

OCTOBER 2026

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE LinesTM

BY PRIDESOURCE.COM

DINER TO DESTINATION
How Detroit's Roses
became a national name

FALL INTO FUN
Get spooky with drag,
disco and more



ELECTION 2026

Michigan leaders confront
a pivotal November

Turning the Page

After three decades on newsprint, the publisher on why
we're becoming a monthly magazine

Not sure who's on your **BALLOT** this year?

Check
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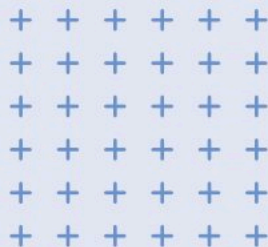
[Progressivevotersguide.com/Michigan](https://progressivevotersguide.com/Michigan)



Paid for by Progress Michigan, 614 Seymour Ave., Lansing, MI 48933

Dr. Paul Benson's

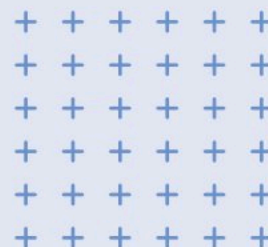
Be Well Medical Center



EST. 1980: THE ORIGINAL LGBTQ CLINIC IN MICHIGAN

Quality Health Care, Experience Counts

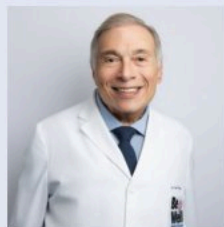
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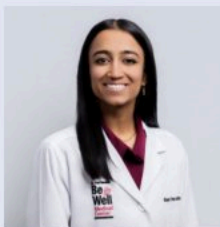
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We celebrate and embrace diversity and are non-discriminatory. **ALL GENDERS WELCOME!** Our priority is your good health.



Paul Benson, DO,
AAHIVS



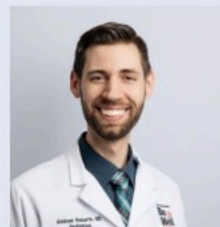
Mayuri Bharathan, PA-C



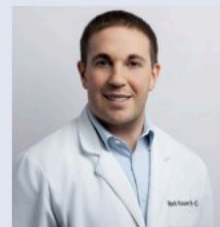
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AAHIVS



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FAAP



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AAHIVS

Three Locations



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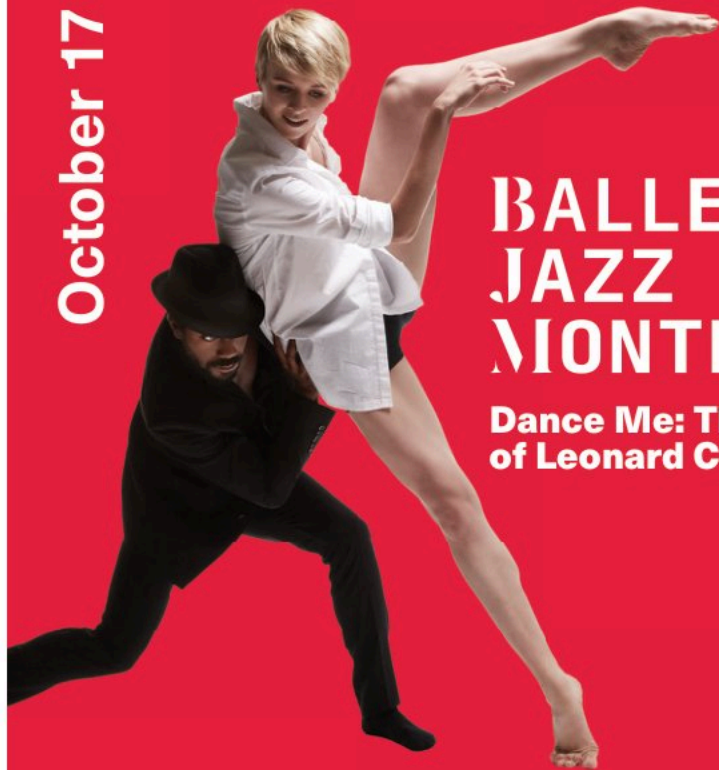


Osborn Family Medical Clinic
13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248 544-9300



Community Health Awareness Group
1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118

October 17



BALLETS JAZZ MONTREAL

**Dance Me: The Music
of Leonard Cohen**

**Dance@
Detroit Opera**

SAT / OCT 17 / 7:30PM

Sexy, explosive, and completely original—Ballets Jazz Montréal (BJM) arrives in Detroit with one of this season's most anticipated tour de force in *Dance Me*. Developed with the personal blessing of Leonard Cohen, *Dance Me* is more than a tribute; it is a breathtaking translation of a legend's soul into physical form.

Ballets Jazz Montreal doesn't just move to Cohen's songs—they surrender to it. Through movement, they capture the mood and essence that made Cohen such an icon. From the depth of his voice to the sharp wit of his lyrics, these world-class dancers embody the very rhythm of his poetry. The result? A performance where impeccable technique meets raw, individual personality.

**Tickets start at
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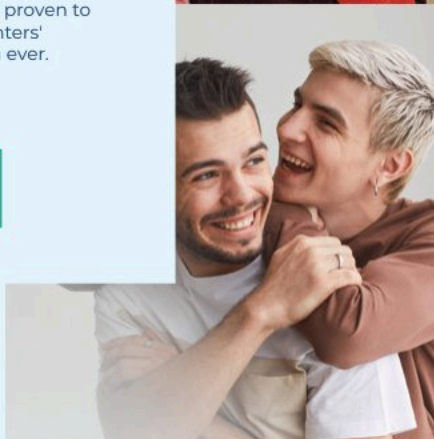
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8



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One Handshake at a Time: Meet Angelica Robinson



Cpl. Angelica Robinson. Courtesy photo

Quick Takes

The movie that gets you

“Hidden Figures.” I’ve spent a lot of my life and career navigating spaces where women with a voice haven’t always had an easy road. But I’ve learned you don’t have to fight for every room to recognize your value.

What you love most about Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community

The people and the stories. Sometimes people don’t need you to come in and fix everything. They need to know you see them, you hear them and that they matter.

Detroit’s LGBTQ+ liaison wants to be part of the community, not just there to police it

Angelica Robinson, a Detroit police corporal, knows what it means to build relationships. After more than three decades in law enforcement, the bisexual Detroit native stepped into a new role this past spring as the Detroit Police Department’s LGBTQ+ Liaison. Born and raised in the city, Robinson is taking a hands-on approach to connecting the city’s police force with community members.

Why did you want this role?

This position gives me the opportunity to bring the experience, relationships and purpose all together in one. I didn’t just take this on a whim. The work I do means something more; it’s way bigger than just the liaison position itself. I want to be able to leave something sustainable behind once I retire.

How are you approaching the job day to day?

I felt it was very important that the community not just see me as law enforcement, but see me as part of the community, and be very transparent in engaging with them. I don’t want them to feel like, oh, this is just another police officer. How is that done? It’s not done behind a desk, sitting in headquarters. It’s actually out and about, shaking hands, giving hugs, hearing their concerns and showing my genuine compassion for all. I am not that law enforcer who’s just a paper pusher sitting in an office. If you see me out and about, please come say hello.

You’ve talked about bridging gaps both outside and inside the department with the LGBTQ+ community. What does that look like?

I need to properly train our officers when they engage with our community, and not just externally. We also have sworn members who are part of the LGBTQ+ community themselves. What about my officers who are fearing coming out? I need to be there for them as well and be that voice, be that advocate. So I’m not only bridging the gap externally, I’m bridging the gap internally, too. We’re working on QR codes we can put up in our precincts where officers can scan, see the different resources and report to me anonymously.

What’s coming up this fall?

I’ll be starting our Citizens Police Academy Oct. 6. It’s free and runs 10 weeks, one day a week. I’m going to take people out of their shoes as a citizen and put them in the shoes of an officer, from patrol runs to investigations to the courts, and they’ll do a ride-along, too. Then in November, I’m hosting a health and wellness open enrollment resource fair with CNS Healthcare and LGBT Detroit. My target audience is our aging LGBTQ+ members, because everything is pretty much geared around our younger people. What about our aging LGBTQ+ members?

What drives you in this work?

It’s a passion and it’s a need. I want to put DPD first and foremost in a different light, and I want the community to be able to embrace the law enforcers as well as law enforcement embrace our community. We come together collectively for one another. I want to build that trust, and I am building that trust.

What Comes Next

I remember where I first found *Between The Lines*.

I was a kid from Canton, pretty freshly out, when I first got my hands on a copy. I don't remember what was on the cover. I don't remember the headline. What I remember is smaller than that, and bigger than that: photos from *Pride* with people holding flags like it was nothing and gay-owned businesses listed plainly, like it was the most normal thing in the world.

I remember feeling something shift.

Other people like me existed. I hadn't known that, not really — not in a way I could point to. And here it was, printed mostly in black and white, free for the taking.

This was before you could find a whole community with a few taps on a phone. A stack of newspapers on a coffee shop counter could feel like stumbling onto something almost secret — a door you didn't know was there, cracked open just enough to see through to a life that might someday be yours.

I didn't walk through that door myself until years later. I was 23 when I took a job at that same newspaper and, without fully realizing it, became part of the thing that made me feel more at home with myself.

I have now spent 20 years inside *Between The Lines*, which means I have spent nearly half my life with a publication that was already part of my life before I ever worked here. I've watched it evolve, watched the community change and have had the extraordinary privilege of helping tell some of its stories along the way. I've interviewed pop stars I once

considered heroes, sat across from politicians and activists, and talked with countless Michiganders whose names you may never have heard but whose stories mattered just as much. Through all of it, the question underneath the work has remained remarkably simple: Can we make someone feel seen? Can we make someone feel a little less alone?

For 33 years, *Between The Lines* has arrived on newsprint. You've folded us. Stacked us. Carried us home. Left us on coffee tables and picked us up at coffee shops, community centers, bars, bookstores and wherever else queer Michigan gathers. You've read us for the news, but you've also used us to find people, places, ideas and, sometimes, a little bit of yourself.

Our first glossy issue isn't really a leap. It's an arrival. Because independent queer news isn't confined to just a newspaper you pick up anymore. It's everywhere, all the time, on every screen, gone as fast as you can scroll past it. We wanted to make something different. Something that sits on your coffee table long enough that a friend picks it up while they're waiting for you to find your keys, flips it open and sees somebody who looks like them.

And yet, in some of the most important ways, it hasn't changed at all.



Chris Azzopardi with past copies of *Between The Lines*. Photo: Andrew Potter

There is still a kid somewhere looking for that secret door. Still someone who needs to know they're not the only one. Still an ever-evolving community whose stories deserve to be told — carefully, boldly, beautifully and through our own voices.

So this isn't goodbye to the newspaper I found all those years ago. It's a thank-you for the door it opened.

Now we're building a bigger one.

Welcome to what's next.

Warmly,
Chris

Chris Azzopardi, Executive Editor
chris@pridesource.com



Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. Photo: Andrew Potter

The Election Michigan's LGBTQ+ Community Can't Ignore

Governor candidate Jocelyn Benson, state Sen. Jeremy Moss, Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed and other leaders weigh in

BY NICK FULTON

When Joanna Whaley's primary opponent filed a formal complaint over her campaign not using her deadname, she didn't respond with a statement about transphobia. She talked about utility bills.

"When my identity gets brought up by the other side of the aisle, I will continue to just talk about utility bills because that's what people care about," says Whaley, a clinical spiritual care provider who came out on top of a three-way primary in Michigan's Second House

District. "I've never once knocked on a door, and someone asked me a question about bathrooms. The only time that comes up is when it shows up on my opponent's literature."

If elected in November, Whaley will become the first openly transgender person elected to the Michigan Legislature. She's one of several LGBTQ+ candidates on the ballot this cycle poised to make history. But this November carries a second, less visible stake that could matter more than any single race: Proposal 1, a question that appears on the ballot only once every 16

years, asking Michigan voters whether to convene a constitutional convention.

A "yes" vote would open the entire state constitution to rewrite, including the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act protections it took Michigan advocates decades to win.

"We're encouraging folks to vote no on Prop 1 because it will just open Pandora's box and put everything that we have gained at risk," says Jerron Totten, chair of the Michigan Democratic Party's LGBT and Allies Caucus, who also serves as campaign manager for Vote No on Prop 1. "If Prop 1 is passed, that's

another way that we could lose a lot of the progress that we've made over the last 10 years. Everything is up for grabs, voting rights up for grabs, reproductive freedom up for grabs. Elliott-Larsen up for grabs."

Prop 1 isn't the only thing on the line. In November, Michigan will see one of the most significant shifts of political power in the country. The governor, the attorney general, the secretary of state, one U.S. senator, 13 U.S. representatives and 148 state legislators are all subject to change come January. With that scale of turnover comes a real fork in the road for LGBTQ+ Michiganders: either deeper protections or a serious rollback of the progress made under the current Democratic trifecta.

"We were able to protect reproductive freedom in this state, we were able to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, we were able to get rid of right-to-work, we were able to ban conversion therapy," Totten says. "All of these things impact LGBTQ+ people. And it's these gains that we don't want to see lost because we failed to elect the correct candidates."

Totten's group endorsed 18 candidates this cycle, 14 of whom advanced past their primary to the general. The caucus was also among the first groups to endorse Dr. Abdul El-Sayed for U.S. Senate. El-Sayed told *Between The Lines* earlier this year that he intends to be a "lion" for LGBTQ+ rights if he advances to serve in the Senate — an allyship that retiring Sen. Gary Peters has built into Michigan's congressional representation for more than a decade.

"Michiganders know too well what's on the line in this election. Mike Rogers would be a rubber stamp for Donald Trump as he rolls back fundamental rights for LGBTQ+ Michiganders," Peters says. "We have to keep our state blue, which is why I endorsed Abdul

El-Sayed for my seat. I'll always fight for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTQ+ Americans in Michigan and across the country."

Peters has served in the U.S. Senate since 2015 and has presided over some of the most significant legislative changes related to LGBTQ+ rights — from marriage equality to the Respect for Marriage Act, he's voted on the side of inclusion. Those votes weren't unique to Peters alone; Michigan hasn't elected a Republican U.S. senator since 1994. If Peters' seat flips to Republican Mike Rogers, local leaders warn of the consequences for queer Michiganders.

"Michigan has made enormous progress for LGBTQ+ people over the last few years under current Democratic leadership in our state; if we do not elect Democratic leaders to replace them, we will see an immediate rollback of our rights," says state Rep. Jason Morgan.

Rogers, who formerly represented Michigan's 8th congressional district, has been a staunch opponent of marriage equality. In November, he announced a "Faith Coalition" leadership team made up of pastors and political figures, several of whom have promoted baseless claims about election fraud. A review of the coalition by *WLNS 6 News* in Lansing found some members have also pushed anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric — one calling homosexuality a "violation of God's design," another describing federal LGBTQ+ protections as a "godless, demonic, satanic and wicked agenda."

Morgan is one of the 148 state legislators up for election this cycle. According to Morgan, the legislature is poised to house the largest body of LGBTQ+ elected officials in its history after November. Currently, seven LGBTQ+ legislators hold power in the State House, but that number is expected to grow and include some

"As governor, I will veto any anti-LGBTQ legislation that comes across my desk... Michigan should be a place where anyone can come and build a life."

- SECRETARY OF STATE JOCELYN BENSON

powerful firsts.

State Rep. Jason Hoskins is poised to become the first openly LGBTQ+ Black state senator, a barrier he already broke on the other side of the chamber in 2022. Joseph McClusky is running to flip Michigan House District 86 blue, and Whaley looks toward shattering a barrier of her own.

On the campaign trail, Whaley's trans identity took center stage without her consent — but she's kept her focus on policy rather than the attacks. She's aware that if elected, her role extends beyond her own district.

"I first and foremost will have a responsibility to my district to represent their interests. And then having my voice in the room is something that I do understand is going to be a statewide responsibility for me," Whaley says. "And for the trans person in Petoskey and for the parents of a

Continued on page 16

Ready to Vote?

Here's your Nov. 3 cheat sheet

Michigan voters head to the polls Nov. 3 to fill an open governor's seat, an open U.S. Senate seat and dozens of legislative races. A historic number of LGBTQ+ candidates advanced after the Aug. 4 primary.

BTL ENDORSED

GOVERNOR

Jocelyn Benson (D)

Michigan secretary of state since 2019, won the Democratic nomination to succeed term-limited Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Running mate: state Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks of Grand Rapids.

U.S. SENATE

Abdul El-Sayed (D)

Physician and former Wayne County health director; won a close primary over U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens. Would be the first Muslim U.S. senator if elected.

U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 11

Jeremy Moss (D)

Physician and former Wayne County health director; won a close primary over U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens. Would be the first Muslim U.S. senator if elected.

LGBTQ+ CANDIDATES ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

All Democrats, all advancing after the Aug. 4 primary.

Joanna Whaley

Michigan House, District 2

Chris Gilmer-Hill

Michigan House, District 8

Mike McFall

Michigan House, District 14

Laurie Pohutsky

Michigan House, District 17

Noah Arbit

Michigan House, District 20

Jason Morgan

Michigan House, District 23

Emily Dievendorf

Michigan House, District 77

Joseph McClusky

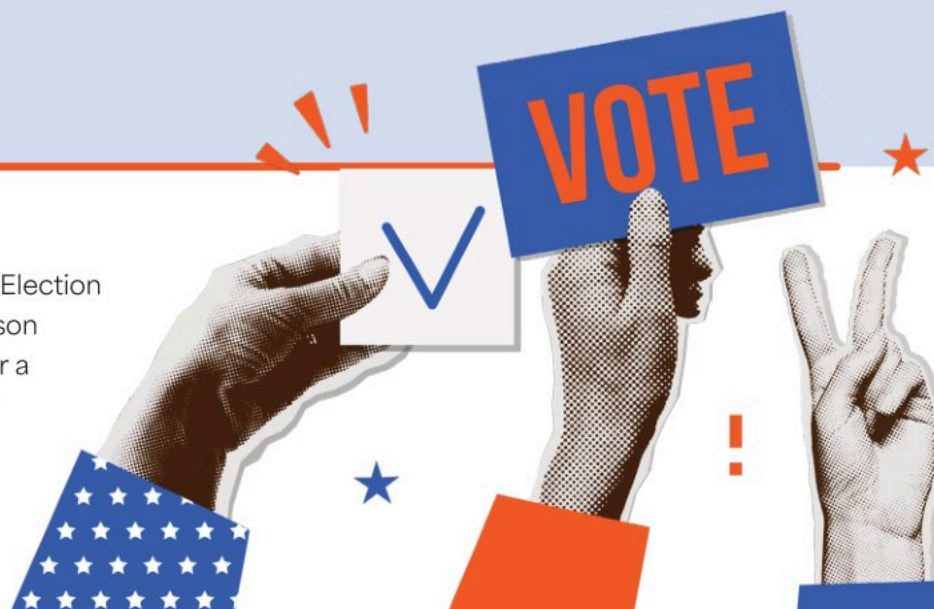
Michigan House, District 86

Jason Hoskins

Michigan Senate, District 7

★ READY TO VOTE?

Same-day registration is available through Election Day at your local clerk's office. Early in-person voting runs the nine days before Nov. 3. For a sample ballot, registration status and early voting sites near you, visit vote411.org.





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- Partner services
- Poly and sex positive

HIV Prevention and Treatment

- Oral and injectable PrEP for HIV prevention
- HIV treatment and monitoring



Gender Affirming Care



- Gender affirming hormones
- Gender inclusive PAP/GYN services
- Surgical referrals

HENRY FORD HEALTH
「 Ruth Ellis Center 」

Turning the Page

Pride Source publisher Benjamin Jenkins leads a bold new chapter



Benjamin Jenkins. Photo: Andrew Potter

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

This issue marks a new era for *Between The Lines*. After 33 years on newsprint, Pride Source's flagship publication now arrives monthly, printed glossy, featuring photography with greater impact and more room to showcase the kind of in-depth features our team has always been proud to tell.

Benjamin Jenkins started at *Between The Lines* as an intern, writing the paper's calendar pages. Sixteen years

later, as publisher, he calls the shift to a monthly magazine format the biggest change he's seen since.

"We've spent several months looking at how newsprint is changing, how print at large is changing and what our readers want," Jenkins says. "The more we asked those questions, the clearer it became that readers hold on to things that feel more permanent, with higher quality. We want it to feel like it's curated with the love and dedication our team has

for the stories we put together."

Jenkins felt that history firsthand in September during a visit to the University of Michigan's Hatcher Graduate Library to photograph the paper's very first issue for this transition.

"Going to pick up that first issue really put a point on the legacy of the last 33 years," he says. "The librarian who helped us, Julie Herrada, started that job in 1994. She's seen nearly every issue come into the archive since,

and she recognized Michigan State University professor and LGBTQ+ historian Tim Retzlaff's byline attached to a key article in that first issue. He's still writing for us today."

Between The Lines' back issues live in U-M's Joseph Labadie Collection, one of the country's oldest and most comprehensive archives of social movements. Herrada trained under longtime curator Edward Weber, who led the collection for 40 years. Weber was interviewed for that first 1993 issue about his early years in Ann Arbor's gay community, and Retzlaff, the contributor Herrada spotted in the archive's first issue — and dozens of reporters who followed — have been covering this beat ever since.

Flipping through that issue together, Jenkins and Herrada reflected on its cover story: "Right Wing Targets Michigan."

"As Julie pointed out, that cover could run today," Jenkins says. "Our shift to a monthly glossy magazine is a big change, but I think it reflects what we're seeing everywhere. There are so many local publications changing or closing, struggling with the challenges of the moment. We think this move meets that moment, giving us a chance to reconnect with readers, refresh how we tell these stories and reflect where the community is today."

Jenkins' roots in queer advocacy run deep. A Michigan native raised in Garden City, he studied socioeconomic American history at UM-Dearborn, where he led the campus Gender and Sexuality Alliance, growing it into one of the university's largest student organizations and building out programming that included on-campus testing services and a visit from Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church.

Jenkins carried that organizing instinct into journalism early. In 2011, he found a loophole in Eastern Michigan University's affirmative action policy, brought it to the

university's attention and got it amended.

"That was a formative moment for me, understanding the impact we could have," Jenkins says.

He's carried that same steadfastness into how he leads today. After his 2010 internship, Jenkins became the publication's first art director, then left to build a marketing career, founding Merithot in 2015, the Ann Arbor agency he still owns, all while freelancing on nearly every issue along the way. When publishers Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz began thinking about retirement early in the Covid pandemic, they turned to him.

"We'd meet socially distanced on their back porch, masks on, and talk about it for probably six months before making the announcement," Jenkins recalls. "It felt really cool to come back home."

Pride Source has changed hands only a handful of times, and each one tells you something about how the publication has survived while so much LGBTQ+ media has consolidated.

Between The Lines began in 1993 out of MaxZine Weinstein's Ann Arbor bedroom, co-founded with David Rosenberg, a University of Michigan Medical School dropout who taught Weinstein newspaper design software and helped fund the first issue, laid out at the university's computer center. Ownership passed from Weinstein to community members Shannon Rhoades and Julie Enszer, then to married couple Horowitz and Stevenson, and finally to Jenkins, its current sole owner — independent at a moment when it's increasingly rare.

The move to glossy comes weeks after editors at The Advocate, Out and other Equalpride-owned brands publicly pressed their parent company after a newly appointed board member expressed support for President Trump and the MAGA

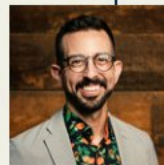
Continued on page 28

THE TEAM BEHIND PRIDE SOURCE

Every issue of Pride Source's Between The Lines comes together through the work of a small, dedicated team. Here's a quick look at who does what across editorial, sales and design.

Chris Azzopardi • Executive Editor and Brand Director

Chris leads Pride Source's editorial and artistic vision as well as its national wire service, Q Syndicate, shaping the voice readers see across every issue.



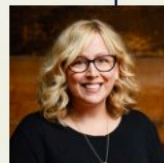
Sarah Bricker Hunt • Director of Content and Community Engagement

Sarah oversees Pride Source's storytelling and its connections with Michigan's LGBTQ+ community, from feature reporting to reader outreach.



Carolyn Cardenas • Vice President of Operations

Carolyn manages the operations and internal processes that keep Pride Source running behind the scenes with an added hand in advertising sales and overseeing that all advertiser creative is exactly what the client asked for in print and online.



Tim Powers • Director of Sales

Tim builds the advertising relationships that keep us thriving, connecting local businesses with the community that supports them.



Sarah Wolf • Graphic Designer

Sarah shapes the visual identity of Between The Lines, from layout to design.



Queer & Now



Trans Empowerment Month Kickoff

Stand with Trans (standwithtrans.org), 6–8 p.m.

Ghost Light Cabaret: Saturday Night's Alright

An Evening of Elton John —
Elgood Theatre Lobby, Flint, 7
p.m.

Necto Pride Presents: Horse Meat Disco

Necto, Ann Arbor,
midnight

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" feat. Nell Campbell

Fisher Theatre,
Detroit, 7 p.m.

"Equus"

The Ringwald Theatre,
Ferndale, 7 p.m. (opening
night; runs through Nov. 2)

Detroit Red Wings Pride Night

Little Caesars Arena,
Detroit, 7–10 p.m.



Monthly Furry Karaoke Night at Uplift

Grab your best fursona and warm up those vocal cords — Uplift in Ann Arbor hosts Furry Karaoke every month, and it's always a good time. Join hosts Ado, Scotch and friends for a night of fursuits, fandom pride and belting out your favorite tunes. Costumes are welcome but never required, and fursies of all stripes are invited to come sing, socialize and soak up the welcoming vibes. Uplift. (210 S. 1st St., Ann Arbor), Oct. 4, 5–9 p.m.

October

11 Hallo-Queen Drag Brunch

Silver Creek Event Center
at Four Winds, New Buffalo,
10:30 a.m.

14 Legal Doc Assistance Walk-In Day

Grand Rapids Trans Foundation,
Grand Rapids, 12 p.m. (Recurring:
second and fourth Wednesdays)

Book Discussion: "They Called Us Enemy" by George Takei

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo,
2–3 p.m.

16

Michigan Drag Bus in Detroit

Detroit Shipping Company,
Detroit, 6–8 p.m. (Recurring)

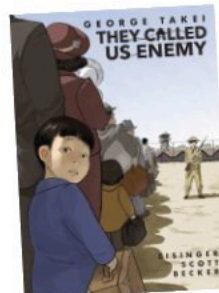




Photo: Jasper Fox

17 **HalloQWEEN Drag Bingo with the Kuntz Kittens**
Riviera Theatre and Bar, Three Rivers, 7-9 p.m.

18 **Night of the Living Drag**
GLC Live at 20 Monroe,
Grand Rapids, 7 p.m.

24 **Furry Karaoke**
Uplift, Ann Arbor, 5-9 p.m.
(Recurring monthly)



Pajamas Performing the Music of David Bowie
Blind Pig, Ann Arbor,
8 p.m.

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Continued from page 9

trans kid in the Upper Peninsula, they're going to be looking to me to represent their family and their interests because their representative sure as hell won't."

Whaley's potential milestone isn't the only one this cycle. State Sen. Jeremy Moss is running in Michigan's 11th Congressional District, soon to be left vacant by Rep. Haley Stevens after her Senate bid. If elected, Moss will become the state's first openly LGBTQ+ person sent to Congress — a level of representation he says drives lasting protections for LGBTQ+ Michiganders.

"If you're not at the table, oftentimes you find yourself on the menu," Moss

"If you're not at the table, oftentimes you find yourself on the menu."

- STATE SEN. JEREMY MOSS

says. "When I became one of the first out LGBTQ members of the State House, and then the very first out LGBTQ state senator, I brought a whole community with me into the halls of the state Capitol where it had not been before. As a result, not only did we expand our state's civil rights law to include sexual orientation and gender identity, but we did so with

bipartisan support because our community had a direct voice to talk to colleagues and dispel the lies told about us."

Current statewide elected officials have acted as a firewall between Trump's anti-LGBTQ+ actions and queer Michiganders — none more visibly than term-limited Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who leaves office in January. During her two terms, she signed the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act amendment, a ban on conversion therapy and the Michigan Hate Crime Act. In an interview with Pride Source earlier this year, Whitmer was candid about the risk that work now faces.

"These policies have to transcend a change in administration," Whitmer said. "No matter who it is, though, it's on all of us to keep the pressure on in Lansing and in Washington, D.C. to elect

Michigan State Rep. Jason Hoskins. Courtesy photo





Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.
Photo: Andrew Potter

people who will do the work and be unapologetic about it.”

State legislators echo the concern about who will succeed her.

“As a legislator, it is crucial that we have a willing partner in the executive office of the governor,” says state Rep. Laurie Pohutsky. “There’s a lot that can be done just within that. Day one, it would be incredibly detrimental if any of those offices flipped to Republican.”

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson hopes to be that willing partner and to carry Whitmer’s commitment forward as governor.

“Michigan should be a place where anyone can come and build a life. But too many families are struggling to make ends meet, and too often government is showing up everywhere we don’t want it, and nowhere we actually need it,” said Benson in a statement to Pride Source. “As governor, I will veto any anti-LGBTQ legislation that comes across my desk and stand firm and protect the rights of every Michigander.”

Benson’s opponent is Rep. John James, a MAGA ally, who currently represents Michigan’s 10th congressional district. James has been

a leader in anti-trans rhetoric around gender-affirming care and trans inclusion in sports.

Michigan’s first openly nonbinary state representative, Emily Dievendorf, has watched the state’s LGBTQ+ political gains unfold from inside the legislature. She’s not taking any of it for granted heading into November.

“At this point in Michigan history, I take no progress or victories for granted,” says Dievendorf. “I know deeply the losses that we sustain if we don’t hold strong in the humanity of our LGBTQ neighbors.”

Democrat Rep. Marcy Kaptur: Just As Anti-Trans As Her Opponent

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



Stop telling trans people they have to vote for anti-trans Democrats. Stop telling them they'll be responsible for the fall of democracy unless they do.

I've been thinking a lot about something @nome posted to Bluesky on Sept. 15: "I do not understand the folks furious at trans people for responding in anguish when the party that they've been told would protect them treats their existence as negotiable," he wrote. "I do not understand thinking trans folks have political power and responsibility where candidates have none."

In other words, if you're mad and want to yell at someone, channel your anger toward the campaigns of anti-trans Democrats. Tell them democracy depends on them not being anti-trans.

You can start with Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, an Ohio Democrat running for reelection. She recently released a horribly transphobic campaign ad that brags about her voting with Republicans to hurt trans kids. In the 30-second spot, the subject of transgender people gets even more screen time than the war with Iran: 16 seconds versus two.

This ad is a response to an attack ad by her opponent, Republican Derek Merrin. In it, Merrin brags that he "sponsored a bill to protect girls' sports here in Ohio." He then claims that while in Congress, Kaptur "voted to let biological men compete against girls in their sport." He then calls her "way too liberal."

Here's how Kaptur responded: "I voted with Republicans to keep transgender ideology out of our schools. Because parents know what's best for their

kids. And boys should not play in girls' sports." During that last assertion, the video shows an image of an older white couple watching a swimmer race on TV. No doubt this is to evoke the specter of transgender swimmer Lia Thomas, the woman to whom chucklehead Riley Gaines owes her career in right-wing grift.

If I lived in Ohio, there's no way I could proudly vote for Kaptur. And I sure as hell wouldn't be lecturing trans people about needing to set their own humanity aside and take one for the team.

Instead, you should contact Kaptur's campaign and ask her why she's doing this. Why is she throwing transgender people to the wolves and echoing right-wing talking points designed to portray transgender people as a threat to children, especially girls? And why is she so proud of doing so?

Contact Kaptur's campaign via phone at 419-665-3133 or email at info@marcykaptur.com. You can also use Facebook to express yourself.

Kaptur isn't the only anti-trans Democrat who is going to be on the

November ballot. All of them need to hear from voters that their anti-trans stances are reprehensible. All of them need to hear that they are cowards. All of them need to hear that they are causing real harm to real people. All of them need to hear that trans rights are human rights, damn it, and if they won't stand up for trans people, how can you trust them to stand up for you? (The answer is you can't.)

Republicans have chosen to focus on hurting transgender people because they've got nothing else. They've tanked the economy, they've supported turning major cities into police states where civilians get shot in the street, they've started a war with Iran, and they've hitched themselves to the most unpopular president in recent history.

Democrats don't have to turn against transgender people to find something to talk about. And yet, here we are. If you're mad at anyone, it should be the Democratic Party and the anti-trans candidates they support. So let them know it.



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Aaron Rush. Photo: Andrew Potter

In Full Bloom

How Roses general manager Aaron Rush helped turn a shuttered diner into a national name

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

There's a version of this story that starts with a list. Like many good stories, though, it's better to start at the bar, under a pressed-tin ceiling, past mirrors that don't quite match and gnarled, wax-drenched candles that have melted into their own small sculptures. Roses, the 29-seat diner on Detroit's east side, has always felt like this. A little worn-

in, a little romantic, entirely itself. This September, The New York Times took notice, naming Roses to its 2026 list of best restaurants in the country, its critic noting the "colorful bouquets plucked from the parking lot garden out back" and comparing the dining room to the feeling of eating in "Grandma's sunroom."

Established in 2014, Roses closed in 2023 after nine years in business, its final

chapter clouded by pandemic-era pivots that left longtime regulars confused and chef-owner Molly Mitchell burned out. Roses reopened in the summer of 2025 under Mitchell, shifting from its longtime brunch identity into a dinner service. In February, the Detroit Free Press named Roses its 2026 Restaurant of the Year, calling the reopening "a coming-of-age story" for a restaurant

Continued on page 22

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built with intention.

The accolades kept coming. A local honor from Hour Detroit came in August, naming Roses among Detroit's 10 best new restaurants for 2026. The magazine described the space as exuding "a distinctive, homey personality," pointing to the mismatched vintage furniture and untamed floral arrangements that soften every corner of the room.

And then there's what people really come here for: the food. Roses built its reputation on brunch classics, but this iteration leans into an elevated diner experience anchored by a Polish-American menu, Mitchell's tribute to the region's heritage filtered through seasonal Midwestern ingredients. The Times pointed to standouts like Polish nachos, a mashup of potato chips and smoked whitefish topped with trout roe, alongside a tomato horseradish martini with "enough heat to clear the sinuses."

It takes a lot of moving pieces to make a restaurant work this well. At Roses, general manager Aaron Rush is the one putting them together.

"It has been a huge year for us, and I believe we owe our success to the cohesion between front and back of house under Aaron's leadership," Mitchell says. Rush, she says, has brought the space to life over the past year. "He orchestrates it all like a dance."

For Rush, running Roses well means bringing his full self to the job and letting that authenticity shape how he leads.

"Growing up queer has been about surrounding yourself with the people that you want to surround yourself with," he says. "The only people that I really want to be around are the ones that make me feel comfortable to be the person that I am. I've taken that into the entirety of my life to make sure that people feel that way as well, whether they're queer or not."

Rush came aboard with that 2025 relaunch, though he'd been a regular at the restaurant for years before ever working there. Today, the tiny dining



Roses cook Ellie Goudia (left) and head chef Libby Roger. Photo: Andrew Potter

room, backed by a garden that can hold about 120 more, draws a steady crowd.

"We just wanted to make Roses feel really comfortable and community-focused," Rush says, pointing to partnerships with local farmers as one piece of that. "You can go to a bunch of different places to eat and some of them are very transactional. Here at Roses, we really understand what a consumer wants from a service experience, down to every fine detail."

Mitchell points to how that shows up with staff. "We have such a unique team, with everyone bringing different strengths to the table," she says. "Aaron sees each team member for who they are and encourages their individual talents." Rush describes it as encouraging people to "stir their identity into everything that we do here."

Rush credits years in corporate environments with sharpening that approach. In these roles, he says, he grew familiar with the gap between companies performing inclusion and actually building it.

"There's this performative dance around being accepting and inclusive," he says. "While that is the case and should be in every business, it's about creating an infrastructure where someone really feels true inclusivity, and that there's a pathway for these people to continue to grow, and not only nourish themselves from the food perspective at Roses, but also emotionally."

Watching for burnout, an occupational hazard across the restaurant industry, is part of that infrastructure, too.

"It's very easy to get sucked into your work," Rush says. "Understanding why someone might be feeling like they need a break, and working to find resolution, is so important. If we're burned out, it's going to show in our service and our quality. Our number one guest is the people that are working, because if they're happy, anything that they produce will be made with happiness as well."

Rush points to smaller moments as some of the job's more meaningful ones: staff going out of their way for guests without being asked, a handwritten note, an unprompted gesture. "Those are the most rewarding parts of the job," he says.

Even with the national attention, Rush isn't in a hurry to chase what comes next. "We're really just relishing in all of this grassroots excitement," he says. Roses, he adds, plans to keep deepening its ties across the city rather than scale quickly. "We see this as a long-standing establishment with a lot of ideas and a lot of great minds behind those ideas working here."

For Rush, running Roses and being fully himself aren't two separate things.

Roses is located at 10551 E. Jefferson Ave. in Detroit. Follow Roses on social media @roses_detroit.



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**Don't Threaten Me with
Love, Baby**

Puzzle on page 27

Kal Penn Has Never Paid for a Drink at a Lesbian Bar

The ‘Harold & Kumar’ star on Anna Nicole Smith and how he never really ‘came out’

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

We know him as Kumar in the “Harold & Kumar” movies, but Kal Penn has spent the past two decades happily refusing to stay in one lane: He left acting for a stint in the Obama administration, returned to Hollywood and, in 2021, published “You Can’t Be Serious,” a memoir that many assumed was partly his coming-out story. Now, in his new film, “Trust Me, I’m a Doctor,” he plays Dr. Sandeep Kapoor, a gay doctor who finds himself pulled into the orbit of model and reality TV star Anna Nicole Smith, who died in 2007 from an accidental overdose.

Penn has always been an interesting one for our community to claim: not a splashy, front-of-the-parade gay icon, but someone whose openness has arrived gradually, through a memoir chapter here, an interview there and the occasional reminder that yes, Penn is gay.

Recently, we talked about why his book made straight women love him more than gay men did and — because I had to ask — how often queer stoners recognize him. (Spoiler: not as often as the lesbians do.)

You and Abbie Cornish, who plays Anna, actually filmed some scenes during WeHo Pride. What was it like to be telling Anna’s story in the middle of an actual Pride event?

I remember there was an email that we got that was like, “Hey, the parade organizers are wondering if after we shoot once through, if you and Abbie can go in the parade in a car and wave



Kal Penn and Abbie Cornish in “Trust Me, I’m a Doctor.” Photo: Briarcliff Entertainment

to people?” Abbie was like, “There’s no way to get out of hair and makeup fast enough as Anna Nicole Smith and then back into Abbie hair and makeup to do this.” And I was like, “I look like a 2002 doctor who is about to be on trial. I don’t have my beard, not looking my best. There’s no reality in which I’m marching in a Pride parade not looking hot. I’m sorry. Call me in a couple of years and we’ll do it.”

Sandeep is a gay man whose private life becomes public at a time when that kind of exposure could carry very different consequences, and you can see glimpses of that in the film. Did his sexuality change the way you approached him or what he stood to lose?

It’s an interesting question, because it’s such a small part of the film, but of course in all the research I’m like,

there’s a scene with Sandeep and his dad where he has this kind of emotional break and says, “I lie about everything.” And on the litany of things that he tells his dad he’s been lying about, he kind of squeezes in, “And I’m also gay.” And I thought, “What was this like for you?” Because he wasn’t a public figure at the time. He was basically out to everybody.

More than his sexuality, I thought the more interesting part was when he’s at Pride with Anna at the after-party, that’s based on a real thing, obviously. And Sandeep was saying, look, for him, he would go to The Abbey all the time with friends. It was not a strange place to end up. It certainly wasn’t a coming out experience for him, but this was the first time he went with somebody who was recognizable, and so it made him feel seen.

You’ve talked pretty openly about

Continued on page 26

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coming out. How do you feel about the way that people talk about your coming out story?

I wrote a book in 2021. Editors love what they call “palate-cleansing chapters,” and one of them was about how my partner Josh and I met. It’s about Coors Light and NASCAR. I was a bit naive, because we’d been together, I think, 12 years at that point and certainly I was out and open professionally and personally and all of that. I just thought this story is funny because it’s about a first date gone wrong. Then the book comes out and every article is like, “Yay, Kal Penn announces massive gayness in gay book.”

Then you look at the reviews of the book and straight women love the book, straight dudes love the book. Gay guys are like, “This book sucks. There’s nothing gay about it.” In retrospect, I should have given that chapter to the New Yorker six months in advance.

I think the queer community is still just desperate for representation so it’s like, “Oh, Kal Penn came out.”

Yeah, which I totally understand. I will sound like a broken record because everybody says this, but anytime there’s more visibility for anybody in the community, it’s a great thing. And it’s also nice that none of us really have the same journey or story and there’s no timeline on it or any of that. But the moral of the story is: Give your chapter to the New Yorker first.

There’s been talk about an upcoming “Harold & Kumar” sequel. What excites you about getting back to these characters?

I love those characters. I love comedy. That’s obviously how I started in my career, and it’s still my first love. So, I hope we get to make the movie. I know they’ve written a script, which I recently read, and it’s hilarious.

I remember 20 years ago when the first one came out, you’d be like, “Oh, it’s probably just people in L.A., New York, San Francisco that are going to watch this stoner movie with two Asian American dudes leading it.” And then everybody forgets the movie came out and completely tanked in the box office. A few months later when it came out on DVD, people were buying this DVD in Milwaukee and Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and it was definitely not just the coasts, and it definitely wasn’t people who looked like us. It was truly every walk of life.

How often do you get a gay stoner that comes up to you and tells you that they loved you in that movie?

I’ll be honest, gay dudes don’t really watch the “Harold & Kumar” franchise, but I have never paid for a drink at a lesbian bar.

“Trust Me, I’m a Doctor” is in theaters Oct. 16.

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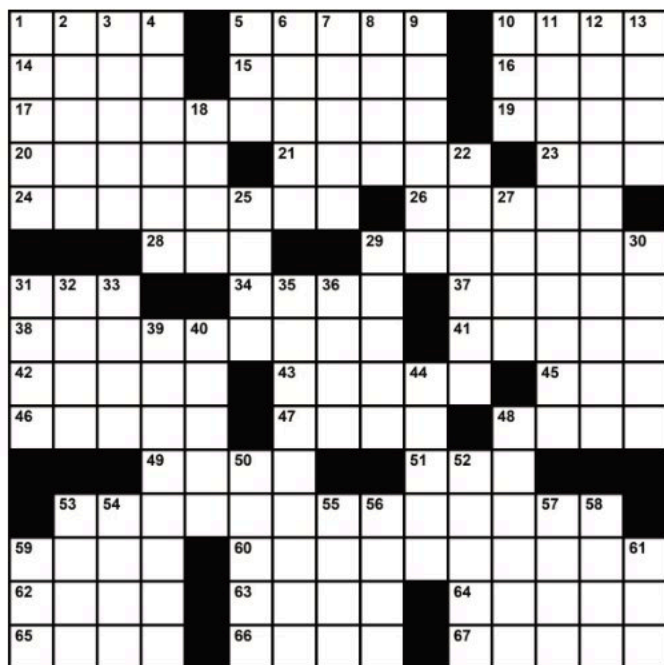
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- 1 One of Bernstein's strings
5 "If ___ nickel for every time ..."
10 Poet Broumas
14 Anti-oxidant berry
15 Pool shot that hits two balls

- 16 Go for another tour
17 More of the quote started in the title
19 Sheepish comments?
20 Try to deceive
21 Pussy cat with dangerous teeth
23 Eminem's mentor

- 24 When fruits are ready to be eaten
26 Nova opening
28 SSW's opposite
29 More of the quote
31 Pink, for example
34 Alan of "And the Band Played On"
37 Slow, to Saint-Saens
38 End of the quote
41 It can cut leaves of grass
42 Shankar's instrument
43 Berube's "Coming Out ___ Fire"
45 Hosp. scan
46 Clinton antagonist
47 Org. that has never been to Uranus
48 Language of Wilde's land
49 Connecticut senator Christopher
51 Hustled
53 Source of the quote
59 Role of George Takei in sci-fi
60 Turned into gold, maybe
62 "Spamalot" writer Idle
63 Lois portrayer of "Lois and Clark"
64 Poetry muse
65 Travel laboriously
66 Frigga partner
67 Blue material, often

- 7 "... who ___ heaven"
8 Rap's Snoop
9 One that reproduces without sex
10 Heavenly body
11 Michael Stipe, to R.E.M.
12 Written assurances
13 Vaulted area at the Cathedral of Hope
18 Military cross-dresser of Arc
22 Hair curler
25 Burn slightly, as when cooking
27 Timetable, for short
29 Tools of fairy godmothers
30 Area between two ridges
31 Serpent's sound
32 Hand, when measuring a stallion
33 One of the Cone sisters
35 Cleaned, as dirty money
36 Emily in "Butterfield 8"
39 Not being able to get it up, ironically
40 Swashbuckling Flynn
44 Nobles of Auden's land
48 Bear
50 "Same here"
52 Prepared to shoot off
53 "Perry Mason" star Raymond
54 Former netmn Nastase
55 Part of a name in espionage
56 What comes after "Come..."
57 ___ all-time high
58 Abominable snowman
59 Group of games, for Martina
61 Benedictine monk's title

DOWN

- 1 Frankie of The 4 Seasons
2 Leave stranded on a gay ski weekend, say
3 One of the "Maneater" singers
4 Prick up one's ears
5 Part of Seattle Grace, for short
6 Can't help but

Solution on page 23

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Benjamin Jenkins. Photo: Andrew Potter

Continued from page 13

movement, a controversy that laid bare how much of LGBTQ+ media now answers to a single company.

Jenkins doesn't have to look far for proof of what that independence makes possible. In 2025, Pride Source published an investigative story about Evan Lakatos, a Muskegon man convicted after a fake Grindr profile was used to arrest him in a police sting that disproportionately targeted gay men using dating apps. An amicus brief in the related Michigan Supreme Court case, *People v. Jade*, cited the investigation, and the court's July 2026 ruling acknowledged that pattern and clarified the entrapment standard, giving Lakatos and others stronger legal footing. The story also earned Pride Source a first-place Detroit Society of Professional Journalists award.

"That story is exactly why we exist,"

Jenkins notes. "That's the kind of impact I want this publication to keep pursuing."

Splitting his time between Pride Source and Merithot, Jenkins leans on a staff he's trusted for years. "Having people I've known this long, people I trust, who can be the face of the publication in their own right makes this all work," Jenkins says. "It's a coalescing of people who've done really good things together for a long time."

Advertisers have noticed the shift as well. "Most everyone has been excited about what this means for how people experience the magazine, how long they hold onto it and the opportunity that gives our advertising partners to reach the community," Jenkins says. "Our longtime advertisers are eager to see how we'll honor the paper's legacy while giving them new ways to reach readers."

Much of that energy is landing on

pridesource.com, which is rolling out an expanded business directory for LGBTQ-owned and LGBTQ-friendly businesses across Michigan. "We want it to actually help people find what they need, since it's sometimes felt buried," Jenkins says. Readers can already find a new direct donation option online, with subscription packages and expanded digital photo galleries on the horizon.

There's a full-circle moment in the mix as well. The events calendar Jenkins is reviving on the website, already pulling in steady reader submissions, is the same job that first got him hired as an intern years ago. Podcasts and video are next on his list.

"I think the through line of what we do is connecting people with their community, people with supportive businesses and people with people," Jenkins adds. "We'll keep building on that legacy in this next chapter."

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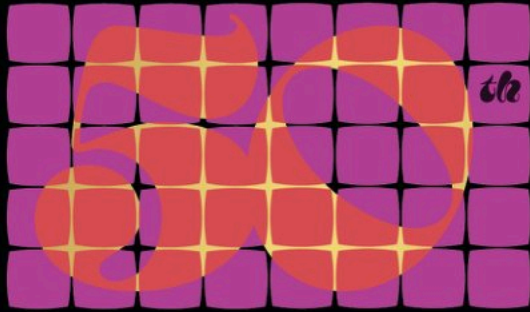
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