimberly

12:15 P.M.

E TBD

12:30 P.M.

F A Show of Circus Skills, Magic Tricks and Laughs!

1:00 P.M.

K Corky Morgan
I Post DOMA Planning: How Changes in Federal Law Affect Your Family

1:15 P.M.

E AIDS Network: Act Ride

2:00 P.M.

F How to Grow Your Family Seminar

D Lady Gia's Milwaukee Revue
K City Of Festivals Men's Chorus
I Building Stronger Ally Relationships
H Karen Muehlbauer
H Nadia Geiger
A DJ Tonya

2:15 P.M.

E Tamarind Tribal Belly Dance

3:00 P.M.

K Shane Ashton
I Drag Makeover with the Miltown Kings

3:15 P.M.

E Diverse & Resilient "It's About Us"

4:00 P.M.

A DJ Duo AJ Dubbz and Carla Starla
K The Nearly Deads
I Feminine Gender Presentation by Ashley Altadonna and Laura Ann Stuart
H Lu Shanti
H Mandy Cappelmen
G Costume Contest
A DJ Tyrone
J Moonlight Karaoke

4:15 P.M.

E LGBT Dance Milwaukee

5:00 P.M.

D DJ Nikno
F Astor Street Dance Studios
K Beverly McClellan
I Funkin Wassels
G So You Think You Can Dance

5:30 P.M.

D Shea Coulee - Host
D Yes Sir Leather/Fetish Gear Show

6:00 P.M.

J Max Hardswells' Drag King Show
K Steve Grand
H Lions Mouth

H Roxie Beane

A DJ Tonya

6:30 P.M.

D DJ Tim Walters
F Julie Brandenburg

6:45 P.M.

K Emcee - Dear Ruthie

7:00 P.M.

K Mary Lambert
I Queen of the Castle, Sister Sweet Sister film screenings

7:30 P.M.

J Corky Morgan
D DJ Chomper
F Eliza Hanson

8:00 P.M.

F The Upside
H Jayme Dawicki
H Katiebeth
A DJ Tyrone

8:30 P.M.

J Lex Allen
D DJ NMF (New Music Freak)
F The Acoustic Orchard
K Big Freedia

9:00 P.M.

A Carey Nokey

9:30 P.M.

Fireworks

9:45 P.M.

D DJ Reid Stefan

10:00 P.M.

J Shane Ashton
H Conversations
H Moustache Ride
A DJ Kimberly
K Macy Gray

SUNDAY, JUNE 8

12:00 P.M.

D Fusion Radio
K Julie Brandenburg
A DJ Style/ DJ DAVI-D Southside Underground
H Conversations
H Conversations

12:15 P.M.

E American Cancer Society: Presentation

12:30 P.M.

F Tim Glander Magic and Balloon Show

12:45 P.M.

C The Upside Band

1:00 P.M.

F TBD
A DJ Purple
I Groundwork Milwaukee

1:15 P.M.

E Zumba!

1:40 P.M.

K Women's Voices

2:00 P.M.

A DJ Pep Lara
H Jenna Lynee
H Delray

2:15 P.M.

D DJ Covlove
E American Cancer Society: Presentation

2:30 P.M.

K Ian & The Dream

I Alliance School's 8th Annual Pride Graduation

3:00 P.M.

A Dial Tone

3:15 P.M.

D Brew City Sisters
E Diverse & Resilient: "It's About Us"

3:30 P.M.

K Ronnie Nyles & Tallulah Who I Love Will Win: ACLU of Wisconsin & marriage equality

4:00 P.M.

F Figureheads
F House of Brooklyn Entertainment Presenta "Orgulla Latino"
H Elena Garcia
H Dots
G Project Q Graduation

4:15 P.M.

D Furrlesque
E Ballroom Dance

4:30 P.M.

K Dangerous Muse
I Stonewall Crafts

5:00 P.M.

J TBD
D Trannika Rex - Host
F Astor Street Dance Studio
A DJ Pullout

5:15 P.M.

G Emcee - Bjorn

5:30 P.M.

D Underwear Show with DJ HME
K Debby Holiday
A DJ Short Style
I Keeping the Spark Alive

6:00 P.M.

G Dixie Kuppe's Kamp and Kurlers Revue
F Julie Brandenburg
A DJ Bad Omen
H Esh
H Lezy Dezy

6:30 P.M.

D DJ Teri Bristol and Psycho-Bitch
F Jordin Baas

7:00 P.M.

J Kaitlyn O'Keefe
K Sandra Bernhard
A Sandra Valls

8:00 P.M.

J Movie: Tying the Knot

8:30 P.M.

D DJ Grind
F The Upside
A DJ Absolut

8:30 P.M.

F Dora Diamond's Gay Cabaret

9:00 P.M.

K Lisa Diamonelli

9:00 P.M.

A DJ Eleazar/DJ Green Eyez

10:00 P.M.

D DJ Hector Fonseca

EDITOR'S NOTE: Acts, times and venues are subject to change with little notice. Check at the Info Desk or visit www.pride-fest.com.



Mary Lambert, of 'Same Love' fame, looks forward to PrideFest



PHOTO: YOUTUBE

Mary Lambert on stage at the Grammy Awards with Macklemore and Ryan Lewis.

By Gregg Shapiro
Contributing writer

Out singer/songwriter and performance poet Mary Lambert owes her meteoric rise to her collaboration with Macklemore and Ryan Lewis on the groundbreaking rap song "Same Love." A YouTube sensation and hit single, the song was Grammy-nominated. It was performed live during the Grammy telecast amid a mass wedding that included same-gender couples. Shortly after that groundbreaking event, Lambert released the *Welcome to the Age of My Body* EP. It featured "She Keeps Me Warm," an expanded version of her contribution to "Same Love."

I spoke recently with Lambert about her rising career.

I'm sure you've been

asked about your Grammy performance with Macklemore and Ryan Lewis a million times already, but what was the experience like for you? It's a life-altering experience. Performing for that many people and being nominated for a Grammy is pivotal enough for an individual. But what the song stands for and what I'm singing about and what I've written, that to me is more gratifying. The actual content and the social impact (were) life-changing for me. I feel so fortunate that this is the song that will be remembered for years to come.

Your religious upbringing plays a role in your artistic life. What kind of an impact do you think your work is having on conservative religious organizations like the evangelical church in which

you were raised. I'm not sure if it has. I feel like I've been out of touch in terms of those actual communities. I have been working with some churches. There are churches that have reached out. I do think that Christianity and the whole evangelical sect are undergoing a shift right now. But I don't know if I am solely responsible for that. I do feel that there is a shift toward the idea of gay marriage.

"She Keeps Me Warm," the full-length song that grew out of your "Same Love" collaboration with Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, is featured on your *Welcome to the Age of My Body* EP. How did you decide what to include? I wanted to make the EP an introduction to who I am. I wanted "She Keeps Me

Warm" on there. "Sarasvati" is on there, too, and that's very confessional, a deeply emotional song to sing. "Body Love" is on there — and that's an encompassing idea of what I do.

The EP opens and closes with the spoken word tracks "Body Love: Part 1" and "Body Love: Part 2," putting your poetic skills on display. Who are some of your favorite poets? I have so many! I was fortunate enough to do a little stint with Andrea Gibson, who is one of my favorite poets. Buddy Wakefield and Shira Erlichman, too.

Like Beth Ditto, you have become a body image advocate, most recently launching The Body Love Campaign. What can you tell me about it? The Body Love

Campaign is something I feel very strongly about. It's just the idea of self-worth and self-care and propelling that in our culture, when our culture is so invested in breaking down women. Women (are) asking for validation from men. I don't think it's anybody's fault, but I think it's perpetuated by both genders. Something I really wanted to attack was that it starts before you are 16 or 17. That was the peak of it for me, when I felt pressured to be somebody that I wasn't and then feel really guilty about it. I wanted to make a declaration of "you are beautiful, just the way you are." But I didn't want to smooth over it the way a lot of other people do. I think it's about girls' self-harming, drinking heavily and escapism because of the pain of our bodies.

Have you started on a full-length album and, if so, will the songs from the EP be included on it? We considered that. But I want the full-length record to be a new body of work. I want it to be really fresh and state where I'm at right now in terms of my career and what I'm creating. We have a single that will be released in June, and then the record will be released in the fall. I couldn't be more proud of what we're making. I wanted to retain the emotional content of what I do, but I wanted to make a commercially viable album. I want to hear these songs on the radio, so I've fused those ideas together. I couldn't be happier with it. It sounds like magic.

You are the queer voice on Gavin Degraw and Matt Nathanson's upcoming summer concert tour. What does that mean to you? I hope that I represent (the LGBT community) well. I'm trying to. It's really flattering. I never intended to be an activist. I just wanted to write songs about things I feel strongly about. I'm flattered with the recognition from that viewpoint. I love my community. It's going to be an awesome tour.

Have you performed at other Pride festivals? Not a lot, but this year I will be. I'm looking forward to Pride season. I'm excited to come to Milwaukee. I've never been.

ON STAGE

Mary Lambert performs on the Miller Lite Mainstage on June 7.



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PRIDE
2014

Cazwell brings wit to PrideFest, but shirts are optional

By Gregg Shapiro

Contributing writer

Perhaps the first gay white rapper and break dancer to gain a national following, Cazwell is a born entertainer. With a surprisingly sophisticated sense of humor and apparently not a single shirt in his wardrobe, Cazwell wryly parodies New York club culture with sizzling energy, dazzling moves and lots of eye candy. His outrageous and sexy music videos, usually featuring barely-clad dancers from the New York club scene, have a tendency to go viral. "Ice Cream Truck," with such quintessential Cazwell lyrics as, "I'll show you my drumstick / It will make your eyes gleam," has scored 3.7 million hits since it debuted three years ago. Other hits include "I Seen Beyoncé at Burger King," "All Over Your Face," "Rice and Beans" and "No Selfie Control."

I spoke with Cazwell about his past work, his upcoming album and his June 7 appearance at PrideFest Milwaukee.

Do you know if Beyoncé has ever heard "I Seen Beyoncé at Burger King" — and if so, what she thought of it? Yes. I heard that she saw the video (and) she thought it was funny. That's all I heard. I don't know if it's true. I heard it from someone who works with her people. I assume she likes it because she has a sense of humor about herself.

Will your recent singles "Helen Keller" and "Guess What," as well as "No Selfie Control," be on your new album *Hard 2 B Fresh*? Yes, sir! There's a total of 17 tracks. There are five tracks that people probably know, aside from the ones you mentioned. "Rice and Beans" is on there, too. The rest are new to ears.

You have a long history of collaboration, from your early days as one half of Morplay, extending to the present day and your collaborations with Manila Luzon and others. What makes you so good at playing well with others? First of all, thank you for being a journalist who does his research. I appreciate that (laughs). I enjoy working with other people and I enjoy writing for other people. It's a lot easier to write for others than it is for myself, because I'm less afraid of what the judgment will be.

Manila Luzon is featured on your song "Helen Keller." What was the inspiration for that song? Manila Luzon had texted me. I really enjoy her. I think she's great and a natural star. That's why I wanted to work with her. The inspiration for that song was a break-up I went through a year and a half ago. There are a couple of songs on the (forthcoming) album that revolve around that break-up. I took some time to do some lyrical therapy. It was really difficult for me. One thing that happens in a break-up, especially if you are with a person for five and a half years, as I was, you still have to go out and see them. Helen Kelling came from when you see the person, you (utilize) tunnel vision. They're at the club, but you don't hear them, you don't see them.



PHOTO: MARCO OVANDO

Above, Cazwell and his dog Elvis. Dancers such as those on the right from the video "Ice Cream Truck" have helped make his music videos wildly popular.

They're excommunicated. I've always heard the queens in the club say, "I don't see her." That usually means they don't care for their look or what they're wearing. I changed it around a little bit.

"Guess What," your collaboration with Luciana, charted well on Billboard's Dance Chart. How do you feel when you walk into a club and hear one of your songs being spun by a DJ? The first thing I think is, "Do they really like it? Or are they just playing it because they know I'm here (laughs)?" Either way, I'm happy that the whole room is hearing it. It feels good. It feels like I get a lot of respect in gay clubs and gay club culture. I've been doing this an awfully long time.

How much time do you spend at the gym to maintain that physique you like to show off in your music vids? It depends on if I'm going to be making a music video

or not (laughs). Because if I'm not making a music video, I like to slack off. I'll tell you right now, I'm not a natural at the gym. But I do enjoy it more lately, because I've been boxing. I like having an activity to do. I like classes. I like learning something while I'm doing it and I like being in a class with other people. I'm really proud of myself that I keep up in the class. I would say I work out five or six days a week, sometime twice a day. But that is because I'm getting ready to shoot as many videos as I can. Summertime is coming, obviously, and I have a lot of Pride shows coming up where I'm going to be outside in 95-degree weather with my shirt off. If I come to your hometown and I take off my shirt and have muffin-tops hanging over my waist, you're not going to hire me to come back. You're just going to walk away saying, "Cazwell's been hanging out by the ice cream truck. Cazwell's been to Burger King

with Beyoncé." People are going to say that. I know it's going to happen.

A big fuss is made every time a rapper comes out of the closet. As a rapper who was never in the closet, what advice would you give to those newly out? Just don't stop. Life is like a highway and the road will eventually bring you somewhere. Don't stop the car. Keep going, no matter what. Can I just tell you the Number 1 piece of advice? Don't be afraid to suck. Because everybody sucks. There's no one that looks back 10 years ago and says, "That song was genius!"

What do you like best about performing outside New York? Meeting new people. I do get a lot of gay gigs. It's interesting to see the other gay communities and the club world of Charlotte, North Carolina. I also get a good grip on how gay people are treated and how they treat themselves. If I play someplace where the city or the town allows them to have a gay Pride and a gay sense of self and a gay neighborhood, people always seem to be a lot looser at shows. If I play some place like Gainesville (Georgia), where there is no gay Pride or gay 'hood or sense of gay community, there seems to be less of a connection.



Have you ever performed in Wisconsin? Yes, I played the Fruit Fest in Madison.

What do you have in store for Milwaukee PrideFest? I might try out some new songs or at least a new song from the new album that they haven't heard before. They're going to get a little bit of a fashion show. I always wear nice clothes and show off. It's going to be a good show. I'm an energetic performer. I really bring it. It's going to be some good shit.

ON STAGE

Cazwell performs in the Dance Pavilion at Milwaukee Pridefest on Sat., June 7.



Look out, Sandra Bernhard is sassy

By Gregg Shapiro

Contributing writer

Do we have all the cool kids playing on the LGBT team? Among the coolest is comic legend (and Great Lakes native) Sandra Bernhard. After getting her start in stand-up comedy, she's morphed into a first-rate monologist, as demonstrated in *Without You, I'm Nothing, I'm Still Here... Damn It!, Everything Bad & Beautiful* and, most recently, *Sandyland*. She's also made movies, including the Martin Scorsese masterpiece *The King of Comedy* (with Robert DeNiro and Jerry Lewis!). She's palled around with Madonna, played recurring roles on sitcoms (you might remember her as Morgan Fairchild's lover on *Rosanne*?) and released music and comedy CDs.

Bernhard spoke with me about her career and her upcoming performance at Milwaukee PrideFest.

Do you remember attending your first Pride parade or festival? Actually, I don't remember anymore (laughs). The last time I rode in a parade, which was also maybe one of the first times I rode in a parade, was in San Diego about two or three years ago. It was definitely fun. We had a great crowd. The vibe is always great. People want to go out and have a good time. I think now, more than ever, with the quickly shifting sands of history in the gay community, people are in an upbeat mood. It's a really good time to be out there performing.

How different is your preparation for a Pride performance than for one of your theater performances? You try to take the pieces you think will work best in an outdoor venue and keep it casual. At the same time, you can't get too involved with the crowd, because people come and go. They're not sitting in a formal theater. You have to work a little bit harder to keep people's attention and keep them focused. I will also have my band with me — The Flawless Zircons. They're actually my Midwestern band — these young, groovy musicians from Chicago who I've worked with several times. I've got musicians all over the country now. It's too cost prohibitive to bring everybody in. But I have all of these nice, young, gorgeous boys who work with me. They'll be there. The music will be fun.

How did your early years doing stand-up prepare you for the performances you're doing now? Every time you get up, it's always a new



experience. You never know who's going to be there, what you're going to encounter. It makes you be on your toes like no other performing. It's trial by fire. You get good at it if you stay with it long enough.

Have you spent much time in Milwaukee or other parts of Wisconsin? We never went to Wisconsin when I was little. First of all, we moved from Michigan to Arizona when I was 10, so I missed out on the possible camp years. And I don't necessarily mean the camp years in the sense of Judy Garland. As an adult, of course I've been to Wisconsin many times. It's a beautiful state.

You are something of a social media maven, making frequent use of Twitter and Facebook. What impact has social media had on you? I think it's been great. It introduces you to a new audience and it reminds them of what you do. For me, as a creative person, it's a great outlet for funny, witty asides that might otherwise go into the trash heap of funny, witty asides (laughs). Although, in general, I don't really like it — the whole narcissistic vibe of social media and selfies and people celebrating themselves and their every move. I really try not to do that. I think it's incredibly boring. I really try to curate what I say and what I show on social media.

Besides live performances, you continue to be seen on television and in movies. What do you have coming up? I'm working on raising money for the film version of *(Sandyland)*, the show I've been doing. It's actually a culmination of a lot of material I've been doing over the past 15, 16 years. I've also written a couple of scripted television projects that are just in the nascent stages of getting seen and hopefully set up. It's a long process. First, you have to get people to look at it, then you have to take meetings. It's a slow climb. I'm also auditioning for shows and movies. I've been shooting a show called *Switched at Birth* for ABC Family where I play an art instructor. You can see those on Netflix. I hope to do more of those when they pick up again with the shooting.

ON STAGE

Sandra Bernhard performs at Milwaukee PrideFest on Sun., June 8



Fest balances comfort food with trendy options

By Michael Muckian
Contributing writer

Summertime and the eating is sleazy, at least when it comes to festival food. But chef Shelly Herrmann is out to balance the festival's offerings, retaining traditional treats while adding healthier and ethnically inspired choices.

Now in her second year as PrideFest's food and beverage director, Herrmann would like to see more diversity in the festival's food choices. Specifically, she'd like to add healthier choices to the menu.

"We're trying to get away from deep-fried anything on a stick," says Herrmann, whose partner Kate Sherry is PrideFest's co-producer. "There are people who just don't want to see the foot-long corn-dog go away, but we're trying to find more unique and local vendors whenever possible."

A graduate of Milwaukee Area Technical College culinary school and sous chef at Milwaukee's Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Herrmann brings a higher level of understanding and appreciation of food to the festival scene. She has to balance promoting healthier food with the knowledge that good intentions are rivaled by market demands that favor cotton candy over cauliflower. With that in mind, she's taking a cautious approach, attempting to adjust PrideFest's offerings gradually, with an eye toward expanding selections rather than replacing festival favorites.

"I sought out someone for last year's PrideFest who served healthy, organic foods because people were asking for them," Herrmann says. "But when all was said and done, there wasn't enough of a market and the vendor lost money."

But Herrmann has convinced a number of new and returning vendors to add healthy options to their existing menus — to meet the needs of PrideFest-goers who want healthy choices while letting vendors make money from the more typical fest fare. For instance, Red Rock Saloon is "going to offer some veggie options that are healthy, but they also are serving deep-fried Oreos."

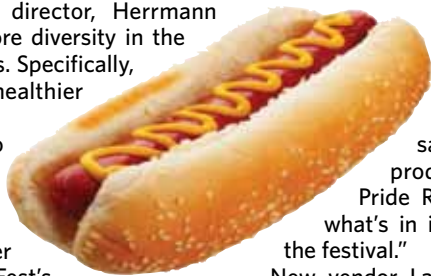
"Of course, we had to taste those to see if they would fit the festival profile," Herrmann adds.

Red Rock also is offering Southern-style pulled-pork in a bowl, served over mashed potatoes and topped with coleslaw. Offering regional cuisine is another way that Herrmann is trying to broaden the festival's culinary scene.

Diversity in culinary styles is popular with PrideFest-goers, Herrmann says. Immy's South African Cuisine has been one of the most popular vendors for several years running. Not affiliated with a restaurant, Immy's serves up samosas and other such

ethnic favorites to a growing and appreciative PrideFest crowd. The vendor is back this year with a menu of African favorites.

Screaming Tuna Sushi and Asian Bistro is also returning for a second year. That's good news for Herrmann, who sought out the restaurant due to her own love for raw, expertly trimmed seafood. Screaming Tuna also proved a hit with 2013 festival-goers.



"We brought them in and people got very excited about them, so we're happy to have them back," Herrmann says. "They're planning on producing a custom-made Pride Roll, but we won't know what's in it until we're actually at the festival."

New vendor La Coppa Artisan Gelato, which has one Milwaukee and two Madison locations, also plans to create a special Pride flavor this year. La Coppa, too, is keeping its concept under wraps until the festival, Herrmann says.

The fest's best-kept secret may be Albert Yee, owner of The Burg in Cedarburg. He has the equipment to produce the state's — and perhaps the nation's — only four-foot-long egg roll. Yee also has a Pride-themed entry in mind. And, yes — he too isn't revealing the ingredients. The restaurateur is keeping the idea under wraps, however, until he's sure he can secure the proper equipment from his Chinese manufacturer.

This year's more than 20 vendors also will include the Madison-based Little Shop of Cheesecakes and Milwaukee's Toppers Pizza, along with many of the more familiar area food purveyors.

Two corn vendors, each anchoring an end, of the festival grounds, are offering different approaches to perennial festival favorite. Returning vendor Anderson's Corn Roasts, based in Waterford, will serve the traditional corn-on-the-cob, dripping with butter and saturated with salt. Across the grounds, Reid's Roasted, based in Racine, will serve corn-in-a-cup. The corn, freshly shaved off the cob, will be available in 15 to 20 different flavors, Herrmann says.

"We have a bit of a Latin-American following, so I've positioned them near the margarita bar," says the chef. "You can get the corn mixed with Mayo, Parmesan cheese and chili powder, which is a traditional Latin preparation."

In addition to the margarita bar, there will be a Bloody Mary bar and a tiki bar. Skyy Vodka, a new corporate sponsor, will be featured at the festival.

Herrmann says the beverage side of her food-and-beverage planning could use some help.

"I sure could use a beverage director," she says. "Interested parties may want to contact me and check out this year's fest if they are interested in the position for next year."

Any volunteers?

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Big Freedia vows to release your wiggle and bounce

Bill Lamb

Contributing writer

Long before Miley Cyrus and twerking — that frenzied, pelvic-thrusting move that looks like an obscene case of St. Vitus dance — became a distinguishing feature of bounce music, there was Big Freedia (pronounced Free-duh), the so-called “Queen of Bounce.” Her dancers, dubbed “The Divas,” specialize in rapid-fire twerking to music that combines the free spirit of New Orleans with hip-hop tradition. The act’s intense energy is sure to fire up the crowd when Big Freedia takes the stage at Milwaukee Pride-Fest on Sat., June 7.

Bounce music began when hip hop made its way south to New Orleans in the late 1980s. A sub-genre of hip hop, it’s characterized by call- and response-style vocals and repetitive up-tempo melodies set to fast beats. With the success of the New Orleans rap label Cash Money in the late 1990s, bounce music gained wider national attention.

But Hurricane Katrina in 2005 devastated neighborhoods in New Orleans that were strongholds of bounce. Big Freedia was forced to flee the city for Texas. When Caesar’s became the first club to reopen in New Orleans after Katrina, Big Freedia was invited back to perform “FEMA Fridays.”

Bounce music was back.

The free spirit days of FEMA Fridays

came full circle on May 2, when Big Freedia and his fellow bounce performers closed down the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival with a dance-off between them and New York underground vogue stars at the New Orleans Wax Museum.

In recent years, Big Freedia has performed coast to coast, including at Bonnaroo, SXSW and on Jimmy Kimmel Live.

Born Freddie Ross, Big Freedia was born and raised in New Orleans. Artists such as Patti LaBelle, Sylvestor and Gladys Knight were big influences. Like so many artists before, he was raised singing in the Baptist church choir. By the time Ross was 18, he had become the choir’s director.

In 1991, Ross heard the track “Where Dey At” by MC T Tucker, considered by many to be the first recorded bounce song. For Ross, it was a life-changing moment. He became a backup dancer for Katey Red, the first “sissy bounce” performer, and his career was on

its way.

“Sissy bounce” is a queer variant of bounce music, but Big Freedia rejects being pigeonholed into the category. Although he has often performed with Sissy Nobby and his transgender mentor Katey Red, Big Freedia stressed in an interview: “I wear women’s hair and carry a purse, but I am a man.”

In his publicity bio he says, “Bounce is bounce. There’s no need to separate it out. All types of people, gay, straight, rich, poor, black, white come to my shows. People just wanna get out and shake their azzzz and have a good time!”

Big Freedia’s national career kicked into high gear in 2010 with extensive touring and an appearance on *Last Call with Carson Daly*. In addition to releasing his own music, he sang on recordings with RuPaul. In 2012, he appeared at Austin’s SXSW festival and in 2013 his reality TV show *Big Freedia: Queen of Bounce* debuted on the Fuse network. The

program received a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Reality Program, defeating *Project Runway*. The show begins its second season in June.

In recent weeks, Big Freedia released the new single “Explode.” In his inimitable style, he implores listeners to “release your wiggle.” The idea behind the song is that he feels like he is about to “explode” after the stresses of being on the road while sustaining a relationship, he said.

The next Big Freedia album *Just Be Free* is due for release June 17, to coincide with the kick-off of his reality TV show’s second season. Producer Thomas McElroy, best known for helping launch the R&B girl group En Vogue, worked on the album.

Big Freedia’s live show takes a few minutes of adjustment for the audience. The energy is high, the music is loud, and the twerking dancers filling the stage can overload the senses. But once you free your mind and “release your wiggle,” you just might find Big Freedia taking your booty and mind to a new place of joy and expression.



ON STAGE

Big Freedia performs on the Pride-Fest Mainstage at 8:30 p.m., Sat., June 7.

Wisconsin performers take the Gay Arts Center stage

By Bill Lamb

Contributing writer

Milwaukee’s PrideFest not only provides the opportunity to experience internationally known talent, but it’s also is a showcase for Wisconsin talent. This year the Milwaukee Gay Arts Center Stage presents local musicians performing in a range of musical styles, from guitar rock thrash to indie folk. The performers will present sets throughout the three-day festival.



The Acoustic Orchard first came together at last year’s PrideFest to showcase singer and guitarist Mallori Reichenberger. This year the group is back just days after releasing new music in early June.

Acoustic Orchard describes its music as “bright and airy and looking toward the future of modern indie folk rock.” In addition to original songs, expect to hear crowd-pleasing covers from the group as well.

The Acoustic Orchard closes out all three

nights on the MGAC Stage with a sound honed through performances at both folk-oriented coffeehouses and rock venues in Wisconsin.

The Upside brings the sound of thrashing girl-guitar rock to the MGAC Stage. The group plans to showcase new music that’s set to be released on PrideFest’s opening night.

The Upside came together in 2013 when Samantha Jansen and Lindsay DeCleene, formerly of The Way, decided to revamp and update their sound with the addition of Katie Potkonjak on keyboards. This is home-grown Milwaukee post-punk-influenced pop rock. Catch The Upside during all three nights of PrideFest.

Last year the Milwaukee duo Saint James, including Eliza Hanson and Evan Ditter, brought modern folk sounds to PrideFest. This year, with Evan Ditter pursuing studies abroad, Eliza Hanson returns as a solo artist. With a style influenced by classic folk artists Janis Ian and Joan Baez, Hanson contributes calm sounds to the PrideFest experience. Hanson performs both Friday and Saturday.

Jordin Baas kicked off her career performing in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. She sang acoustic songs, blending her powerful voice with guitar and blues harp. Baas performs throughout Wisconsin and in Chicago at venues ranging from coffeehouses to farmers markets to Summerfest. Her music has a striking intimacy that will light up the



PHOTOS: COURTESY
Eliza Hanson.

MGAC Stage on Friday and Sunday.

Julie Brandenburg is familiar to followers of the homegrown Milwaukee music scene. In addition to performing her own music, she is an instructor at MATC, where she teaches piano, voice and composition. She also serves as a supervising composer with the young artist Creation Project of Milwaukee’s celebrated Present Music. She’s performing at PrideFest with her group Brandenburg 4, a group that came together in 2012 as a vehicle to present her original

progressive pop songs. The groups perform both Saturday and Sunday.

Part of the joy in connecting with Wisconsin-based artists is the opportunity to see them perform again and again as their careers unfold. Enjoy the headliners but also take the time to experience the sounds of performers closer to home. They will instill a sense of local pride.

Discover them at MGAC’s PrideFest stage.