

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE Lines™

HIDDEN GENIUS

The trans woman who
shaped your smartphone

GOING STATEWIDE

Why Michigan Pride Chamber
is thinking beyond Detroit

THE BUSINESS
INNOVATOR ISSUE

Pride Takes Root

How a farm stand
became a safe haven
for LGBTQ+ people in
rural Michigan

By Jason Collins

Dr. Paul Benson's

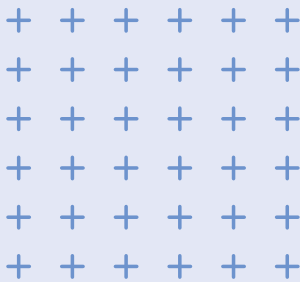
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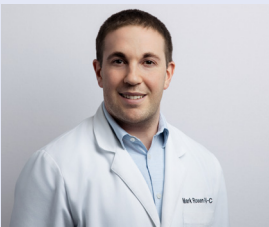
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- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 50 Years of Queer Legacy Built. What the Election Could Undo.
- 7 Trump Is Targeting the Smithsonian. My LGBTQ+ History Is Inside It.
- 10 Michigan Pride Chamber Bets Big on Statewide Growth
- 12 Trans Lucent: A Trans Woman Invented the Tech Behind Your Smartphone
- 14 Creep of the Week: Democrats Won't Win by Giving in to Transphobia
- 15 The Scroll: Between The Lines Gets a Glossy Glow-Up for New Era
- 16 The Charlotte Farm Stand Growing Something Beautiful
- 18 How Jason Lee Turned Personal Adversity Into Leadership
- 22 68 Businesses and 6 Boyfriends: Tristan Schukraft, the 'CEO of Everything Gay,' Talks About How He Made His Fortune

Page 16



Sarah and Kim Padilla, owners of Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery. Photo: Brian Wells

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PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS

Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL

Executive Editor and Brand Director

Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Director of Content and Community Engagement

Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

CREATIVE

Cartoonist

Paul Berg

Graphic Designer

Sarah Wolf

Contributing Photographer

Andrew Potter

ADVERTISING & SALES

sales@pridesource.com

Carolyn Cardenas
734-263-1476
carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers
734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

September is doing that Michigan thing where it cannot decide whether you should be wearing shorts, a hoodie or both (let's be real here: you're going to wear both) but, fortunately, your social calendar can be considerably more decisive. This fortnight, you can buy art your father may or may not understand, temporarily turn a wine bar into the lesbian bar Detroit deserves, shop from dozens of trans and queer artists, and solve a murder while wearing fishnets.

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

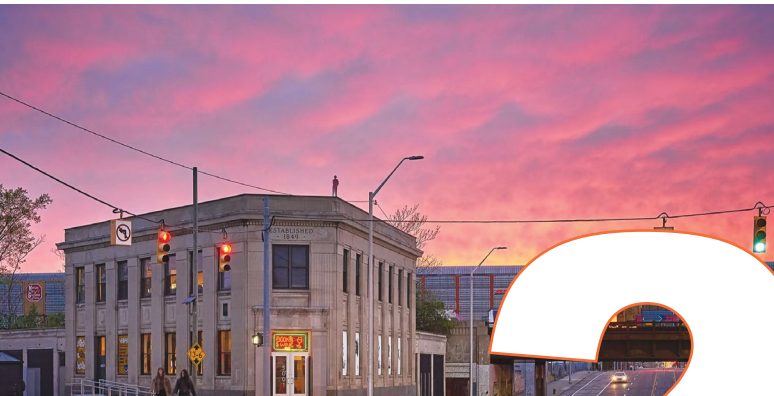


Artwork by Funky Ferndale Art Fair artist Megan Krol.

Shop Ferndale's Funky Side

The Funky Ferndale Art Fair turns 20 this year, which means it is now old enough to have extremely strong opinions about what constitutes art. More than 140 juried artists and authors will take over Nine Mile west of Woodward, including more than 50 artists who have never shown in Ferndale before. The organizers describe the show as "fine art with an edge," emphasizing unusual, thought-provoking work rather than the sort of tasteful beige object you buy because there is an empty spot above the couch. There will also be puppet-making and a procession, because apparently merely looking at art wasn't funky enough.

Sept. 25, 5-9 p.m.; Sept. 26, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sept. 27, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Nine Mile Road west of Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. funkyferndaleartfair.com.



Vesper Bookstore and Wine Bar. Photo: vesperbooksandwine.com

Turn a Wine Bar Lesbian

Detroit's lack of permanent dedicated lesbian bars is plenty heartbreaking, so it's amazing that the Midwest Sapphic Society has decided to take matters — and cocktails — into its own hands. For one Friday night, the group is popping up at Vesper Wine Bar for a sapphic happy hour featuring wine, cocktails, books, flirting and whatever extremely intense friendship gets formed while waiting for another round. Vesper will remain open to the general public, meaning men may technically be present. Do not panic. Organizers remain confident that sufficient concentrations of sapphics can temporarily alter the molecular structure of a wine bar. No tickets, no cover and no elaborate plan required. Just show up.

Sept. 25, 5 p.m.-midnight, Vesper Wine Bar, (5001 Grand River Ave., Detroit). pridesource.com/events/popuplesbianbar.



Grand Rapids. Photo: Getty via Canva/Denis Tangeney, Jr.

Spend Your Money Queerly

If your preferred shopping experience includes queer art, drag, live music and the knowledge that your money is circulating through the community instead of disappearing into the Amazon abyss, head west for the fourth annual TransFuse Night Market. A collaboration between Transfigure Print Co. and the Grand Rapids Trans Foundation, the free event brings together more than 80 trans and queer artists, 15-plus community organizations and mutual aid groups, performers, food and drinks at Fulton Street Market.

The whole evening is designed to center and celebrate trans, nonbinary, gender-expansive and queer people — and proceeds support the Grand Rapids Trans Foundation. Bring your friends. Bring your wallet. Bring the tote bag containing all your other tote bags.

Sept. 26, 5-10 p.m., Fulton Street Market, (1145 Fulton St. E., Grand Rapids). pridesource.com/events/transfusenightmarket.



Tim Curry in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."
Photo: Twentieth Century Fox

4

Solve a Very Queer Murder

It's astounding. Time is fleeting. Somebody at dinner is dead. Five15's Rocky Horror-inspired murder mystery takes over Pronto Lounge & Showbar with a three-course dinner, audience participation, scandalous suspects and enough fishnets to make any sensible footwear present feel personally attacked. Guests follow clues and interrogate suspicious weirdos while attempting to identify the killer before dessert — which, frankly, seems like a lot to ask of anyone who has also been drinking something called a Sweet Transvestini. Costumes are encouraged, with a Dressed to Kill contest for the particularly committed, but Rocky Horror virgins are welcome. They promise to be gentle. Allegedly.

Sept. 22, 8 p.m., Pronto Lounge & Showbar (608 S. Washington Ave., Royal Oak). pridesource.com/events/rockymurdermystery.



Photo: Canva

5

Replenish a Queer Pantry (Yours/Theirs)

Food insecurity is considerably less fun than the other things on this list, but Affirmations, Ferndale's LGBTQ+ community center, operates the delightfully named Lettuce Help Food Pantry, which distributes fresh and nonperishable food to anyone who needs it. The pantry is held monthly and relies on partnerships, staff and volunteers to keep the groceries moving. Want to donate? Check out their Instagram for their current needs, which you can drop off at the front desk. Need some help? Stop by Sept. 19. Queer community care: Sometimes it looks like protest signs; sometimes it looks like peanut butter or canned goods.

Sept. 19, 12-3 p.m., Affirmations (290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). instagram.com/goaffirmations.

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Former Ann Arbor City Councilmembers Mary Richman (left) and Kathy Kozachenko in 1974. Photo: Ann Arbor District Library/Jack Stubbs

50 Years of Queer Legacy Built. What the Election Could Undo.

From one council seat in 1974 to leaders like Dana Nessel and Jeremy Moss today, the state's queer political arc has been neither straight nor steady

BY NICK FULTON

Three years before Harvey Milk's ceiling-shattering victory in San Francisco, a 21-year-old from Plymouth, Michigan, accomplished one of the most defining moments in

queer political history. Kathy Kozachenko ran for Ann Arbor City Council as an activist, a student leader and a lesbian — and she won.

Widely recognized as the first openly LGBTQ+ person elected to public office in the United States, Kozachenko's victory was

a watershed moment. It offered something radical for its time: proof that queer people could not only participate in politics, but win as their authentic selves.

That spark did not ignite a straight line of progress. It lit a fire that has flared, dimmed and, at times, nearly burned out.

From Kozachenko's 1974 victory to the passage of one of the nation's most restrictive constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage in 2004, to the long-awaited expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act in 2023, Michigan's arc of queer political power has bent in

multiple directions. In a state often defined by its "purple" political makeup, neither bright red nor brilliant blue, LGBTQ+ Michiganders have experienced both some of the country's most exclusionary policies and some of its most meaningful advances.

Building power, fighting exclusion

When Michigan passed the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act in 1976, just two years after Kozachenko's election, it was hailed as one of the most comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in the country. It prohibited discrimination based on religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex or marital status.

But LGBTQ+ people were not included.

The omission would define the next several decades of advocacy, litigation and political organizing. For queer Michiganders, the law stood as a reminder of deliberate exclusion.

Advocates like Ruth Ellis, born in Springfield, Illinois in 1899 and long rooted in Detroit, carried the fire in ways no legislation could. For decades, her home served as an informal gathering place for Black LGBTQ+ Detroiters who had nowhere else to go — a living room that became a lifeline, years before the term “community center” entered the vocabulary of queer organizing. Ellis lived to 101, her life spanning Jim Crow, Stonewall and the dawn of marriage equality. While politicians debated who deserved recognition, people like Ellis ensured survival. Her namesake center in Detroit carries that work forward today, providing support to LGBTQ+ young people.

By the early 2000s, however, the political climate had hardened.

“It was very tough in our state in regards to LGBTQ+ rights because you didn't have the executive branch supportive, you didn't have the legislature supportive, and you had a very activist conservative court that was not supportive,” Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBTQ+ Project, told BTL.

Kaplan joined the project in 2001, after years of working in disability rights and HIV/AIDS advocacy. At the time, he said, Michigan's legal framework didn't just fail to protect queer people, it actively worked against them.

In 2002, the chief judge of Washtenaw County, Archie Brown, ordered judges to stop granting second-parent

adoptions to same-sex couples. Two years later, then-Attorney General Mike Cox issued an opinion stating that same-sex couples legally married elsewhere could not jointly adopt children in Michigan.

Soon after, voters approved Proposal 04-2, a constitutional amendment defining marriage strictly as between one man and one woman. It passed by a wide margin, cementing Michigan's reputation as one of the most hostile states in the country for LGBTQ+ families.

In 2014, Rolling Stone ranked

groundwork for change was being laid. That year, then-state Reps. Jeremy Moss and Jon Hoadley formed Michigan's first LGBTQ+ legislative caucus, a group of two. It was small, but it marked a shift: queer representation was no longer an idea. It was structural.

Over time, cultural attitudes evolved alongside political strategy.

“We have infrastructure now to influence elections like we never had in the past,” said Tim Retzlöff, an assistant professor at Michigan State University who has documented LGBTQ+

“I spent years watching the resources of this office be used to delay and denounce necessary, legal protections for residents in my state, just like me. I realized then more than ever Michigan needed an attorney general who would protect, instead of persecute, families like mine.”

— Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel

Michigan in their top five worst states for LGBTQ+ people. No legal protections from hate crimes or discrimination, no hope for marriage equality, no family rights and a legacy of obstacles at every level.

So what changed?

The shift: from margins to the legislature

By 2014, in all the places where queer people were brave enough to fight for a seat, the

history across the state. “Queer political breakthroughs have been a motivator politically for certain segments of the voting population.”

Legal victories accelerated that momentum. The 2015 U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Obergefell v. Hodges legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, reshaping the legal landscape that Michigan had once helped restrict. Kaplan sees that transformation clearly.

“We're no longer looked at as a

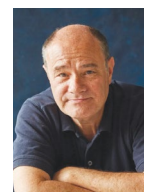
See **Queer Political Power**, page 20

Trump Is Targeting the Smithsonian. My LGBTQ+ History Is Inside It.

My artifacts tell the story of the LGBTQ+ movement — and what we fought to overcome

BY MARK SEGAL

There's been something troubling me for the last couple of years about



what the Trump administration has been doing. It affects me personally, but I've mostly kept it in the back of my mind.

After all, there are so many larger and more immediate issues facing our country that demand attention.

But this one has become impossible for me to ignore.

One of the many ways the Trump administration is hurting this country is by attempting to rewrite — or simply erase — parts of our history that it finds uncomfortable. And Trump has now attacked my history.

Around the nation, we've watched displays dealing with slavery and our Founding Fathers come under attack. We've seen the history of Japanese American internment diminished or politicized, military bases renamed and symbols representing Indigenous people and the LGBTQ+ community targeted.

History, apparently, is acceptable only when it tells the story this administration wants Americans to hear.

And now that effort has reached my own history.

Several years ago, I donated my papers and artifacts to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. It was one of the greatest honors of my



A donation can from the first Gay Pride march in 1970. Photo: Mark Segal

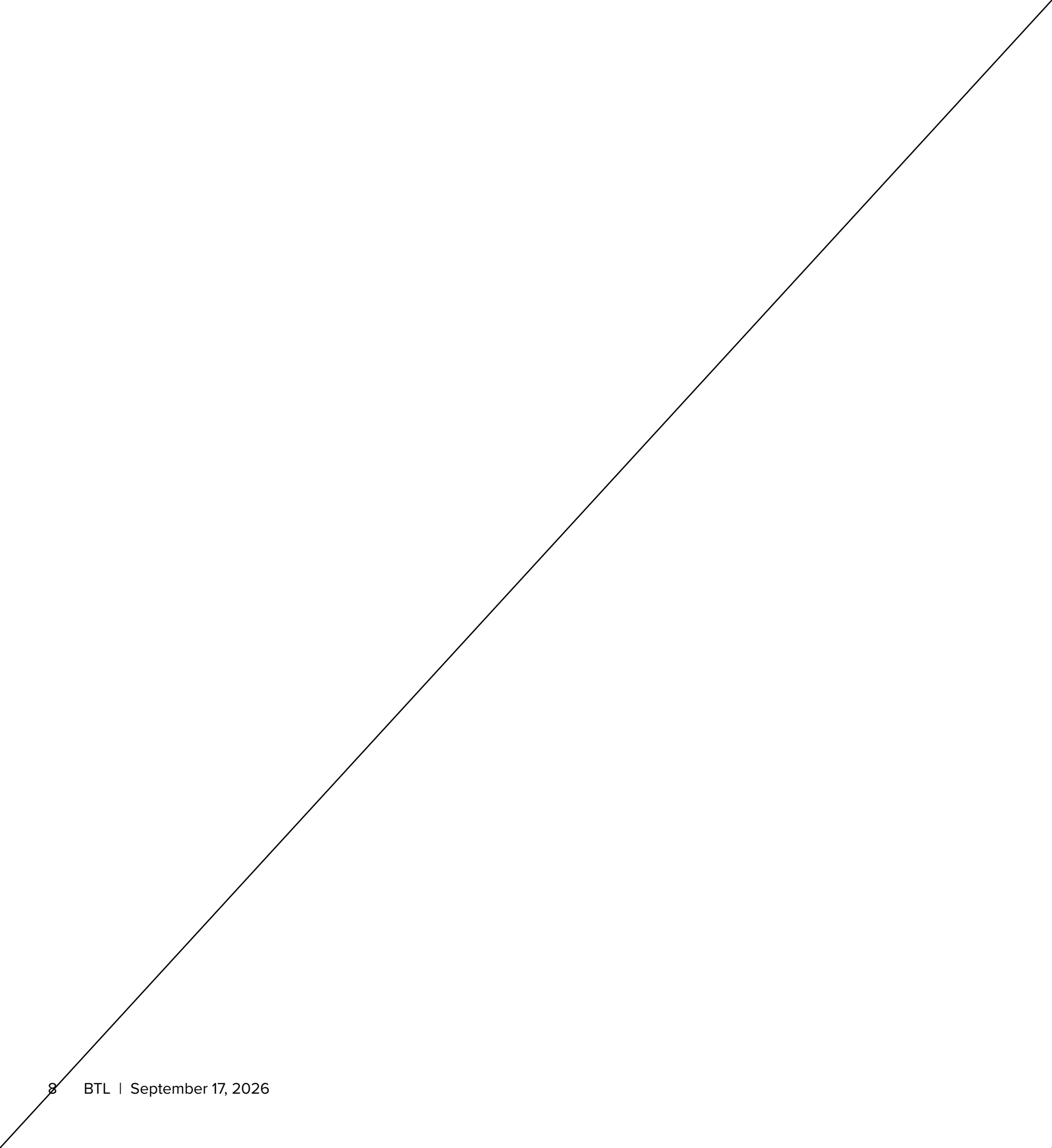
life. Those papers and objects weren't simply about me. They documented a movement and a generation of people who stood up, fought back and demanded a place in the American story.

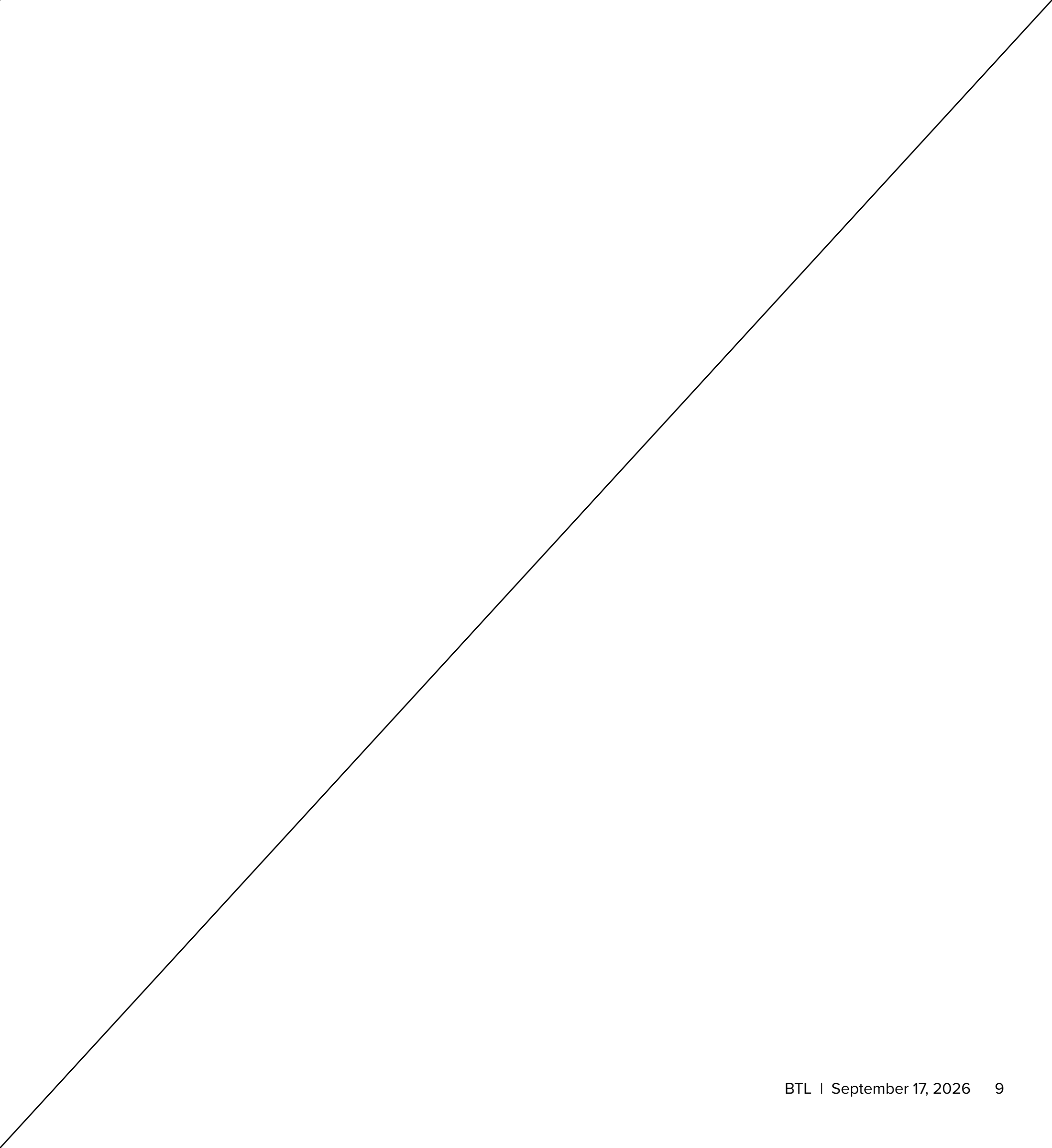
As the Trump administration has increasingly targeted the Smithsonian and questioned how our national museums tell that story, I became concerned enough to speak with Katherine Ott and Franklin Robinson, the two Smithsonian curators with whom I worked regarding my collection.

Then last week I read a profile of my friend Katherine in LGBTQ Nation, and one passage immediately caught my attention.

It noted that Katherine had been called out by name in a White House report, “Saving America's Story,” in part for work on racism as a public health crisis

See **Mark Segal**, page 11







Kevin Heard. Courtesy photo

Michigan Pride Chamber Bets Big on Statewide Growth

Kevin Heard on why LGBTQ+ business owners in every county need a seat at the table

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Kevin Heard didn't set out to build a networking group. When he moved back to Detroit years ago, he noticed something missing: no organization existed to cultivate LGBTQ-owned businesses, only informal networks tucked inside corporate

employee resource groups. That gap became the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Now, it's the Michigan Pride Chamber of Commerce, and Heard, its executive director, is taking that same mission to all 83 counties.

"We felt like we needed to expand this view across the

state," Heard tells BTL, pointing to Michigan's roughly 10 million residents. "I know that there's at least one LGBTQ business owner in at least every county, and they don't have the access to resources that they would like to have."

The scale backs him up. The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce estimates roughly 1.4

million LGBTQ+ business owners contribute \$1.7 trillion to the U.S. economy each year, and Gusto's 2025 entrepreneurship data found LGBTQ+ people made up 10% of new business owners in 2024, a 50% jump from the year before.

The stakes go beyond commerce, Heard says. Citing research on the effects of

concealment, he says people who stay closeted lose about two years of life expectancy to the stress of hiding who they are. Visibility, in his framing, is a business strategy and a public health one at once.

"When someone is out and proud and they are comfortable in who they are, they get a better sense of self," he says. "We are

there to be a catalyst of that change, for people to be able to say, 'I'm out, I'm a business owner, and I'm gay,' or 'I'm out, and I'm a business owner, and I'm trans.'"

Building for every corner of Michigan

Heard describes Michigan as several distinct economies layered into one state: the automotive and manufacturing base of Southeast Michigan, home to roughly half the state's population; the small-business, suburban texture of Grand Rapids and West Michigan; and rural, tourism-dependent communities up north that earn most of their income in a handful of warm months.

"These are drastically different communities with drastically different needs and priorities," he says.

That variation shapes how the chamber is expanding. Rather than opening a single statewide office, Heard's team is building relationships county by county, amplifying LGBTQ+ business owners and allies already doing the work locally and inviting them to join the chamber's board, host events or simply show up.

"We are intentional about having a listening session and hosting events in different areas of the state," Heard says. "We're not making you come to us."

These sessions are already underway. The chamber is partnering with member business Brown Dog Creamery on an event in Lansing, and it's coordinating with the Grand Rapids Chamber's OutPro program for an October gathering. A spring summit, held outside metro Detroit for the first time, is in the works for April. Every event will include a virtual option for business owners who can't travel.

Michigan's LGBTQ+ business community isn't one audience but several, Heard says, and building trust in a new region takes longer than opening a

chapter. He's set a marker for the pace of that rollout: at least three cities with an event by the end of the year.

The expansion also arrives as support for LGBTQ+ institutions has become less certain. Organizations that

a gap the chamber's capital-access work is aimed squarely at closing. Its twice-yearly Colours Business Summit, held in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Pure Michigan Business Connect, already brings



Michigan Pride Chamber members at the 2025 Colours Fall Business Summit. Courtesy photo

rely on outside funding, from publishers to nonprofits, have faced increased difficulty attracting sponsors and donors who have grown more cautious amid federal scrutiny, and Heard says he hears similar stories from chamber members navigating that same tighter climate.

Heard's response is to dig deeper into the industries LGBTQ+ business owners already work in, from manufacturing to hospitality, building enough economic footprint that the community is harder to sideline. He points to a national average income of roughly \$65,000 a year for small and micro business owners as a reminder of how much is at stake for people building something of their own.

"We want to make sure that we are creating the new, more ethical Amazons, and the better and intentional Microsofts," Heard says. "Innovation is coming from all walks of life, and that includes the LGBT community."

That framing tracks with national research. The StartOut Pride Economic Impact Index found LGBTQ+ founders created 36% more jobs and 114% more patents than the average founder, despite raising 16% less funding,

LGBTQ-owned businesses face-to-face with corporate and state buyers looking to fill contracts, a model Heard wants replicated as the chamber grows into new regions.

Heard is careful to frame the chamber's work as equity, not exclusion, open to any business owner regardless of who runs it, while pushing back on gatekeeping he says still shows up in business spaces statewide. That includes advocacy at the state legislature, where the chamber has been tracking proposals like a statewide retirement savings option for small businesses with fewer than 10 employees.

The chamber's growing reach at the state level was visible this year at the Mackinac Policy Conference, where it co-hosted the first-ever LGBTQ+ Reception with support from the Michigan LGBTQ+ Commission, a milestone Heard has pointed to as evidence the expansion is landing with state leaders, not just local business owners.

Membership has grown from 74 members in 2019 to more than 140 today, and Heard is blunt about what it takes to

See **Michigan Chamber**, page 30

Mark Segal

Continued from page 7

and the Smithsonian exhibition "Illegal to Be You: Gay History Beyond Stonewall."

Guess whose artifacts were included in that exhibit?

Mine.

Having your personal belongings displayed at the Smithsonian is difficult to describe. For me, it helped put into perspective the history I had been fortunate enough to witness and participate in. More importantly, it told Americans that our struggle for equality belongs in the American story just as surely as the struggles of those who came before us.

So what did the Smithsonian display from my collection?

A donation can from the first Gay Pride march in 1970. A few of the buttons I wore at demonstrations over the years. A letter threatening my life that appeared to come from the Ku Klux Klan. And a sticker declaring, "We support Anita Bryant and Save Our Children."

Some of those objects represent pride. Others represent hate.

Together, they represent history.

They show what we were fighting for and what we were fighting against. They remind people that the rights many LGBTQ+ Americans enjoy today did not simply appear. People marched for them. People demonstrated for them. People were arrested for them. People lost jobs, families and friends for them.

That is why attempts to sanitize our museums and institutions are so dangerous. History is not supposed to make us comfortable. Its job is to tell us what happened.

I have marched in too many Pride marches and stood in too many demonstrations to allow those stories to simply be erased.

Because if you erase the demonstrations, you erase why

we demonstrated. If you erase the hatred, you erase what we had to overcome. And if you erase Stonewall, Gay Liberation and the first Pride marches, future generations might believe the rights they have today were simply given to them.

They weren't.

We fought for them.

"I have marched in too many Pride marches and stood in too many demonstrations to allow those stories to simply be erased. Because if you erase the demonstrations, you erase why we demonstrated. If you erase the hatred, you erase what we had to overcome."

Those artifacts in the Smithsonian are not just objects. They are witnesses.

They say: We were here. This happened. We fought back.

Donald Trump can try to rewrite America's history. But he cannot change one essential fact: We lived that history. We saved the evidence. And we are still here to tell the story.

You cannot erase people who refuse to disappear.

Mark Segal is an award-winning journalist, author and Stonewall pioneer. He is also founder and publisher of Philadelphia Gay News. More information on his 50-plus years of continuous activism can be found at marksegalstonewall.com.



Lynn Conway. Widely distributed photo provided by Conway's family after her death

A Trans Woman Invented the Tech Behind Your Smartphone

In 1965, Lynn Conway invented a breakthrough that shaped modern computing, then spent 30 years watching IBM get the credit while she stayed hidden



BY ANNI ARBOUR

Pride season may be behind us, but the transphobia and legal attacks to which it was a defiant answer haven't gone anywhere. The parades end, the flags come down, but the fight underneath them doesn't

take a season off.

Long before any parade took place, before gatherings of transgender people were ever dared, even before the concept of being transgender was a “thing,” individual battles were being fought by trans people for the right to exist. Trans Pride is an announcement of self-affirmation and dignity. But it wasn't easily attained, and it

thrives due to the battle-tested, wounded and unbowed victims of prejudice before us who refused to give in or give up.

That fight for the right to exist didn't stay in the streets. It also played out in boardrooms, laboratories and workplaces where being discovered as transgender could end a career overnight, no matter how essential the work being done. Few stories

make that clearer than Lynn Conway's. In 1968, IBM fired Conway, one of its best young engineers for being transgender — and then spent the next half-century getting credit for the very breakthrough she helped create.

Conway was among IBM's best young engineers in the mid-1960s, working under her deadname on a secret project known as

Democrats Won't Win by Giving in to Transphobia



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I was at a concert recently and a person next to me was wearing a cross-body bag that read, "Speak Up for Your LGBTQ+ Friends." This person appeared to be your average straight white guy.

The fact is, straight guys, even those who consider themselves to be allies, do not speak up for LGBTQ+ people often enough.

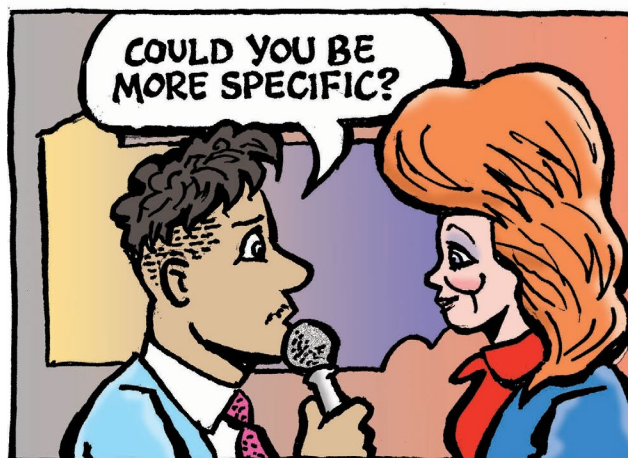
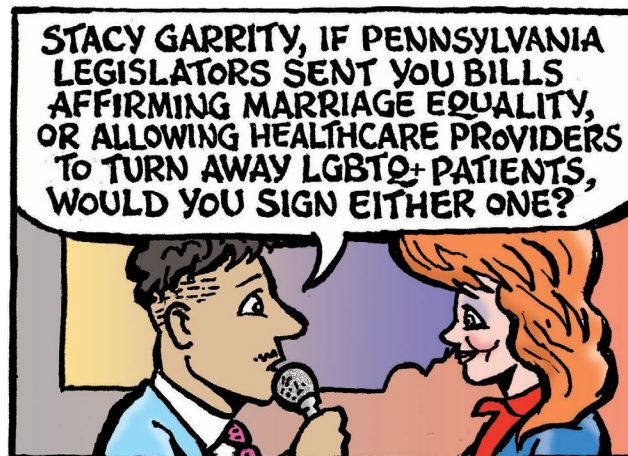
There are a lot of straight guys who aren't against LGBTQ+ rights, but it's not "their fight" because it doesn't directly affect them. Never mind the fact that the people who are directly affected are their family, friends and community members. People they claim to love or at least care about. Straight guys are largely insulated from the harms that result from anti-LGBTQ+ policies. (Straight women less so since so much LGBTQ+ animus has roots in misogyny.)

It's important to remember that not being against something isn't the same as being for something. It's also important to remember that it's not enough to quietly support LGBTQ+ people and issues, especially if you're a straight guy. You can't assume that people know where you stand, because chances are they don't and they're making assumptions.

This idea that trans issues are some kind of electric fence that will fry Democratic candidates if they dare come near it is bullshit.

For example, as a white person I have had encounters with other white people where they say something racist to me, expecting me to agree with them or at least not be offended. As I've lived and learned, I now know that it's important that I live my life and present myself in such a way that racist white people do not think I'm one of them.

Straight folks, you need to live your life and present yourself in such a way that people do not assume you are anti-LGBTQ+. (Unless you are anti-LGBTQ+. In that



case, fuck you.) Because right now the loudest voices are screaming about "men in women's sports" and getting rid of LGBTQ+ books from school libraries and banning trans healthcare. If you give a shit at all, you've got to add your voice to supporting LGBTQ+ people.

This goes for politicians, too. To every Democrat who thinks that they need to abandon trans people in order to win elections, I present to you Sen. Ed Markey's recent defeat of Rep. Seth Moulton in the Democratic Senate primary election in Massachusetts.

Now, Sen. Markey is old. Eighty years old, in fact. And there have definitely been calls for older Dems to step aside in favor of younger leadership.

Unless that younger leadership sucks. And Rep. Moulton sucks. He may be only 47, but he made the extremely gross decision to give credence to the right's anti-trans hysteria.

On the issue of trans kids playing sports, Moulton said, "I have two little girls. I don't want them getting run over on a playing field by a male or formerly male athlete." He later told The Advocate, "As a dad, this is something I think about, and I know others do, too," and that he

wasn't trying to "undermine transgender rights but to highlight what he thinks is the necessity of addressing Republican attacks head-on."

But agreeing with an attack isn't exactly addressing that attack head-on. Moulton lent legitimacy to what is a bad-faith argument. Republicans do not care about girls and women, and they certainly do not care about the sports they play. If they did, they would actually fight for policies that protect girls and women from actual harms, not an

imaginary trans specter.

Markey took a different route.

As Josh Ackley, writing for The Advocate, explains it, "[Markey] confronted Moulton, defended transgender young people, accused politicians of throwing vulnerable children under the political bus, and refused to behave as though association with transgender Americans represented some embarrassing liability requiring distance between himself and the people being attacked."

And Markey won by 30 points.

This idea that trans issues are some kind of electric fence that will fry Democratic candidates if they dare come near it is bullshit.

Are there parents who ordinarily vote for Democrats for whom the issue of trans athletes girls' sports is a top concern? Maybe. But Republicans are betting everything on trans people. Specifically on the hatred of trans people. They are hoping that voters get so fixated on this that they forget about the disastrous war with Iran, the high prices they're paying at the gas station and supermarket, the attack on reproductive freedom, ICE killing people in the streets, immigrants being treated like criminals, the Reflecting Pool debacle, Trump tearing down the East Wing of the White House, lack of food safety oversight, making every meal a game of intestinal Russian roulette, and so much more.

Anyone who cares about a trans kid running track more than any of these issues is not going to vote for a Democrat. Period. Instead of pandering to anti-trans hysteria, Democrats should really be running on a platform of "Republicans want you to shit your pants and die" and make Republicans prove otherwise.

Between The Lines Gets a Glossy Glow-Up for New Era

.....

This marks the final newsprint edition of Between The Lines, Michigan's LGBTQ+ newspaper since 1993. Starting in October, BTL goes glossy and monthly, with crisp imagery, bold colors and fresh ways to tell the stories of our community. Readers can still expect the coverage they count on — news, upcoming events, profiles, opinion columns and more — now delivered in a monthly magazine format built to showcase our community with a modern, new look. You'll find our mag in the same delivery locations each month. Media is an ever-evolving landscape, and Pride Source has

always looked ahead. As BTL transitions, our commitment stays the same: reflecting and representing Michigan's LGBTQ+ community in our pages and online. Our refresh doesn't stop at the printing press. Pridesource.com now features an expanded, searchable events calendar spanning the whole state, plus a donate button readers can use to directly support our independent queer journalism. And our revamped advertiser portal offers more convenience for business partners. We have more in store — follow us on social media, sign up for our email newsletter and subscribe to have our print edition mailed right to your doorstep. Change is part of the story, but the mission holds steady — thank you for reading, for 33 years and counting. We can't wait to share this new chapter with you.



Iconic Designer Bob Mackie Dies

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Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie, 87, died Sept. 14 in Palm Springs from pneumonia. Known as the "Designer to the Stars," Mackie dressed Cher, Carol Burnett, Diana Ross and Barbra Streisand over a career spanning more than 60 years, winning nine Emmy Awards, a Tony Award and three Oscar nominations. He was the first person to win an Emmy for costume design, in 1967, and was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame in 2002. Mackie's longtime partner, costume designer Ray Aghayan, was his collaborator and companion from the early 1960s until Aghayan's death in 2011. "You don't try to change anybody, you just try to make them look better than ever," Mackie once said of his approach to design.

Advocate, Out Editors Demand Answers on Board Member's MAGA Support

.....

Editors at The Advocate, Out and other Equalpride-owned brands publicly pressed their parent company for answers Sept. 14 after

reports surfaced that board member Jay Katari has expressed open support for President Donald Trump and the MAGA movement. According to reports, Katari has posted photos wearing a MAGA hat online and mocks the trans community in his Instagram bio, where he lists his pronouns as a string of masculine slang terms. His appointment follows layoffs earlier this year that pushed out dozens of queer and trans journalists across Equalpride's brands, including editors at The

Advocate, Pride.com and Them.us. In a news release, editors wrote they became aware that Katari "may have espoused beliefs that are antithetical to the mission of our brands." CEO Mark Berryhill, who had praised Katari two weeks earlier, has since said the company will investigate. Pride Source remains independently owned and unequivocal in our support of every member of our community. We will continue shining light on anti-LGBTQ+ efforts from the MAGA movement.

Chappell Roan Throws Fundraiser for Trans Youth

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Chappell Roan is throwing a two-night fundraiser, The Super Graphic Spectacular, Oct. 21-22 at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium, featuring drag, live entertainment, special guests and a performance from Roan herself. Proceeds benefit her Midwest Princess Project, which has raised more than \$800,000 for trans youth and LGBTQ+ organizations. Roan wrapped a global run of tour dates earlier this year, and fans are still eagerly awaiting word on her long-teased sophomore album.

Nashville Airport to Honor Dolly Parton

.....

Soon, passengers will be able to depart from Dolly Parton International Airport — or something close to it. The Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority voted 6-0 on Sept. 11 to begin renaming Nashville International Airport in honor of the country icon, who died Aug. 25 at age 80. A final name is still in the works, but one thing's certain: Dolly's legacy as a proud LGBTQ+ ally will keep soaring.

'Oh, Mary!' Heads to HBO

.....

Cole Escola's Tony-winning dark comedy "Oh, Mary!" is coming to HBO in 2027 as a filmed live performance, recorded during its West End run at London's Trafalgar Theatre. Escola, who is nonbinary and queer, wrote and stars in the show as a scheming Mary Todd Lincoln. The nonbinary actor teased the news alongside out lesbian "Sex and the City" star Cynthia Nixon and co-star Sarah Jessica Parker, who will also star.



Cole Escola in character. Photo: HBO



Sarah and Kim Padilla, owners of Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery. Photo: Brian Wells

The Charlotte Farm Stand Growing Something Beautiful

What happened when lesbian-owned Wildflower Wives took a chance on
Pride in rural Michigan

BY JASON COLLINS

On a farm stand in Charlotte, Michigan, in a county that voted for Donald Trump in 2024, Sarah and Kim Padilla hung a Pride flag and waited to see what would happen.

Picture rainbow colors against a backdrop of farmland — families, couples and kids browsing baked goods and homemade crafts, with no city skyline in sight. That's what greeted the 500 people who showed up in mid-June for Pride on the Farm at

Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery, the Padillas' family business.

The couple weren't sure whether flying rainbow colors over their farmland would draw support or backlash, especially as the current administration moves aggressively

against LGBTQ+ rights. But on June 13 and 14, the community showed up, spending the weekend celebrating, petting farm animals and finding out they weren't as alone in rural Michigan as they might have assumed.

"We put a little Pride flag out, and we

didn't know how that was going to hit with our town because Charlotte is known to be not accepting of people who don't fit the mold," Sarah tells BTL.

Pride on the Farm had the same energy as any big-city celebration — people finding each other, showing up as themselves. It just happened to unfold on a farm in Eaton County instead of a city street.

Since their grand opening on April 25, Wildflower Wives has built a reputation as more than just a roadside stop for seasonal goods. It's become a place customers return to because of its welcoming space, where LGBTQ+ people are not just welcomed but safe, seen and celebrated.

"We learned that there are so many in the community who never felt like there was like a safe place to be because there aren't businesses here that show that they're accepting," Sarah says.

Word about Wildflower Wives had already started spreading before Pride on the Farm ever happened. Sisters Erika Jenne and Erin Laferier, who later helped organize the event, found the farm stand while scrolling Instagram and stopped by on a sister date. A live camera on the property caught the sisters' reaction to their first visit. Sarah and Kim asked if they could share the clip. It went viral. "I think people

are really yearning for a place like this, and a place where you can come and be part of a community," Jenne told WLNS. "They're creating history in this space," Laferier told the outlet.

"Most people keep to themselves, but we started hosting events other than Pride, and it's just become a safe space for a lot of people to just get together and embrace our community," Sarah says.

Wildflower Wives is one farm stand in one small town, but the turnout on Pride weekend suggests the need it met isn't unique to Charlotte.

Pop culture tends to picture LGBTQ+ life as an urban or coastal thing. A 2019 report from the Movement Advancement Project, "Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America," tells a different story: An estimated 3–5% of rural adults identify as LGBT, roughly 3.8 million people, and

15–20% of queer Americans live in rural areas. The report also found that rural LGBTQ+ people are less likely to have explicit nondiscrimination protections, are more likely to live in areas with religious exemption laws and have fewer alternatives when they do face discrimination.

Emily Kazyak, a sociologist at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, has written that LGBTQ+ people now live in 99% of U.S. counties. Compared with their urban counterparts, she notes, sexual minorities in small towns are not more likely to be closeted, and they also report

We put a little Pride flag out, and we didn't know how that was going to hit with our town because Charlotte is known to be not accepting of people who don't fit the mold.

— Sarah Padilla, Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery co-owner

higher levels of well-being. Rural queer visibility doesn't need to look the same as urban queer visibility — it just needs the room to take shape.

In addition to Wildflower Wives, other rural corners of the state are finding their own versions of this. In Vermontville, near Lansing, the youth support organization I'll Be Your Rock hosts an annual Vermontville Youth Pride that draws upward of 150 people, including kids who travel from across Michigan. "In a small, rural community like ours, that kind of visibility and affirmation is powerful," educator Cassey Tien told BTL last year. "It says loudly that you are seen, you are valued and you are not alone."

Back at Wildflower Wives, Kim sees the

See **Wildflower Wives**, page 26



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How Jason Lee Turned Personal Adversity Into Leadership

The entrepreneur turned a challenging childhood into a life of advocacy and political leadership — becoming a role model for a new generation

BY TRACY E. GILCHRIST

Earlier this year, innovative media platform Hollywood Unlocked shared a video of its CEO, Jason Lee, grocery shopping with megastar Rihanna at the Bristol Farms in West Hollywood. The outing went viral with its joyful and heartfelt moments of the duo getting into Yung Miami's "Spend Dat" and a sweet exchange between Rihanna and a cancer patient who approached her. Lee's friendship with the "Diamonds" singer is one of several close relationships he's built with artists over the years, including Cardi B and Tiffany Haddish, who hosted this year's Hollywood Unlocked Impact Awards.

Watching the video, it's easy to imagine the kid Lee once was — a foster child who escaped into celebrity culture and dreamed of connecting with stars like Michael Jackson. Growing up in Stockton, California, in the '80s and '90s, he would dial 411 directory assistance in hopes of tracking down his favorite celebrities.

For Lee, entertainment wasn't just an obsession — it was an escape. During roughly five years in foster care, celebrity culture offered Lee a glimpse of a world beyond his own circumstances. Today, that childhood fascination has evolved into a career that pairs storytelling with advocacy, using media not just to chronicle celebrity culture but to shape conversations and create opportunities.

Hollywood Unlocked features celebrity news alongside episodes of "The Jason Lee Show," which is licensed to multiple platforms and recently partnered with BET through its creator studio. Lee also leveraged his three seasons on "Love & Hip Hop," beginning in 2015, to grow Hollywood Unlocked into a recognizable destination for celebrity and culture coverage.

"By reaching masses of people, whether it's the 400 at a hospital or 4 million across the globe, it's, 'What type of influence and impact do I want to have on the world, what type of influence do I want to have in the culture?'" Lee says. "When I saw the boom of social media and blogging and the dot-com [era], I was like, 'You know, I want to get into the tech business.' To me, HollywoodUnlocked.com is a tech-based business, but the creative output of the product is media."



Jason Lee. Photo: Tyren Redd

In June 2026, changemakers across the spectrum of entertainment, advocacy and politics gathered at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles for the Hollywood Unlocked Impact Awards. Tennessee state Rep. Justin Jones was awarded alongside entertainment legends Tyler Perry, Patti LaBelle and more. The event benefited the Hollywood Cares Foundation, which Lee founded to uplift underserved youth in Black and Brown communities through leadership, civic engagement and personal development. The Impact Awards are an extension of that throughline of culture and social involvement that began early for Lee, a gay man and media mogul who understands the value in telling his own story and uplifting others.

“Growing up, I really loved just entertainment culture and celebrity life,” Lee adds. “And when I was in a group home in foster care, watching my favorite celebrities performing, that was kind of like my thing.”

“What I’ve learned over the years from being a former foster kid all the way through my work with probation and juveniles to working in the union is just, narrative building is important, and being in control of your narrative is important. Storytelling is the way to do that,” says Lee.

In his 2019 memoir, “God Must Have Forgotten About Me,” the future labor organizer, reality TV star on “Love & Hip Hop” and host of the juggernaut talk series “The Jason Lee Show” told the story of turbulent formative experiences in California’s Central Valley.

“It wasn’t a childhood that I think everybody can relate to, but there are lots of people in my community today that still have some of the same challenges,” Lee says. “My mother ended up becoming afflicted by drugs. My father was absent. I ended up in foster care for about five years and then came home, re-entered the community, ended up getting shot, and then losing a brother to gun violence. It was challenging, but obviously I stayed the path and charted a course that was rooted in overcoming and have done pretty well for myself.”

Early on, Lee knew the importance of owning his story and of speaking up. A graduate of Amos Alonzo Stagg High School in Stockton, Lee returned to his alma mater at 19 as a part-time campus liaison at a minimum wage of \$10.63 an hour, ensuring

kids made it safely to class. When Lee spotted a sign on the union message board about a vote to ratify a contract that would reclassify positions and eliminate jobs, he sprang into action.

“The first question I had was, how does the union make a deal with the school without talking to us? Why is my job that I love going away and I [do] not know about it? I started

“We’re navigating with optimism that at some point the pendulum is going to swing the other direction. And we’ll be ready there to work with all the brands who have abandoned the culture under this administration.”

calling around other schools, talking to other campus school liaison aides, and none of them knew what was happening,” Lee says. “I started organizing meetings across the school district. Then I reached out to community groups like the Nation of Islam and the NAACP and different community organizations.”

Though Lee couldn’t save his own position as he had been there less than five years, the work of organizing forced the union and school district to renegotiate terms and resulted in saving several jobs. From there, Lee worked in probation and education for six years, eventually becoming a union representative for the Service Employees International Union Local 250 and ascending the ranks to become staff director within the Kaiser Permanente division beginning

See Jason Lee, page 24

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lost state. We're no longer looked at as a place people leave," he said.

After years of being beaten back, the fire was spreading again.

In 2018, Dana Nessel was elected attorney general, becoming the first openly LGBTQ+ person elected to statewide office in Michigan. "My predecessor as Michigan Attorney General was the opposing party on the Obergefell case, spending our state's tax dollars to argue that my wife and I didn't deserve the right to get married or jointly adopt our children," Nessel told BTL.

Her victory represented more than a single election. It signaled that LGBTQ+ candidates could not only compete statewide but also win even in a politically divided state.

"I spent years watching the resources of this office be used to delay and denounce necessary, legal protections for residents in my state, just like me. I realized then more than ever Michigan needed an attorney general who would protect, instead of persecute, families like mine," Nessel added.

The present moment: power and precarity

Today, Michigan has the largest LGBTQ+ legislative caucus in its history, with seven openly queer lawmakers serving in the state legislature. Their presence has already reshaped policy outcomes.

In 2023, Michigan expanded the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity, a change nearly 50 years in the making.

"Our most vulnerable LGBTQ+ community members really needed non-discrimination desperately. Elliott-Larsen was huge because it was such a long-fought battle," said state Rep. Emily Dievendorf. "We know philosophically and spiritually that fighting for love and the ability to live authentically is both the bare minimum and also something that nobody else should care to interfere with in our lives."

Rep. Dievendorf, Michigan's

first nonbinary legislator, was part of the coalition that helped push the expansion forward, alongside lawmakers like state Sen. Jeremy Moss, who sponsored the legislation.

"We took the helm with a pro-equality majority in the legislature for the first time. And it was a very significant deal to be recognized in that law after a long struggle and ensure that if somebody is discriminated against at work, in their housing, in publicly available spaces, there's a remedy for justice," Moss told BTL.

For Moss, who became Michigan's first openly gay state senator in 2018, this moment is less a culmination than a continuation. Proof of what representation can build over time, and how quickly it can be tested. His current run for Congress, where he could become the first openly LGBTQ+ person to represent Michigan at the federal level, reflects a shift that once felt out of reach.

"For decades, queer people weren't just excluded from power. They were erased from culture, from institutions, from the story of what it meant to belong," said state Rep. Jason Morgan. "I want to make sure that we are never to be made invisible or made to feel less than because of our identities ever again. And the strongest way to do that is to have a seat at the table as decisions are being made."

LGBTQ+ representation in Michigan is no longer something that happens after the fact, or quietly, or at the margins. It has begun to reshape the internal culture of political power itself — visible, present and, increasingly, unapologetic.

"During my lifetime, people might come out, but in a lot of cases, it was after they were done serving. And now that's not the case. Now, there are people who I serve with who are openly and vibrantly living out," said state Rep. Laurie Pohutsky. "I really love the defiance that comes in refusing to back down and to just live authentically and to serve your community authentically."

And yet, that visibility exists alongside a growing sense of



Attorney General Dana Nessel and Rep. Emily Dievendorf. Photos: AG Office / Michigan House Democrats



vulnerability, a recognition that progress, no matter how hard-won, is not self-sustaining.

"The Republicans have already been talking about rolling back a lot of the legislation that we've passed, whether it's around LGBTQ+ people or our environmental protections or our gun legislation," said state Rep. Mike McFall. "I do feel like this is a time in Michigan [when] if we do not take back the House and if we do not maintain a way to stop Republicans, they will roll back everything, all of the progress that we have made."

The ACLU is currently tracking 517 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the country, 22 of which have been introduced in Michigan. In March 2026, the Supreme Court sided with a Christian therapist, striking down a law banning conversion therapy in Colorado. In February 2026, every trans person who had updated their official gender marker in Kansas had their IDs and birth certificates invalidated. Since taking office in 2025, President Donald Trump has attacked queer people with a slate of executive orders targeting transgender youth, healthcare accessibility, gender-affirming care and much more.

"I think it felt like for a minute these rights were untouchable," Moss said. "And now it just seems like it's a backslide because they're

talking about us. They're talking about trans rights. They're talking about LGBTQ+ youth. They're demonizing LGBTQ+ people. They're waging campaigns on our backs."

Nessel sees the same pattern emerging.

"We're on the other side of that wave of progress, and we're starting to watch it recede, through national sentiment, through egregious rulings by SCOTUS; it does feel like there's another shift underway," Nessel said. "The Trump administration has made no secret about its animosity towards the transgender community and LGBTQ+ rights in general. The landscape of LGBTQ+ protections has developed very quickly over the last decade or so, but that progress may disappear just as quickly if we don't stand strong together in this moment."

What comes next

The question now is not whether queer people can win office in Michigan. That barrier has been broken repeatedly. The question is what that power can withstand.

Every member of Michigan's LGBTQ+ legislative caucus faces reelection in 2026. The margins remain thin. The political

environment remains volatile.

"It's still concerning that there could either be multiple LGBTQ+ people in the Senate or there might not be any. There might be two LGBTQ+ people of color in the Senate or, again, there might not be any," Rep. Jason Hoskins noted. "We just need to continue to build power ... we need to continue to be at the table."

Hoskins, the first Black LGBTQ+ person elected to the Michigan Legislature, represents both the expansion of representation and the stakes of losing it.

Fifty years after Kathy Kozachenko's victory, queer political power in Michigan is no longer an aspiration. It's a fact — and a target.

The fire Kozachenko helped ignite is still burning, but not as a steady flame — as something more dynamic. It surges. It flickers. And in moments like this one, it demands tending.

"You yourself may not be a political person, but your identity has been politicized. To pretend otherwise is irresponsible," Nessel said. "If we stick our heads in the sand and ignore the world around us, then we won't get a say in what comes next. It will be up to the next generation of LGBTQ+ leaders to capitalize on the momentum we've built in order to propel us forward."

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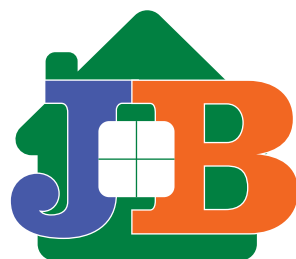
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68 BUSINESSES AND 6 BOYFRIENDS

Tristan Schukraft, the ‘CEO of Everything Gay,’ talks about how he made his fortune

BY SPENCER MACNAUGHTON

This article originally appeared on Uncloseted Media.

Tristan Schukraft started his first business when he was 21, selling Razor scooters out of his pickup truck to help finance his idea for an e-ticketing platform for the airline industry. Today he’s founder and CEO of MISTR, a major LGBTQ+ telehealth platform expanding access to PrEP and STI testing, and he boasts a broader portfolio of 68 businesses, which he says have led him to become a billionaire.

Schukraft has become widely known as the “CEO of Everything Gay.” He also owns Tryst Hospitality, a family of luxury gay hotels with destinations in iconic LGBTQ+ destinations like San Juan and Puerto Vallarta. Last year, after Schukraft spent \$17 million to buy much of Fire Island Pines’ commercial district, WSJ Magazine ran a story titled “The Man Who Bought Fire Island.”

Schukraft sat down with Spencer Macnaughton on the podcast “UNCLOSETED with Spencer Macnaughton” to talk about preserving queer institutions, ending the HIV epidemic and the realities of running so many LGBTQ-focused businesses, plus six — yes, six — boyfriends.

In addition to MISTR, Schukraft owns some of the country’s most iconic queer spaces, from the Abbey in West Hollywood to his Tryst Hotels properties and his recent Fire Island Pines acquisition. Below, he talks about what it takes to run it all.

A lot of people in the LGBTQ+ community know you as this force who seems to have his hands on everything. How would you describe what you do?

My biggest project is MISTR. I started it eight years ago with the objective of ending HIV. I was trying to help friends get on PrEP, and 10 friends became 100 friends. I realized this was more than a pet

project, it was a full-time job. Now we have 800,000 patients, and for the first time in a generation, we can really end HIV. That’s how I got into telehealth and HIV prevention and care.

Hospitality was different. I watched “The Birdcage” years ago, and when I bought this hotel here in Puerto Rico, it was going to be my retirement project. But shortly after, the Abbey came up for sale, and I thought it couldn’t go to a conglomerate or get bulldozed for condos. So I bought it. Then Fire Island, Crown & Anchor and expanding Tryst hotels to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Part of my day is HIV prevention and care, and the other half is nightlife and preserving queer institutions.

How did you become this force? How did you make your money?

I’ve been an entrepreneur for a very long time. My first company, I started at 21 doing e-ticketing for the airline industry, and before that I was selling Razor scooters out of the back of my pickup truck. It was not an easy road.

So it’s not family money. You really independently created this for yourself?

No, I wish it was family money. I always say the only thing better than new money is old money. My parents loaned me \$10,000 to start that first company, but it wasn’t enough, so I imported 457 scooters and sold them at swap meets, schools and strip malls until Christmas Eve. I learned my first lesson on inventory: I bought every color when everyone just wanted red, blue and black.

I read that you now have 100 companies in your portfolio. Is that accurate?

I have 68 companies. ID90 was my first big success. It started as a travel booking engine for airline personnel, kind of like an Expedia for that industry, and it grew from there. That’s actually how I got into

hotels, too. I’d stay at the Four Seasons or the Ritz-Carlton and think, this is a nice luxury experience, but there’s no music by the pool, no protein bars, no shower wand. I thought I could do this better, and that’s been my driver with a lot of my businesses.

What is your advice for entrepreneurs or for managers and leaders?

Efficiency. I can’t be everywhere, so you need really good talent. When there’s a problem, I don’t want to throw more people at it, I want to figure out what’s actually wrong and see if we can automate it. My objective has always been to leverage technology and make money while I sleep. And find a need. Every business I’ve gotten into is because I looked at what existed and thought, they’re not doing this right. There are tens of thousands of hotels in the world, but I’d argue there’s no luxury hotel chain built for us. In our hotels you’re going to hear Lady Gaga, Dua Lipa and Madonna in the lobby. You can wear your thong at the pool. If three people check in to one bed, we’re not going to say anything.

People say you’re a billionaire from all of this. Is that an accurate statement?

That’s a fair and accurate statement.

People call you the CEO of everything gay. Do you like when people call you that?

I do. Some people thought I gave myself that name, but it actually came from a journalist, I believe



Tristan Schukraft. Photo: Facebook/Bradford Rogne

at the Washington Blade. Other outlets picked it up and ran with it. There’s a lot of responsibility that comes with it. I’m preserving gay institutions like the Abbey and Fire Island, and I want to keep what’s there while also evolving them so they can sustain themselves for future generations. It’s a lot of fun, but the downside of owning all of these businesses is that I’m working seven days a week, even when I’m supposedly having a good time at the Abbey or on Fire Island.

I read that MISTR makes some of its money through fees paid by nonprofits, through a government program that subsidizes the cost of HIV prevention drugs, and that the company could soon face challenges as Congress considers changes to that program. Has that affected MISTR yet?

See **Tristan Schukraft**, page 27

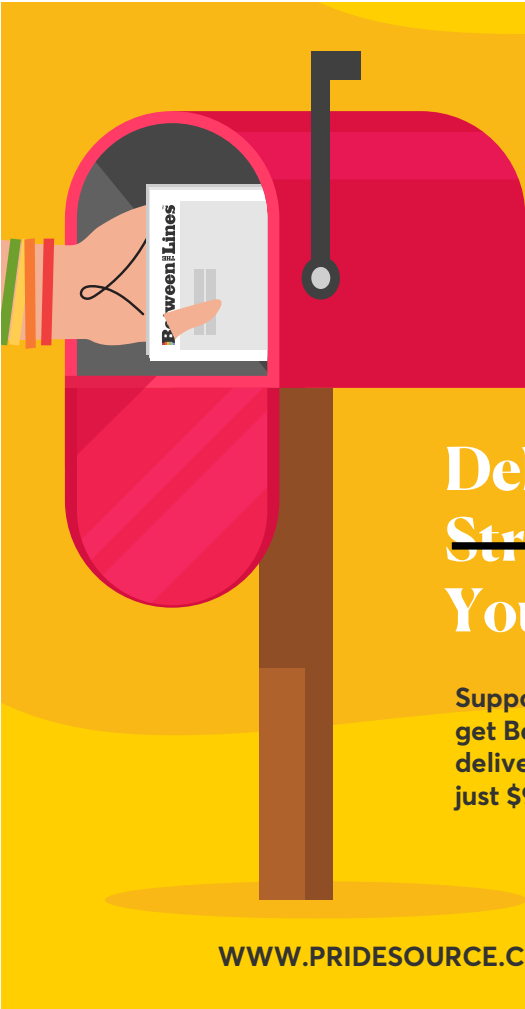
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Jason Lee

Continued from page 19

in Sacramento and expanding to his home city of Stockton and eventually to Southern California.

"I immediately became a steward of the union, a chief steward, executive board member, and got very active in the union there," Lee says. "That school district experience was what really fueled my passion for standing up for the underdog."

Upon leaving SEIU, Lee worked for the California Nurses Association for four years, where he advocated for nurses in and around Los Angeles, negotiating their contracts when they went on strike. As digital media transformed the entertainment landscape, Lee launched Hollywood Unlocked in 2015, creating a platform centered on Black entertainment and culture that continues to thrive even as much of the media industry contracts.

"We saw diversification as a priority early on. So, you know, we have relationships with streaming platforms that aren't based on advertising dollars," Lee says, acknowledging media downsizing under the Trump administration.

"We're navigating with optimism that at some point the pendulum is going to swing the other direction. And we'll be ready there to work with all the brands who have abandoned the culture under this administration," he adds.

One offshoot of Hollywood Unlocked is Healthcare Unlocked, launched in partnership with Enhance Health in 2023. The vertical combines celebrity culture and health insurance "to help families get access to quality, affordable healthcare," Lee says.

BET's Black + Iconic Soiree, which celebrates Black LGBTQ+ excellence, honored Lee with its Culture Trailblazer Award in May.

"I went from running through the streets in Stockton, California, where I was shot, to now helping lead those same streets as the first openly gay vice mayor in the city's history," Lee said in his acceptance speech. "A Black gay kid who once felt discarded and underestimated is now helping to shape policy, protect diversity and inclusion, and advocate for safer communities, and show young people what happens when you refuse to give up on yourself."

Through the years, Lee has held ties to the community where he was raised, and in 2024, he ran for Stockton City Council District 6 on a campaign including uplifting youth and won, becoming the city's first openly gay vice mayor.

"The [Trump] administration has just pulled the veil of racism back in this country where we can see it for what it is. And then we all get to decide how we engage it. Do we participate in the election process by voting? Do we jump in the political arena like I did and become an elected?" Lee says. "The greatest thing that we have that a lot of our ancestors and the people in the civil rights



Jason Lee. Photo: Tyren Redd

movement lost their lives for is our voice and our right to have an opinion and to have the ability to voice that opinion."

Whether it was as a campus liaison at 19, launching the Hollywood Cares Foundation, or focusing on youth in his political campaign, Lee has continually advocated for youth. As a gay man and a force in advocacy, politics and media, Lee is a possibility model for young people who see themselves in him.

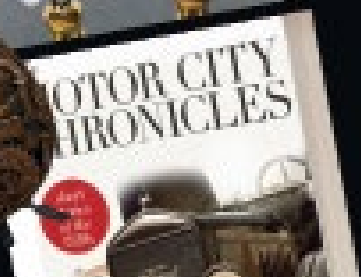
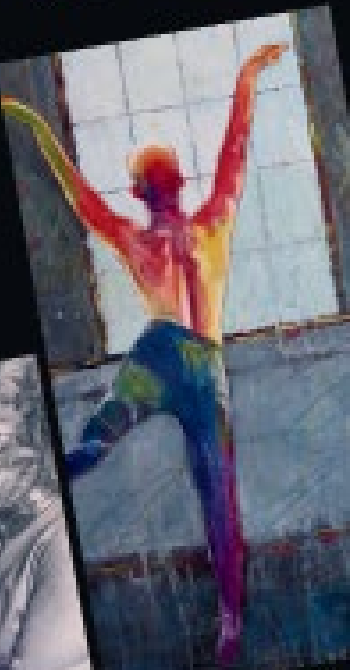
"The world is so noisy now with social media, and social media every day tells you who you are, who you should be. You're not good enough," Lee says. "I love that when kids see me, they go, 'Oh, yeah, that's the guy that was with Rihanna. That's the guy that was with Cardi B. That's the guy that's our vice mayor. That guy right there got shot and survived and changed his life. Oh, and he's gay.'"

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Co-owner Sarah Padilla tends to goats at Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery. Photo: Brian Wells

Wildflower Wives Continued from page 17

farm stand playing that same role for adults.

“We’re giving as many opportunities for people to get together and just connect as possible,” Kim says.

“A lot of people said our event was different than other prides that they’ve gone to. It felt very comforting, and everybody felt more like a family,” Sarah says. “Everybody was talking to strangers, sitting in our yard on swinging chairs and making friends.”

Nobody marched or crowded a parade route. Instead, people bought baked goods and homemade crafts, visited with farm animals and sat around talking to strangers until they weren’t strangers anymore. That’s a kind of belonging that can grow wherever people choose to create it.

For Sarah and Kim, that comfort is the point — not just for one weekend, but as a model other rural towns might follow.

“We would love to inspire others



Owners Sarah and Kim Padilla at Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery. Photo: Brian Wells

and hope it can be like a domino effect,” she says. “It’s not just about the LGBT community. It’s about everyone being kinder to each other.”

Wildflower Wives Farm Stand & Bakery is located at 2276 S. Stine Road in Charlotte, with self-serve pickup available Friday

through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The stand’s small-batch menu rotates weekly — look for cookie flavors like Fruity Pebbles, red velvet, mint chocolate sundae and pistachio swirl rolls. Orders can be placed ahead through the farm’s website, and updates on new offerings and events are posted regularly on its Instagram and Facebook pages.

We represent 65 community-based health organizations across the country that outsource their online PrEP programs to us. It doesn't cost taxpayers anything, so it's a win-win. But changes to policy and funding are a constant threat. Trump could change his mind by lunchtime, and it has a domino effect.

You brought several stars from "The Real Housewives" to Congress to speak about the importance of HIV prevention and funding. Why did you do that?

You can go into Washington combative, or you can bring star power. If I can get seven Housewives to agree on one thing, there's hope for Congress. It was well received, packed the room and got coverage from both parties, which was the whole point.

You have six boyfriends?

I do. People assume I'm dating six different guys separately, but it's really three throuples that make up one family. My fiancé and I have a boyfriend. My other two boyfriends were already a couple before I became the third in that relationship, and we've known each other for years. Then I met Victor about a year ago, and we just celebrated our first anniversary. All my boyfriends are Latino, and we call ourselves the familia. We live together and travel together, but it's not everyone sleeping with everyone.



Tristan Schukraft with Madonna. Photo: Instagram/@tschukraft

It's three throuples coexisting under one roof.

Is there not interpersonal jealousy that can become a hotter mess than any Housewives show?

No real jealousy, but like any relationship, people get on each other's nerves sometimes. For the most part, we're happy.

See **Tristan Schukraft**, page 28



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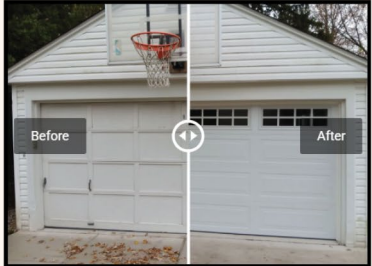
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I Didn't Know He Was Gay
 Puzzle can be found on page 29

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◀ **Tristan Schukraft**
Continued from page 27

gay men's health more broadly, whether that's hair restoration, ED or other wellness needs.

Read the full interview at pridesource.com.

Do you worry any of them are coming for your money?

There are people out there who'd want to date me for that reason, sure. But it's one cohesive family, and the personalities have to genuinely work together for this to function. I don't really worry about it.

What's next for MISTR? What are you looking forward to?

Everyone knows us for PrEP, and that's still our core focus, along with long-term HIV care. We recently introduced an ED program priced 49% below the rest of the market. The goal is to keep building on making sexual health stigma-free. When we started, terms like "Truvada whore" were common. Now PrEP is socially accepted, and we want to keep expanding into



Tristan Schukraft with five of his six boyfriends. Photo: Instagram/@tschukraft

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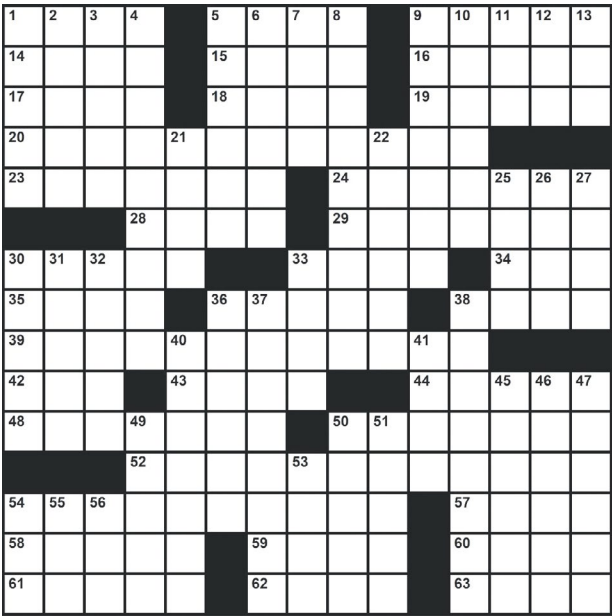
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I Didn't Know He Was Gay

Across

- 1 One that may be beaten
- 5 Plunk your rear down
- 9 Deep throat problem
- 14 Razor brand
- 15 All-night bash

- 16 Pageant crown
- 17 The word "queer," e.g., before "Queer Eye"
- 18 Wilson of "Zoolander"
- 19 Warhol's range?
- 20 She married Euphe Byrd
- 23 Advocate
- 24 Skipping school
- 28 NY Met or LA Dodger
- 29 Track event for Mickey Mouse?
- 30 She came between Bess and Jackie
- 33 Bargain sign at Barneys

- 34 Ran into
- 35 Apple that isn't a fruit
- 36 High-end hotel option
- 38 Care beginning
- 39 She married Peter Allen
- 42 U-turn from WSW
- 43 Respondents to 911
- 44 Like Emma Donoghue
- 48 Tanning places
- 50 "South Pacific" setting, broadly
- 52 She married Peter Marc Jacobson
- 54 WWII battle site in Nureyev's country
- 57 Give for a while
- 58 Like phone sex
- 59 A little behind
- 60 River of Wilde's land
- 61 Estelle of "The Golden Girls"
- 62 Some of Mary's lambs
- 63 Mark with a branding iron

Down

- 1 Prop department jewelry
- 2 Musclemen Charles
- 3 Queen that beats a king
- 4 Mouth organ
- 5 Juliet who starred with Elvis in "G.I. Blues"
- 6 Evan Wolfson, for one
- 7 Where to find hot buns
- 8 Get inside of
- 9 Law about who can marry whom, e.g.
- 10 Musical ineptitude
- 11 "Far out!"
- 12 Preposition for Byron

- 13 Swan Lake step
- 21 Kind of log
- 22 Walk, in Caitlin Clark's sport
- 25 Dick, for one
- 26 Reproduced without sex, for short
- 27 Company that makes coolers
- 30 Odometer reading
- 31 Essential acid
- 32 "___ tov!"
- 33 Homophobia and such
- 36 Monkey or ape
- 37 Fix, as a mess of wires
- 38 Inexplicable events
- 40 One way to row a boat
- 41 They gave Pinocchio an 8-incher
- 45 Words from a closet, perhaps
- 46 Earth pigment
- 47 Benefitting from Viagra
- 49 Black key for Elton John
- 50 Take the soapbox
- 51 Yields
- 53 Pull out your shooter
- 54 Org. for Clea DuVall
- 55 Mon. follower
- 56 Michelangelo's output

See p. 27 for answers

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Michigan Chamber

Continued from page 11

benefit from that network.

"Ten percent is your membership dues to join the chamber," he says. "Ninety percent is your participation."

Heard says he often points to a specific example when explaining why the statewide expansion matters beyond spreadsheets and membership dues. One of the chamber's board members lives in a community very different from Detroit and drives back into the city regularly, he says, simply to find people who see her as a whole person in an environment where that connection is harder to come by. Multiply that by every county without a chamber presence yet, and the case for going statewide gets less abstract.

Heard describes the endpoint less as a business network and more as an ecosystem, one built to work alongside government, nonprofits and community partners rather than duplicate them.

"We aspire to be the convener of everything LGBTQ in the

state of Michigan," he says, "whether that's partnering with our nonprofit or NGO partners, or with our allies inside the state legislature or the federal government, and amplifying the voice of the communities so they can feel seen and affirmed in who they are."

"We want to make sure that we are creating the new, more ethical Amazons, and the better and intentional Microsofts. Innovation is coming from all walks of life, and that includes the LGBT community."

— Kevin Heard, Michigan Pride Chamber of Commerce executive director

October 17

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