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Michigan LGBTQ+ students
face a funding crisis

UNDERSTANDING MADONNA, FINALLY

How the icon won over
one queer millennial

COFFEE WITHOUT THE COOL KIDS

How Washed Up Coffee is
redefining Detroit cafes

Dolly

Made Us Family

Remembering the
country icon who
never turned away
from LGBTQ+ people

By Chris Azzopardi



Dr. Paul Benson's

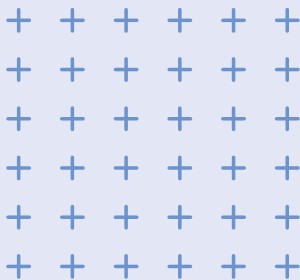
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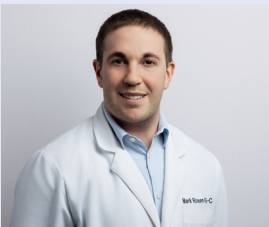
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Dolly Parton. Photo: Fran Strien

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

Who said September can't be fun? Well, probably your ninth grade algebra teacher, but she had no fashion sense and is probably long gone. So forget about imaginary numbers and solving for X and take back early fall by screaming along with a furious queer punk band, getting dressed up for a gala that is deliberately rethinking what a gala can be, and packing both sequins and fleece for an up north Pride-cation.

Find LGBTQ+ events across Michigan at pridesource.com/events/



Lambrini Girls.

Rage Along With Lambrini Girls

U.K. punk duo Lambrini Girls are finally bringing their gloriously furious live show back to Detroit after their May date was postponed because of injury. Phoebe Lunny and Selin Macieira have built a reputation for turning political rage, queer feminist energy and a truly impressive amount of noise into something resembling a party. Assuming your parties involve screaming about social injustice. Which, of course, they probably do. Last year, tickets sold out well before the show opened so unless you want to feel like screaming about something decidedly less political, don't put off buying yours.

Sept. 28, 7 p.m., The Majestic Theatre (4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit). pridesource.com/events/lambrini-girls



Ruth Ellis Mural

Raise Your Voice at Voices

Ruth Ellis Center's annual Voices gala is less about sitting politely through dinner. Inspired by Ruth Ellis and her legacy of creating sanctuary for LGBTQ+ people, this year's "Everyone Gets the Pulpit" theme brings together LGBTQ+ artists, musicians and community storytelling at The Shepherd. Expect drag choirs, gospel vocalists, narrative sharing, fellowship and considerably more personality than the phrase "annual fundraising gala" usually promises. More importantly, the evening supports REC's work with LGBTQ+ young people, including housing, health and wellness services. So yes, please get dressed up ("your outfit is your canvas" is the dress code suggestion). But remember — this is a party with a very good reason to party.

Sept. 25, 7 p.m., The Shepherd (1265 Parkview St, Detroit). pridesource.com/events/voices-gala-2026



Up North Pride 2024. Courtesy photo

Pack Up For Up North Pride

If you have been waiting for an excuse to turn some Pride-related feelings into a full-on end-of-September road trip, Traverse City has been kind enough to provide one. Up North Pride week starts with QueerStory storytelling Tuesday, followed by a sign-making happy hour on Wednesday, comedy Thursday and the Intimi Affair Fashion Show Friday. Saturday is all gay all day with a visibility rally and march, resource fair and drag show that includes a performance by "RuPaul's Drag Race" favorite Silky Nutmeg Ganache.

Pack layers. Northern Michigan remains Northern Michigan, even if there are drag queens wearing only sequins.

Sept. 22-26, various locations in Traverse City. upnorthpride.com



Martell Mason. Photo: Instagram/scpdetroit

Caffeinate Your Connections

Coffee "Taulks" is bringing LGBTQ+ networking to the part of the day when coffee is not so much a beverage as a requirement. The newly renamed Michigan Pride Chamber of Commerce (formerly the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce) is launching the morning series for entrepreneurs, professionals and allies to meet, mingle and talk shop. The first gathering happens at The Sepia Coffee Project's new East Grand Boulevard location, owned by Martell Mason, winner of the Chamber's 2026 Pitch Competition. Show up, caffeinate and make a few new connections, possibly in that order.

Sept. 10, 8-9:30 a.m.,
The Sepia Coffee Project
(2831 E. Grand Blvd.,
Detroit). pridesource.com/events/coffee-taulks

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Hotter Than July 2022. Courtesy photo

Shape the Next Hotter Than July

Hotter Than July has been celebrating Black LGBTQ+ Detroit for 31 years, which means organizers know how to throw a Pride celebration, but they also want to know what the community thinks. LGBT Detroit is holding a Hotter Than July After Action Meeting for volunteers, partners, sponsors, committee members and community members to talk about this year's celebration and help shape what comes next. If you attended this summer, here's your opportunity to turn "Hey hey I have an idea" from something you say to your friends into actual useful feedback. Meetings not your thing? They built an online survey just for you.

Sept. 17, 6 p.m., LGBT Detroit (20025 Greenfield Road, Detroit). lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly

5

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Washed Up Coffee Is Making Detroit's Cafe Scene a Little Less Precious

Detroit cafe is earning national attention for its coffee and deliberately anti-cool-kid approach



Washed Up Coffee owners Amélie Boulanger and Emily Potter. Photo: Jonathan Vega

BY KELLI DUNHAM

A piece of plywood balanced on two sawhorses was not Emily Potter and Amélie Boulanger's original vision for Washed Up Coffee. But when plans for their inaugural location fell through, they had a business to start and bills to pay. So they chopped up a piece of wood, loaded up their coffee gear and hit the streets of Detroit.

Not figuratively. For a time, they served coffee on whatever Detroit sidewalk the Michigan Department of Transportation wasn't patrolling. When they were asked to move along, customers helped them scamper to the next spot.

"The 50 people waiting in line for coffee would help us move our entire setup around the next corner. Humble beginnings," says Boulanger.

"Very humble beginnings," agrees Potter.

But then local bars and even other coffee shops offered Washed Up space for takeovers. Eventually, a mutual friend connected Potter and Boulanger with La Fonda Street Food in Detroit's West Village. They were supposed to pop up there for four days.

They never left.

Washed Up began operating there in September 2025 and officially opened Nov. 1 after completing its licensing. Today, the coffee operation still shares space with the taco shop, something customers occasionally find surprising. One five-star reviewer summed up the unusual arrangement particularly well: "Love the coffee, smells like chili."

The founders laugh at this. This might not have been exactly the plan, but the improvisational beginning says a lot about Washed Up. Potter and Boulanger didn't have a gleaming new space or a pile of startup capital. At one point, they had \$500 in the bank, donated by someone who believed in the business. The same week they opened, the water heater at home broke. They were exhausted, sick and unable to take a proper shower for days.

What they did have, they say, was "a fuck ton of heart," years of coffee experience and a radical innovation idea that sounds almost comically simple: What if the coffee was excellent and people were genuinely happy you came in?

They say traditional independent coffee culture often asks customers to choose between kindness and quality. At one shop,

a customer might encounter a wonderful barista and mediocre coffee. At another, the coffee might be excellent, but ordering it could require negotiating a gauntlet of pretension.

The approach has resonated far beyond their tiny counter. Washed Up has developed an intensely engaged social media following, and Potter and Boulanger, who are both romantic and business partners, recently appeared together on the cover of Barista Magazine.

“We’ve been joking with people that it’s like our equivalent of Sports Illustrated,” says Boulanger. “We got the centerfold, and we’re beside ourselves. We’re so excited. Where do we even go from here?”

The recognition is especially meaningful because they appeared not as a novelty or as part of a Pride-themed feature, but simply as two coffee professionals doing notable work. For two queer women who have spent years in an industry where women and nonbinary people have not always been treated as equals, this is no small accomplishment.

Their own staff has been almost entirely queer, not because they set out with a mandate to hire only queer people, but because those were the people in their existing professional and personal networks who were the right fit. What matters more is the environment they have deliberately created for them.

They describe how one newer employee regularly gets emotional talking about what it means to work somewhere they feel supported, not just by their bosses and coworkers, but by the customers coming through the door. Employees also know that if someone comes in and makes the space unsafe, they have the owners’ full support to handle it.

Ironically, “community” is one word you won’t see plastered all over Washed Up’s branding.

Potter and Boulanger have become suspicious of the word precisely because it is so often used as a marketing device. A coffee shop, they argue, shouldn’t have to announce that it creates community. It should demonstrate it.

Their preferred philosophy is simpler: “Don’t talk about it. Be about it.” This philosophy applies to their coffee choices as well.

Washed Up operates as a multi-roaster café, serving coffee roasted by several companies rather than roasting its own beans. At any given time, customers might find four to eight roasters from around the country and world represented on its shelves, through pour-overs or other offerings, giving Detroit coffee drinkers access to coffees they might otherwise never

encounter.

Michigan’s enthusiasm for supporting local businesses is valuable, Potter and Boulanger explain, but coffee itself is inherently global. Nobody is growing coffee beans down the street in Detroit. So why pretend the world stops at the state line?

The couple chooses roasters based heavily on relationships, respect and transparency. They want to know not only who roasted a coffee, but where the green coffee came from, who grew it, how it was processed and how the people along that supply chain were treated and paid.

“If a roaster isn’t paying those people correctly and respectfully to do the work that they’re doing so that it can end up in our cup at the end of the day, then what the hell is the point?” says Potter.

That philosophy also shapes how they

“The 50 people waiting in line for coffee would help us move our entire setup around the next corner. Humble beginnings.”

— Amélie Boulanger, Washed Up Coffee co-owner

educate customers. Potter and Boulanger have both spent years as educators in the coffee industry, but they’re not interested in turning every latte into a lecture. Instead, they want customers to have opportunities to become curious — to meet a visiting roaster, try something unfamiliar or ask why a drink costs what it does.

Potter and Boulanger’s romantic partnership predates Washed Up, but it was coffee that brought them together. They met at a latte art competition Potter was judging. Boulanger won. “Fair and square,” Potter interjects quickly.

“It was fair and square,” agrees Boulanger.

“We had never met in person, and everyone just kept on saying, ‘You need to meet Emily Potter. I just feel like you

See *Washed Up Coffee*, page 20

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Dolly Parton. Photo: Netflix

Saying Hello to Dolly Was Easy. Goodbye Isn't.

Over a decade of interviews, she made this gay reporter feel like family



BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Here's the thing nobody's obituary is going to lead with, so I will: Dolly Parton picked up the phone for queer press. Not just the glossies with the biggest circulation — she talked to a small LGBTQ+ paper out of Michigan, the one I write for, the same way she talked to Rolling Stone or Playboy, at a time when most of country music wouldn't return that call at all. There was no algorithm

rewarding her for it, no cultural mandate yet that made it the safe or expected thing to do.

I got to ask her about her gay family, her trans employees, her drag queen name (she told me “P. Titty, like P. Diddy”), whether Willie Nelson's tour bus gave her a contact high — sometimes in the same conversation — because she never once treated an LGBTQ+ outlet like a liability to be managed. She treated it like a call from a loved one.

“There are no angel wings,” I wrote, backstage in Grand Rapids in 2016, watching Dolly Parton scoot into a drab garage in a

canary yellow dress and more rhinestones than the room could reasonably hold. I meant it as a joke about costuming. I didn't know I'd be reaching for that same sentence a decade later and meaning something else by it entirely.

That night she worked the line the way she always did — moms, dads, kids, an elderly woman in a wheelchair and at the end of it, me, a gay reporter and a fan like everybody else waiting their turn. I called her, in print, the only religion we might all agree on. I stand by it. Around that same stretch, I got her on the phone, too — 11 whole minutes, timed

and everything, her manager's small mercy of a bonus sixty seconds tacked on at the end. I didn't know then my career would allow me to check back in with her over the years, or that I'd eventually be writing that sentence about her in the past tense.

Everybody wants to call Dolly “the great unifier” now, ever since the 2019 podcast “Dolly Parton's America,” from Radiolab's Jad Abumrad, made the case for her as maybe the last person left in America who both sides claim as their own. It's not wrong. It's also a little bit of a cop-out to call her that, because it

makes her sound like she got there by staying quiet, by being agreeable enough that nobody could pin anything on her. She didn't. She got there by answering hard questions in a way that made it very hard to be mad at her for the answer because it was honest, and honesty was Dolly's default.

I asked her once, point blank, on a Zoom call the morning after Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, what it meant to reach people across "the spectrum of religion, race, politics, gay, straight." She didn't dodge into a talking point. "I just love people," she said. "I love that God light and that God core that is in every single one of us. I do not judge or criticize or condemn." Fine, sweet, very Dolly. Then I pushed a little further — does it hurt you, knowing not everyone can love like that? And she didn't do the thing famous people do, where they pivot to gratitude and grace. She just said yes. "Well, yeah, it does hurt me that anybody cannot open their heart to love people in the way they should."

I was not supposed to ask about anything remotely political that day. She answered like a person who'd decided the question was bigger than politics anyway.

That same conversation, she brought up "Family," a song of hers from 1991 that — by her own account — might be the first country song to say the word "gay" right out loud, no euphemism, no clearing of the throat first. "Some are preachers, some are gay, some are addicts, some are strays, but not a one is turned away, when it's family," she sings.

I asked how country fans reacted to that word landing in a genre that, in 1991, mostly pretended it had never heard it. She said she didn't remember anybody objecting, because to her it wasn't a provocation, it was just true. "I really do believe whether you accept 'em or not, we all have gays and lesbians and transgenders in our family or in our family of friends," she told me. Whether folks wanted to admit it or not. She wasn't announcing a position. She was describing a guest list that, in her mind, had already been set.

That's the part of Dolly that's going to get flattened if we let the tributes run on rhinestones and Dollywood and "9 to 5" alone. She wasn't doing allyship as brand extension. She was talking about an actual family. Hers — which, it turned out, was a lot bigger and a lot more specific than the metaphor.

In 2016, I asked her the plain version of the question: growing up in the Smoky Mountains, did you know any gay people? No, she told me — not because there weren't any, but because nobody had the words yet. The two guys in town everybody whispered about were just "queer," "sissies, they're girls," in the ugly little shorthand of the era. She didn't have a category for "different" back then. She just already knew, somehow, that different was fine, on account of

being pretty different herself. "I have many gays and lesbians in my own family," she revealed to me, and then she used a word that's stuck with me for a decade: ours. "They're ours and they're who they are and we know they're wonderful and they're like us." Some relatives back in the mountains, she admitted, still weren't quite sure what to make of it.

She also told me — casually, like it was nothing, which is exactly how she wanted it treated — that she had transgender employees on salary in her own company, years before most corporations would say that sentence out loud, let alone mean it. People came to her the way they used to come to her mama, she said: to be told it was safe to be honest. "You need to let people know who you are and you need to come on out," she'd tell them. "You don't need to live your life in darkness."

That interview didn't stay ours for long. CBS News and HuffPost both picked it up within days, crediting BTL's parent company, Pride Source, as the source, running her words about



Dolly Parton, as interviewed by Chris Azzopardi, in a 2014 issue of Between The Lines.

becoming the family member her gay and lesbian relatives call when it's time to come out. National outlets didn't get their own version of that quote. They ran ours. What she said to a small LGBTQ+ paper became, for a few days, the version of the story the rest of the country's press was working from.

I ended that conversation the only way that felt right, thanking her for the joy she'd brought to my life. She didn't say anything a celebrity says to a reporter. She said what your mother says when you tell her you love her, without missing a beat: "Love you too!"

Somewhere in the middle of all that sincerity, I should say: Dolly was also just deeply, reliably funny about all of this, in a way that mattered just as much as the earnestness did. Back in 2014, I asked her about the National Enquirer story that had her secretly marrying

See **Dolly Parton**, page 19



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A Lifeline for LGBTQ+ Students in Michigan Schools Is Running Out of Money

Federal cuts and a hostile political climate threaten a program educators have relied on for a quarter century

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

For 25 years, the Michigan LGBTQ+ Students Project has worked to make schools safer for the state's LGBTQ+ youth, at a moment when many of those students still describe their schools as anything but welcoming. Now the program itself is at risk. It could disappear in early 2027 unless it raises about \$250,000 to replace funding lost to federal cuts and a political climate that's made school districts wary of anything tied to LGBTQ+ students.

Run through the nonprofit MOASH

(the Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health) in partnership with Roots of Change, a consulting group focused on building healthy communities through education and training, the project trains superintendents, teachers, school bus drivers, mental health providers and just about everyone else who works in a school building on how to keep LGBTQ+ students safe. According to project lead Kim Phillips-Knope, it's the only effort of its kind operating statewide and exists because LGBTQ+ students so often can't advocate for themselves.

"There are more than 109,000 LGBTQ+ students in Michigan schools and they don't have a voice," Phillips-Knope told BTL. "This project is their voice. These students and their families are often unable to advocate for themselves, and it's not their job to educate their schools. That's what we do."

The Trevor Project found 37% of LGBTQ+ young people in Michigan do not consider their schools LGBTQ-affirming, and the same percentage seriously considered suicide in the past year, a figure that climbed to 42% among

transgender and nonbinary respondents. The organization's research consistently ties lower suicide risk to LGBTQ+ youth having access to affirming spaces and adults who understand and advocate for them.

School climate research backs that up. In GLSEN's 2021 National School Climate Survey, nearly 2 in 3 LGBTQ+ students in Michigan, 64%, reported experiencing at least one form of anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination at school, and more than 1 in 4 said they'd been disciplined for public displays of affection that didn't draw the same response for their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

The Michigan Department of Education's 2016 State Board of Education guidance on LGBTQ+ students, still in effect, adds to that picture. According to the 2015 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey, students who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, 8.4% of Michigan high schoolers at the time, were 2.3 times more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon on school property than their non-LGB peers and 2.3 times more likely to skip school out of fear for their safety. Forty-one percent reported being bullied on school property.

Since 2020, the project has run 153 in-person and virtual workshops for 8,751 people, drawing participants from nearly 600 traditional public school districts, public school academies and intermediate school districts. Those districts collectively serve more than 1.2 million young people, or roughly 90% of Michigan's students. The project has also fielded almost 400 individualized requests for technical assistance from schools in 42 Michigan counties, and nearly all participant evaluations, 99%, rated the trainings good or excellent.

Phillips-Knope pointed to work helping districts craft policy language around transgender and nonbinary students as one concrete example of that impact, alongside professional development for school boards, principals, teachers, healthcare providers and paraprofessionals.

"The biggest impact, we know, is in the daily lived experiences of the students themselves who, as a result of our work and collaboration with schools, can show up authentically and fully participate both socially and academically in school, just like every kid should be able to do," she said.

What's driving the shortfall

The project itself has never been funded through Michigan's state budget, so it wasn't directly touched by a provision tucked into this year's education budget, signed into law as Public Act 21 of 2026, that bars the state from sending public school funding to MOASH. But that provision, combined with steep federal funding cuts under the Trump administration, has made the broader funding picture harder for the organization, and school districts and other partners have grown increasingly hesitant

to financially back LGBTQ-focused programming, Phillips-Knope said.

Without replacement funding, MOASH expects to suspend the coordinated staffing, training and technical assistance that lets the project operate statewide, Phillips-Knope said.

The \$250,000 goal would sustain the project for two more years, covering staff and facilitators, statewide travel, program evaluation, resource development and ongoing technical assistance to districts. MOASH is seeking support from individual donors, foundations, businesses and community organizations, with contributions made directly to MOASH, which handles fiscal oversight for the project.

"There are more than 109,000 LGBTQ+ students in Michigan schools and they don't have a voice. This project is their voice. These students and their families are often unable to advocate for themselves, and it's not their job to educate their schools. That's what we do."

— Kim Phillips-Knope, Michigan LGBTQ+ Students Project lead

Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan, has partnered with Phillips-Knope on MOASH trainings for the past decade. He called the potential loss of the program a significant setback for LGBTQ+ students statewide, noting it would come after a "tremendous service" to Michigan schools spanning 25 years, and said the ACLU is hopeful fundraising can close the gap and keep the project alive.

"A pause would be especially painful because the need has not disappeared," Phillips-Knope said. "If anything, the need has increased. Students, educators and families continue to seek practical support for creating schools where LGBTQ+ young people are safe, supported and able to learn."



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Dolly Affirmed Us. Trump Centered Himself.



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I want to say Dolly Parton was too good for this world, but I don't think she'd agree with such a statement. But I think it's fair to say she was better than most. After her death it seemed like no one

had a single bad word to say about her.

Unlike, say, Lindsay Graham and Charlie Kirk. The invective hurled at their corpses was understandable, if not exactly equal to the ugliness they perpetuated while alive.

Dolly Parton is an amazing example of someone who was talented, kind and never forgot her roots. Lindsay Graham is an example of a person who ascended to power and then used that power to hurt people. Charlie Kirk was a tried and true racist asshole. He was literally saying something racist when he was killed.

The moral of the story: Live your life so that people don't celebrate when you die. And so The Onion doesn't feel the need to dunk on your earthly demise.

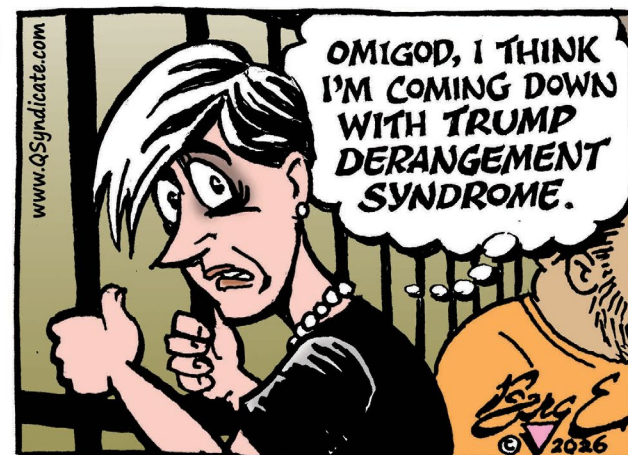
Dolly Parton was a queer icon. Or should I say IS a queer icon? LGBTQ+ people will always love her.

She also transcended musical genres. One of her last albums was "Rockstar," which she made after her induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (an honor she initially declined). On it she dueted with other queer icons like Melissa Etheridge, Brandi Carlile, Elton John, Linda Perry and Rob Halford.

It's hard to know if Trump is completely delusional or if, somewhere deep down, he knows that he is reviled by the majority of the world.

I love Rob Halford. He's the proudly gay singer of legendary heavy metal band Judas Priest. I absolutely love Judas Priest. And I love Dolly Parton.

Not only did Rob Halford duet with Dolly Parton on



"Bygones" (a damn good song), she also invited him to sing at her Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction. Let me tell you, Rob Halford singing "Jolene" (one of the greatest songs in the history of songs — this is not up for debate) with Dolly Parton blew my mind.

His, too.

"Somehow, instinctively, I knew we were going to meet," Halford told Metal Hammer magazine. "I always tell the story of my mother's grandmother, who was a clairvoyant, and I still think I've got a little of that in me, because something went, 'You're going to meet Dolly Parton.' Two or three days later, these emails come into the office, and Dolly's reached out, asking, 'Would you sing some lines on 'Jolene'?' You sit at home and go, 'Oh my god, this is truly going to happen!'"

You may be thinking, "Uh, OK. But why are you writing about this? Isn't this column supposed to be about creeps who hate LGBTQ+ people?"

It is. Usually. But in honor of Dolly Parton, I want to remind you, and myself, that there is still goodness in the world. Dolly Parton may be gone, but her

goodness lives on. And it can live on in all of us.

But don't worry. Amid all of the beautiful tributes and kind words voiced around the world, there was one person who made the death of Dolly Parton about himself. And that person is Donald Trump.

Shocking, I know.

The day Dolly Parton died, Trump told fellow pathetic man Glenn Beck, "She was unique. She was amazing, and to lose her, it's like losing a member of the family," Trump said.

Now, a normal person would have stopped there. But Trump is not a normal person. And, honestly, he probably would have gotten praise for his "eloquent tribute" or some shit.

"She wasn't a very political person," Trump added. "She really liked me, I will tell you."

Indeed, he will tell us that. But even with her heart of gold, I doubt she "really liked" him.

In an attempt to, once again, insert himself into the national mourning for Dolly Parton, he posted an AI generated image of the two of them, arm in arm, strolling together at the White House.

There is just so much insult here. For one thing, AI sucks. It is a tool of fascism (which explains why Trump loves it so much). And also, if Trump wanted to post a photo of Dolly Parton, he could have posted an actual photo of her. Millions probably exist. But then it wouldn't be about him.

It's hard to know if Trump is completely delusional or if, somewhere deep down, he knows that he is reviled by the majority of the world. That there will literally be parties in the street when dies. That he will be remembered as a wretched little man.

No doubt, The Onion will have a field day.

Another metal band I love, Agriculture, has a lyric in their song "My Garden" that goes, "Death is the ultimate fucker."

Death will eventually get us all. While you're alive, be a Parton, not a Trump.

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Metro Detroit Keeps Doing the Time Warp for Tim Curry

Rest in glitter, Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Tim Curry, the fishnet-clad, corset-wearing “Rocky Horror Picture Show” icon who taught generations of queer kids that “sins of the flesh” could also be a really fun Saturday night, died Aug. 25 at 80. While theater kids across the globe are in mourning, Metro Detroit’s Rocky Horror faithful aren’t about to hang up their stilettos.

The Michigan Rocky Horror Preservation Society (michiganrhps.org) keeps the

Frankenstein Place open the second and fourth Saturdays of the month, 11:15 p.m.-2:30 a.m., at Phoenix Theatres in Wayne (35310 Michigan Ave., Wayne), complete with a full shadow cast, rowdy audience participation, costumes and, naturally, toast. The next Rocky Horror Experience is set for Sept. 12, with more dates through the end of the year. Check phoenixmovies.net for showtimes.

Later in the fall, don’t miss the original Columbia actor Nell Campbell when she struts into the Fisher Theatre Oct. 8, and the original Brad Majors, Barry Bostwick, brings the Wharton Center to its feet Oct. 25. Tickets on sale now at us.atgtickets.com.



Tim Curry in “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Photo: 20th Century Fox

Court Blocks DOJ From Trans Kids’ Medical Records

A federal appeals court on Aug. 27 denied the Trump administration’s request to access sensitive medical records of transgender youth who received gender-affirming care in New York City. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit refused to pause a lower court order blocking the subpoena, leaving in place a preliminary injunction issued in July. Lambda Legal’s Omar Gonzalez-Pagan called the ruling a win against efforts to “weaponize the legal system” to target trans youth and their families.

Gender-affirming care remains legal in Michigan, even as institutions like University of Michigan and Corewell Health have scaled back services under federal pressure. Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel has repeatedly said such retreats could violate the state’s antidiscrimination laws, calling Corewell’s decision an effort to “obey in advance.”

Dolly Gets the Last Word in Texas Drag Ban Court Battle

A federal judge in Texas struck down the state’s 2023 drag show ban Aug. 25, ruling it violated the First Amendment. U.S. District Judge David Hittner, a Reagan appointee,

found the law, known as Texas Senate Bill 12, improperly restricted speech. The ruling blocks Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Trump-backed Republican running for U.S. Senate, from enforcing the measure.

In his decision, Hittner repeatedly invoked Dolly Parton, who died the same day, criticizing the law’s vague ban on performances appealing to “prurient interest.” He noted critics have

chastised Parton “as a voluptuous sex symbol because of her big hair, flamboyant clothes and breast exposure.” For those offended by such performances, Hittner offered simple advice: “The solution is relatively simple ... just don’t go.”

Plaintiff Brigitte Bandit, a drag performer who impersonates Parton, celebrated the ruling online, writing, “Drag is free speech.”

Fans Reimagine Peter Parker as a Trans Spider-Woman

The internet’s latest obsession is Petra Parker, a fan-imagined transgender version of Spider-Man who used to swing around as Peter. The trend swung into motion when an X user pictured how J. Jonah Jameson — the Daily Bugle editor famous for hating Spider-Man’s guts — might react to his least favorite superhero coming out as a woman. Cue a wave of comics and fan art imagining Petra dodging both villains and misgendering. It’s not Marvel canon, but the internet’s having a blast anyway.

Jonathan Groff’s Gender-Bending Shakespeare Era

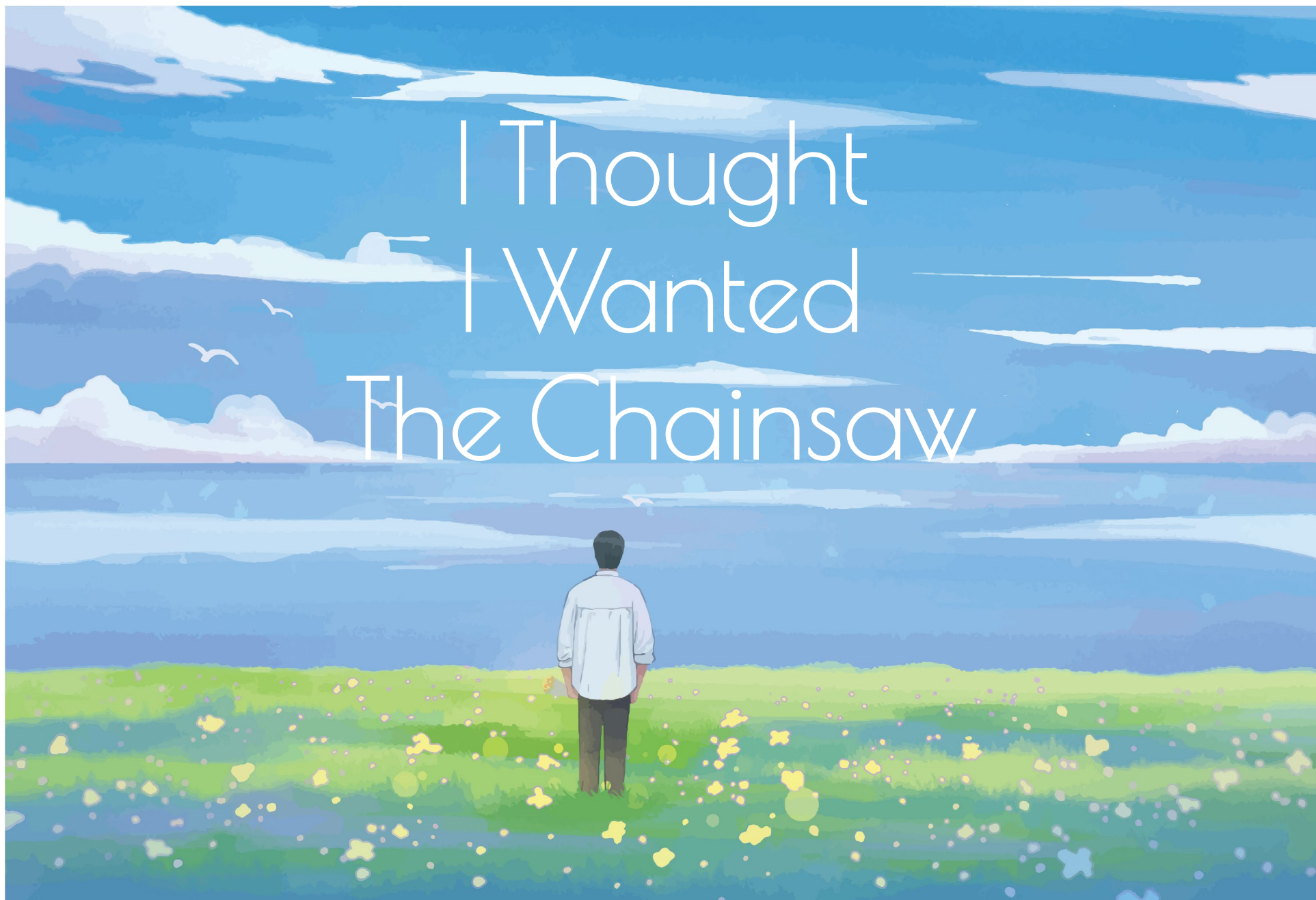
The man has range. “A Nice Indian Boy” star Jonathan Groff will play Rosalind in an all-male production of “As You Like It” at the Royal Shakespeare Company, marking his RSC debut. Groff told LGBTQ+ Nation he responded to director Daniel Evans’ invitation with unfiltered excitement. Evans called Groff’s ability to connect with audiences “rare” and said the production celebrates “love in all of its many forms.” The show runs in London this fall.

‘Schitt’s Creek’ alum Emily Hampshire skates into ‘Heated Rivalry’

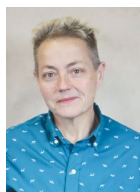
Emily Hampshire will join “Heated Rivalry” Season 2, due out next spring, as Vanessa — a feminist lesbian who runs a sex toy review blog. Hampshire, who’s pansexual, has said “Schitt’s Creek” helped her come to understand her own identity. She’ll reunite with former co-star Francois Arnaud, who plays closeted hockey star Scott Hunter; the two go way back to his turn as David Rose’s ex, photographer Sebastien Raine, and later teamed up in the horror film “Mom.”

Emily Hampshire. Photo: Wikimedia Commons





On butch identity, trans mentorship and the quiet masculinity of showing up



BY KELLI DUNHAM

I was the youngest “girl” — meaning assigned girl — in a large Midwestern farm family in the 1970s. We didn’t talk much about gender, but masculinity wasn’t exactly an abstract concept.

It was everywhere.

It drove tractors. It fixed things. It wore work boots. It got up early. It hauled heavy things without first conducting a committee meeting about whether those things actually needed hauling.

And although we didn’t talk about masculinity, I thought about it a lot.

Mostly because I wanted some.

I didn’t know that was what I wanted, of course. I was a person assigned female at birth who did not particularly identify with

femaleness, growing up decades before the phrase “gender identity” was going to wander into my consciousness via a Tumblr post and explain what the hell had been going on.

So masculinity mostly seemed like a club I desperately wanted admission to, although I didn’t know there was a club, didn’t know admission was theoretically possible and certainly didn’t know where they kept the application.

I just knew there was something over there that I wanted.

I wanted the clothes. I wanted the posture. I wanted the jobs. I wanted the casual assumption that if something heavy needed to be moved, somebody would look in my direction.

But I couldn’t have told you any of that at the time.

Instead, it was just an ache, a deep sense of “Why does everything feel vaguely terrible, and

why do I suddenly feel better when someone lets me use a chainsaw?”

You would think, when I first came out as a lesbian in the mid ’90s, perhaps this could have given me a big dose of “Let’s Explore Masculinity.” But in my queer world, most trans guys were medically transitioning and then going out to live their lives as dudes, often with little ongoing contact with non-trans queer folks. There were many reasons for this, including how trans men were treated by certain feminist lesbians who decided that transitioning was “becoming the enemy, and none of them are my business at all.

But in 2008, with the founding of the Butch Voices conferences, I was suddenly given admission to a world where I could have conversations about underwear and haircuts with people who wanted underwear and haircuts that looked like mine. Butch Voices

brought together butches, studs, transmasculine people and other folks under the broad umbrella of “Masculine of Center.” We were people who might have very different relationships to gender but shared some version of, “Hey, yo, masculinity is happening over here! Wanna chat about it?”

Suddenly, masculinity wasn’t just something I wanted access to; it was something we could examine together. What parts had we inherited? What parts had hurt us? What did we love about it? What kind of masculine people did we actually want to be? For the first time, I was having those conversations with other masculine-identified people instead of just quietly standing near the power tools hoping gender would somehow eventually explain itself. And without (and this deserves an essay of its own) presuming on the emotional and logistical labor of non-masculine-identified

people in my community, often (let's be real here) the femme-identified person I was dating.

With the help of the folks I met through Butch Voices, my masculine identity evolved. Years have passed now, and I'm often in a position to teach and mentor trans young people; I'm theoretically supposed to be the elder in these relationships.

This is adorable.

Because 90 percent of the time, I'm learning from them.

Watching young trans men construct masculinity consciously and intentionally is almost like watching a painter create a watercolor landscape. They aren't starting with a blank page exactly — the colors are already there, handed down by family, culture, every man they've ever loved or feared or wanted to become. But they get to decide which ones to use, which ones to dilute, which ones to let bleed into each other and which ones absolutely do not belong in this particular painting.

But even though I will always and forever campaign for queer and transfolks to be given the credit for all we've created and the mainstream claims as their own (friendsgiving anyone?), I can't in fairness say we're the only people who understand chosen masculinity.

Because I've seen chosen masculinity in my own family.

One of my brothers is a career military man based in Kalkaska, Michigan. If you were casting somebody in the role of Traditional Tough Midwestern Masculinity, he wouldn't get a callback. He wouldn't get a callback because the casting director would interact with him for 30 seconds, walk out into the waiting room and say, "We've made our decision," and send everyone else home. The casting director — once he interacted with my brother — would send John Wayne home.

So this Traditional Tough Midwestern Masculinity is who my brother is. But he's also the guy who treasures sentimental keepsakes. And he's also the guy when he was performing chest compressions on our dying grandfather (he was an adult and a trained paramedic) did so with tears running down his cheeks. And he's also the guy who fills his teenage kids' water

bottles before school every morning.

His kids can fill their own water bottles. This is not an essential parental task. Nobody from Child Protective Services is going to arrive at your house because your 15-year-old had to operate a faucet.

It's not really about the water. It's about care.

It's a small daily ritual that says, "I thought about what you will need today, and before you even asked, I wanted to make sure you had it."

There is something tender about that. And,

"I was a person assigned female at birth who did not particularly identify with femaleness, growing up decades before the phrase 'gender identity' would wander into my consciousness via Tumblr."

possibly now in my mind, something deeply masculine. I used to think healthy masculinity meant removing the bad parts: Don't suppress emotion, don't dominate, don't confuse anger with strength. But maybe that's only half the work.

Maybe we should also notice what's already there.

My brother crying while trying to save our grandfather wasn't masculinity interrupted by emotion. The emotion was part of it. So is filling the water bottles.

The young trans men in my life have taught me about choosing masculinity intentionally. The men I grew up with have taught me that care doesn't always announce itself as tenderness. Sometimes it fixes what's broken. Sometimes it shows up. Sometimes it fills the water bottle.

Maybe healthier masculinity isn't something one generation invented and another needs to learn.

Maybe we just need to get better at recognizing it.

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Madonna in concert and Madonna fans in 1986. Photos: Wikimedia Commons

Madonna Is a Queer Icon. I Finally Get It.

My ‘Confessions II’ confession — why her queer icon status finally makes sense to this queer millennial



BY KEITH LANGSTON

I have a confession to make. Up until recently, I didn’t really understand why everyone loved Madonna so much. I didn’t think the Michigan native was uncool — I just never thought much about her at all. I know, I know. I shouldn’t be saying that. I’m gay, and this is a queer publication, so I’m essentially a heretic hurling blasphemy. But hear me out: I grew up after the era of Madonna as a brave, ahead-of-her-time queer icon.

I know that older gays love Madonna, and I don’t say “older”

to be mean. I say it because I’m acknowledging that for two generations above me, Madonna wasn’t just a singer ... she was a powerful ally, inspiration and activist. She was Mother. She publicly hung out with her gay friends, created hit songs heavily inspired by the queer community, and she vocally supported AIDS research during the 1980s, back when most Americans looked at gay men like they were lepers.

But by the time I was in college, it was the 2010s. Not only was the AIDS crisis over, but we were on the cusp of the PEP/PrEP era. Obama was in office, and America was so embarrassed by the Neanderthal-like Bush administration that it was ready to push forward into a new

tomorrow. I fully believe that there is a massive generational divide within the gay community because of AIDS. For those who lived through the crisis, who watched their friends die, who feared their own diagnosis and who watched their religions and the government not only turn their backs but actively attack them, it left a trauma and scar that us younger gays (thankfully and hopefully) will never know.

For people my age, that trauma wasn’t lived. It was passed down. It’s something older gays talk about living through. It’s something you see in movies from the 1990s like “Philadelphia.” Madonna is loved and adored by gays who are older than me because Madonna’s most powerful displays of allyship

happened in an era before me.

But then Trump happened, and the alt-right, and the manosphere, and Christian nationalism (aka Nazism), and the rise of fake news, conspiracy theories and politicians like Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert who were elected because they ran on platforms anchored by those conspiracy theories. Things started sliding backwards, and kept sliding, and now we’re in a new dystopian era ruled by bigotry.

Politicians, podcasters, influencers and right-wing actors and singers will publicly and gleefully announce that gay people are pedophiles coming for the nation’s children. Drag queens are also coming for the children. Also,

trans people are coming for the children. Apparently, all members of the LGBTQ+ community are coming for your children. Why? Nobody is quite sure. What is it we plan to do with your children? Who knows. But that doesn’t matter because we now live in an era where facts don’t matter.

Instead, Americans get aroused by sense and feeling instead of facts and reality. Americans believe the queer community is full of dangerous heathens because they already wanted to believe that because of their conditioned prejudice. Hearing a politician say it makes them feel good and correct, so they see no need to ask simple questions or do even the most basic level of fact-checking. Why start

asking questions that might challenge your views when you could just not challenge your views and live your life with a false sense of righteousness, superiority and prestige that's created entirely by delusion? Doesn't that feel so much better? Isn't it so much easier?

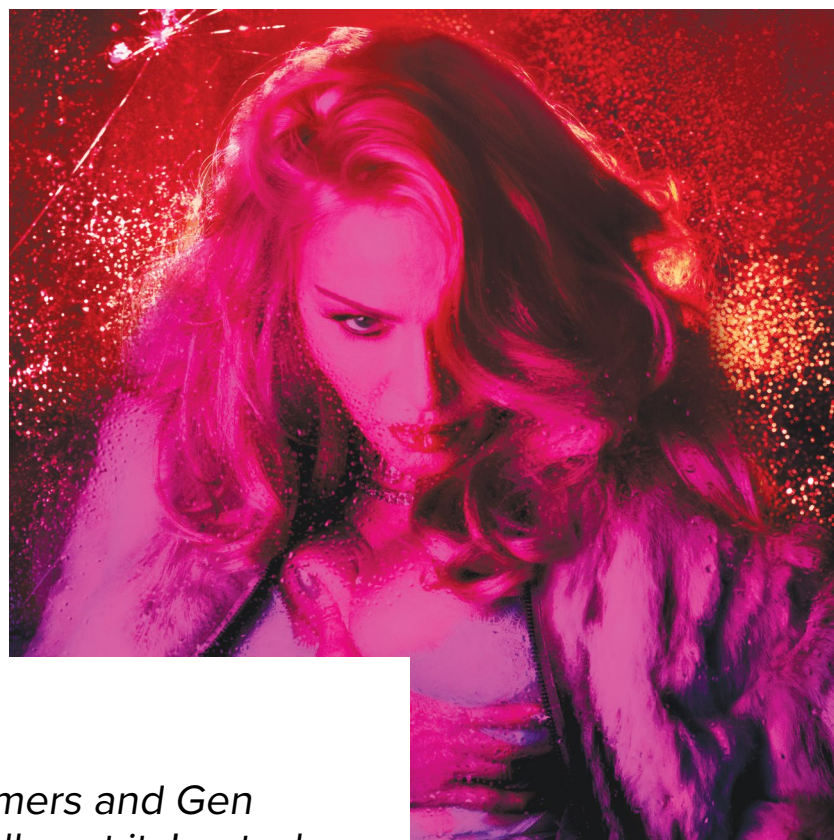
I've also noticed that many celebrities who started getting vocal about equality in past years have gone eerily silent now, like Taylor Swift and George Clooney. Homophobia in all its forms is on the rise, yet the number of vocal LGBTQ+ allies is shrinking because they've learned that standing up for marginalized people isn't easy. It can "damage your image" and make you a target of the MAGA hate machine. Being an ally right now requires empathy and selflessness, and those are two skills Americans woefully lack.

But then came Madonna with her "Confessions II" album. First off, we need to address just how viral her press tour was. From appearing with Sabrina Carpenter at Coachella to her pop-up concert in the middle of Times Square, Madonna is making the kind of headlines that the news industry rarely lets 67-year-old women have. Her new album is a legitimate hit. Not only did it debut at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, but her duet "Bring Your Love" with Sabrina Carpenter charted on the Billboard Hot 100, and the singles "I Feel So Free" and "Love Sensation" have both topped the Dance Airplay charts.

Madonna has also been enthusiastically and unapologetically queer throughout the press tour. Her

in queer culture or making some vague "maybe this is her subtly referencing equality" comments. She's unabashedly, completely and wholeheartedly diving in the deep end. And damn, it's so much fun to watch. It's also a powerful display of allyship that few artists have the guts to show these days.

I never really followed Madonna or kept up with her career in the past. But now I am. Madonna feels more relevant to me now than she did 10 years ago. For the first time, I'm finally understanding why older gays are always talking about how fearless and rebellious she is. Madonna is part of the queer community, and she doesn't care who knows or who judges her for it.



Madonna. Photo: Rafael Pavarotti

“To all the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers out there, I finally get it. I get why she’s a queer icon. I get why she is Mother. She’s here for us, even when it’s not cool to be here for us.”

Times Square concert was done in partnership with Grindr, and she started the concert by saying, "Come on gays, girls, guys, dolls ... happy Pride!" She also had a viral appearance DJing in West Hollywood where she iconically says, "Yay for the gays!" as the audience goes wild. But she wasn't done yet. In August, she performed at World Pride in Amsterdam and even surprised the crowd by bringing out Kylie Minogue.

Madonna isn't just dipping her toes

She knows who she is, she knows who her people are and she just wants to celebrate with them.

I guess I used to take her allyship for granted because it seemed like something that happened in the past. She's twice my age, and her massive hits like "Material Girl," "Papa Don't Preach" and "Like a Virgin" came out before I was even born. I just never really felt connected to her or the queer lore that surrounded her. But "Confessions II" doesn't just feel

like another album. It feels like a reinvention and a proper introduction to a younger audience. Plus, having such a massively gay press tour during such a massively homophobic era is fucking badass.

I know lots of grumpy trolls outside the queer community love to say that Madonna is "pandering" to stay relevant. But to all of us in the community, we know how much is on the line for celebrities to even bring up gays right now. We know how many have gone completely silent because they fear the negative publicity that comes with being a good, decent person who refuses to discriminate against others (and isn't that the saddest sentence ever?). This is

an era where most celebrities are more concerned with protecting their brand than helping those in need. Being a queer ally right now is risky, and there's no benefit to pandering to a group that's so despised and hated.

Madonna isn't one of them. She isn't changing her beliefs to coincide with cultural trends. She's exactly who she's always been and she's never been afraid to show it.

To all the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers out there, I finally get it. I get why she's a queer icon. I get why she is Mother. She's here for us, even when it's not cool to be here for us. She doesn't care. Because she's not just another fair-weather "ally" who will support the LGBTQ+ community only when it's beneficial to them. She's the real thing, and it's great to have her on our team.

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School Districts Are Spending Big Bucks to Fight Anti-Trans Lawsuits

Parents and advocates say coordinated complaints over transgender students are driving legal fees, security costs and emotional strain across Illinois school districts

BY SAM DONNDELINGER & VIOLET MILLER

This story first appeared on Uncloseted Media. This piece, produced in partnership with the Chicago Sun-Times, examines how coordinated complaints and lawsuits over transgender-inclusive school policies are draining hundreds of thousands of dollars from Illinois school districts. These organized legal pressure campaigns targeting trans students in schools are playing out in states across the country, Michigan included. This story mentions suicide and self-harm. If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned that someone you know may be, call 988 or visit thetrevorproject.org.

As Pat Green took the stage at the Valley View 365U school board meeting on April 14, 2025, he recalled another night years earlier, when he picked up his 13-year-old son from the hospital. His son, who is trans and had recently come out as queer, had been shoved into a locker so hard that he needed four staples in his forehead.

“I hear the families of LGBTQI+ youth like mine,” Green tells the board. “And I just wanted to say thank you, and for God’s sake, don’t go backwards. ... I almost lost the most precious gift God ever gave me.”

In the room with Green were also members of Awake Illinois, a Southern Poverty Law Center-designated hate and anti-government extremist group known for fighting against the rights of trans kids. They had filed a federal civil rights complaint against the district for allegedly violating Title IX by allowing transgender students access to bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their genders.

When Green’s son, now 25, came out over a decade ago in eighth grade, he faced slurs daily and was told to use the faculty bathroom if he didn’t want to use the girls’ restroom.

“By the end of freshman year, the light my son used to have had turned into dread. Soon after came the cutting, the suicidal ideation, the grades slipping from honor student to barely passing,” Green told Uncloseted Media and the Chicago Sun-Times.

Despite Green’s emotional appeal to the school board, Awake Illinois founder Shannon Adcock told the board that “failure to address the Title IX violations will invite severe repercussions, including the termination of federal funding for noncompliant institutions, which would



Pat Green sits in front of Hinsdale Township High School South, the school his son transferred to after getting bullied for being queer. Photo: Mark Black for the Chicago Sun-Times

mean \$20 million in this district’s case.”

Voices like Adcock’s prompted Green to start attending school board meetings. He noticed an increasing number of complaints and lawsuits from conservative parent groups targeting transgender-inclusive school policies in Illinois that were resulting in legal and financial strain for school districts.

Documents obtained by Uncloseted Media and the Chicago Sun-Times under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) found that Deerfield School District 109 has paid nearly \$360,000 — the equivalent of four average teachers’ salaries — to fend off an ongoing lawsuit and pay for security costs spawned from complaints about trans-affirming bathroom and locker room policies.

That amount is the equivalent of 37% of all federal funds the district received last year. It

included more than \$255,000 for legal defense, over \$30,000 in school security upgrades and \$4,000 for extra staff to screen threats.

“When schools are forced to fight lawsuits over issues that aren’t a problem for the vast majority of people, it’s a waste of taxpayer dollars. Straight up monetarily, why are we spending so much time prosecuting and persecuting a minuscule part of the population? Why do you want your tax dollars doing that?” Allaina Humphreys, founder of Bolingbrook Pride, told Uncloseted Media and the Chicago Sun-Times.

While these suits are playing out across the state, school officials say they are following policies that align with the Illinois Human Rights Act, which state regulators and courts say require schools to allow transgender students to use facilities consistent with their gender

identity. That interpretation was reinforced by the Illinois Human Rights Commission ruling in 2019 and subsequent state guidance issued in 2021.

But none of this is stopping parents like Adcock. “Federal law reigns supreme,” she said at a Naperville district meeting three months after filing the first of her complaints. “Only recently have trans cultists tried to contest [Title IX].” Adcock did not respond to requests for comment.

“I think the muddying of it comes from all of [Trump’s] executive orders,” says Humphreys. “This administration has used them ... to dictate policy that it has no right to dictate. But that doesn’t mean people aren’t using it as a basis for legal action.”

See **School Districts**, page 22

her longtime friend Judy Ogle, with her husband Carl supposedly fine with it. Most stars in that position reach for the lawyer-approved denial. Dolly reached for a bit. “I am not gay,” she told me, “but if I were I would be the first one running out of the closet.” I asked, naturally, if that meant running straight into Judy’s arms. “Yeah, who knows!” she said. “I might’ve said, ‘Judy, you wanna get something going with me?’” Then, because she never let a joke overstay its welcome without landing somewhere true, she added that their friendship was simply “a precious friendship.”

That 2014 conversation found a second life, too. Three years later, it turned up in “Dolly on Dolly: Interviews and Encounters with Dolly Parton,” a career-spanning anthology of 25 interviews pulled from her five decades in the spotlight, alongside her conversations with Playboy, Rolling Stone and her chat with Andy Warhol for Interview magazine. Whoever decided which 25 of Dolly Parton’s interviews actually mattered decided that one belonged. That’s not a small thing. That’s a book editor, working with no stake in queer press whatsoever, looking at everything Dolly Parton ever said to anyone and deciding the version of her that talked to us was essential to the record.

I didn’t fully understand how deep this ran for me personally, though, until my Aunt Marie texted me the day Dolly died. We don’t speak that often, which made this message all the more meaningful: “Hi Chris, I feel like another family member

has passed. I’m sure you already know about Dolly...it’s heartbreaking and I know you’re feeling it.”

I read that on my phone and started crying over a woman I’d interviewed a handful of times across a decade, always on the clock, always with a publicist somewhere in the room watching the minutes tick down. My aunt, who has no idea how any of that works, understood something faster than I did: that this one belonged in the family column. She was right. That’s exactly where Dolly put herself. Not just for the relatives she actually employed and defended and called “ours” without blinking, but for a lot of queer people who only ever got her 11 minutes at a time.

She said the word “gay” in a country song in 1991 and didn’t flinch. She kept answering the phone for gay press for the better part of two decades, long after she had anything left to prove by doing it. And somehow, from that distance — an interview here, a Zoom call there — she made enough of us feel like family that when she died, my aunt’s first instinct was to check on me.

I once asked Dolly why she’d taken that step, becoming one of the first major country artists to stand up for LGBTQ+ equality. She didn’t treat it like a stance

at all. Just unconditional love. “Why wouldn’t I stand up for everybody, for all people?” she said. “In the country field, we’re brought up in spiritual homes, we’re taught to ‘judge not lest you be judged,’ and it’s always been a mystery to me how people jump all over things just to criticize, condemn and judge other people when that is so un-Christian — and they claim to be good Christians! We’re supposed to love one another. We’re supposed to accept and love one another. Whether we do or not, that’s a different story. But that’s what we’re supposed to do.”

Not a one is turned away, when it’s family. She meant her own. Turns out she meant ours too.



Chris Azzopardi with Dolly Parton at Dollywood in 2019. Courtesy photo

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			C	H	L	O	E		T	W	O	B	I	T
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E	K	E	D			M	I	X	E	R		S	C	O
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T	R	A	P			N	A	N	N	Y		S	E	E

Equal Opportunity Misery
Puzzle can be found on page 21

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Washed Up Coffee

Continued from page 7

guys are gonna be best friends. There's just something about you two," says Boulanger.

"And I'm like, 'Prove it,' basically, is how I live. Then we met, and I was like, 'Oh, no, this is gonna be more than friends; I can just tell.'"

They kept their relationship private for about a year. Both had established careers and influence in Michigan coffee, and there was also a child to consider. Neither was interested in casually disrupting their personal lives, their family or their professional community.

Once they knew the relationship was permanent, however, keeping their lives separate stopped making much sense. They got engaged earlier this year and plan to marry in 2027. Eventually, both left salaried jobs to work full time on Washed Up.

Friends repeatedly asked the obvious question: Aren't you going to get sick of each other?

Their answer is a quick and definite no.

"We actually like spending time together," Potter says. In fact, before they worked together full time, they would arrange their schedules so they could work separately in the same place.

Now they're building the business side by side, and hoping Washed Up's future includes a larger space of its own. They are not in search of something enormous. "Who wants to mop that much floor?" asks Boulanger.

But they do want to host visiting

coffee professionals, events and informal educational experiences. For all the industry recognition, growth and ambition, Washed Up's name remains a useful reminder not to take any of it too seriously.

Potter and Boulanger chose it because,



Latte at Washed Up Coffee. Photo: Jonathan Vega

after years in coffee, they wondered if they were already washed-up baristas. They refer to themselves as the "grandma and grandma" of the coffee world. But the joke also makes room for everybody else.

"You're a washed-up comedian. You're a washed-up basketball player. You're a washed-up anything," Potter explains.

It's anti-cool-kid branding for a deliberately anti-cool-kid coffee shop.

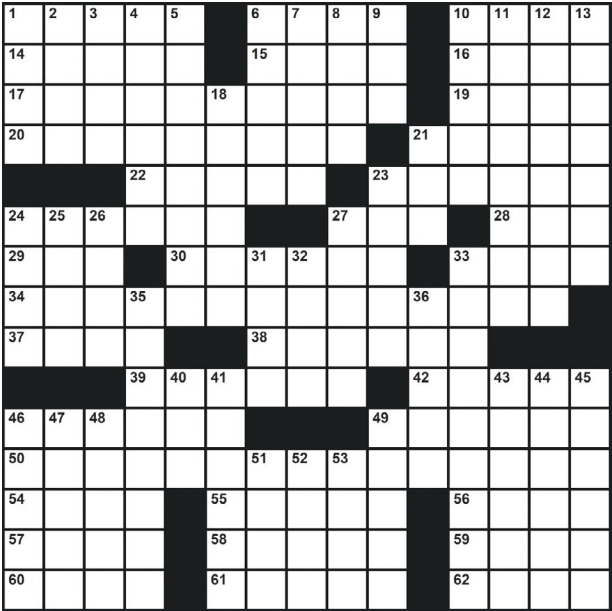
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Equal
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Misery

Across

- 1 Poet Doolittle
- 6 Pre-coll. exam
- 10 50 million Frenchmen's souls
- 14 Like a flaming queen?
- 15 In good health

- 16 Say "So Long, Farewell"
- 17 Start of why Dolly Parton said she supported gay marriage, facetiously
- 19 "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" singer
- 20 State of the undecided
- 21 Word on a Stonewall Democrat's poster
- 22 Amanda Seyfried flick of 2009
- 23 Small-time
- 24 The Mayor of Castro ____
- 27 Golden Girl McClanahan

- 28 It may be Sapphic
- 29 Travel org.
- 30 China shop purchase
- 33 Gelatin container, sometimes
- 34 More of the quote
- 37 Suffix with Smurf
- 38 What a cruiser is looking for
- 39 WNBA team of Los Angeles
- 42 Bobby who lost to Billie Jean
- 46 Dirt from Greg in Hollywood
- 49 Nanette of "One Day at a Time"
- 50 End of the quote
- 54 Managed, with "out"
- 55 Social
- 56 James VI, e.g.
- 57 "The Jungle Book" star
- 58 Rust source for the Tin Man
- 59 Land of Yeats
- 60 Hazard for Sheehan
- 61 Fran Drescher role
- 62 Apparently are

Down

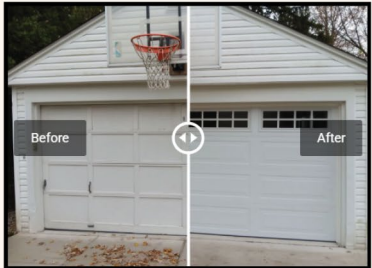
- 1 Shakespearean auxiliary
- 2 "____ Walked Into My Life" (____Mame____)
- 3 Cause of Pinocchio's 8-incher
- 4 Frozen carbon dioxide
- 5 Frasier or Niles
- 6 Platter player
- 7 Booze
- 8 "The Breakfast Club" actress Sheedy
- 9 Homophobe senator Cruz
- 10 Ohno of Geert Blanchart's sport
- 11 Take bets

- 12 Co-creator of "Spamalot"
- 13 Left in the text
- 18 Summer top
- 21 Mary's little lamb, perhaps
- 23 ____-frutti
- 24 Letter enc.
- 25 Tightly stretched
- 26 Rubber vessel, perhaps
- 27 Silences for Tchaikovsky
- 31 Open a crack
- 32 Give head
- 33 Hotel transports
- 35 Decided to come clean
- 36 Seuss title creature
- 40 Peach center
- 41 Tarzan, for one
- 43 Allen who worked with George Burns
- 44 Pussy's last name, in "Gold-finger"
- 45 Buck it, with "the"
- 46 Hotel customer
- 47 Schindler with a list
- 48 Queen in Kings
- 49 Boat to Staten Island
- 51 "Rubyfruit Jungle" novelist ____ Mae Brown
- 52 Yoked beasts
- 53 Hayes of "Will & Grace"

See p. 19 for answers

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◀ School Districts

Continued from page 18

Why Deerfield had to pay nearly \$360,000

Last spring, during a series of fiery school board meetings, Deerfield parent Nicole Georgas said her cisgender daughter refused to change for gym class after seeing a trans girl in the locker room. Georgas says administrators made her daughter change in front of them and the other student.

"My daughter refused to take part in having her privacy being violated," Georgas said at a school board meeting last March.

The school district denies the allegations and says they are committed to obeying state law.

Despite this, Georgas, who declined to comment for this story, filed a federal civil rights complaint in March 2025 with the Department of Justice. Conservative legal groups Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies and Liberty Justice Center then cited Georgas' story in complaints to the Department of Education.

America First Legal — a conservative legal group cofounded by Trump adviser Stephen Miller that has waged a litany of legal attacks against the LGBTQ+ community — then got in the mix. They urged the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate Deerfield Schools District employees, asking federal prosecutors to look at whether school administrators coordinated enforcement of district policy in a way that violated students' rights. Though no charges are identified in the referral itself, the letter invokes federal civil rights criminal statutes, which can carry penalties ranging from fines and probation to multi-year prison sentences.

In the Deerfield referral and accompanying press materials, America First Legal repeatedly referred to the transgender student as a "male" or a "boy 'identifying' as a girl," and described school policies recognizing students' gender identities as "radical gender ideology" and "transgender madness."

Following this, Georgas sued the district seeking an injunction, punitive damages and money for emotional distress. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights repeated Georgas' claim that students were "allegedly forced" to change in front of the transgender student, and cited previous Trump administration executive orders regarding gender.

Shortly after her appearance on Fox News, a reporter asked White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt about Georgas' case. "We are not going to tolerate such behavior by men pretending to be women. The president will continue to strongly stand for the rights of women and girls, not just in sports and on athletic fields, but also private spaces like locker rooms and bathrooms," Leavitt told the reporter.

Georgas is moving to make her ongoing

lawsuit a class action before her daughter graduates from middle school, which would void the case entirely.

Financial burdens

All of these complaints are costing significant time and money and frustrating many parents who see them as a waste of school resources.

Deerfield parent Elizabeth Castro attended the meetings in her child's district last year and says it was shocking to look around the country and see the same "manufactured controversy."

"You realize it's so much bigger when you see all the communities around the country that have dealt with this exact same pattern," Castro told Uncloseted Media and the Chicago Sun-Times.

"Schools should not be forced to divert hundreds of thousands of dollars away from classrooms, student services, mental health supports, accessibility accommodations and educational programming simply to defend their efforts to support vulnerable students," Asher McMahon, the executive director of Trans Up Front IL, told Uncloseted Media and the Chicago Sun-Times. "These are vital public resources that should be invested in children, not spent responding to coordinated attacks on transgender youth and the institutions working to protect them."

Policy matters

Beyond the lost money and the chaos, the lawsuits and complaints have affected the trans kids who are at the center of these debates.

"The human cost is even greater than the financial one," says McMahon. "These actions create fear, uncertainty and instability for transgender students and their families, many of whom are already navigating significant challenges. ... The greatest tragedy is that these costs are entirely avoidable, yet they continue to grow as attacks on transgender youth are increasingly normalized and encouraged at the national level."

According to Corey Lascano, LGBTQ+ coordinator for the Chicago Teachers Union, policies inform school culture, which is concerning especially when school is "the only place where [some trans youth] can feel safe to be themselves."

"When you already exist in a world where there are no safe places and your government is adding to that, it's dehumanizing. ... I worry about the suicide rate [for trans youth] increasing in Illinois," Lascano says.

Pat Green, who is still grappling with the bullying his son experienced, shares Lascano's concerns. "From the time he was born, he had this light," says Green. "When he was at his old school, it was just gone. ... I'm really scared about the way things are right now. I remember the fear of wondering if I was going to lose my son. [These groups] are not protecting children. They are causing so much harm."



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