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The Premier Media Source for LGBTQ Texas

Established 1954 | DallasVoice.com | Volume 40 | Issue 12 | FREE | Friday, July 26, 2023



## *Culture* clash

**Uptown Players closes season  
with 'Chicken & Biscuits'**

By Rich Lopez, page 8



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July 28, 2023 | Volume 40 | Issue 12

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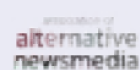
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## Bites from our blog

## WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com

## On a 'Barbie' mission



Todd Maria, head coach and player on the Lost Souls Rugby Football Club, has collected more than 60 Barbie dolls and other Barbie toys

as part of a toy drive benefitting students at Adelfa Callejo Elementary School in Dallas.

The toy drive comes as the new *Barbie* movie,

directed by Greta Gerwig and starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling as Barbie and Ken, premiered last weekend with a record \$155 million at the box office. It has garnered high praise from audiences for its message of empowerment for women and young girls.

— David Taffet

## LGBTQ-welcoming UU church in Plano firebombed

The front doors of Community Unitarian Universalist Church of Plano, 2875 E. Parker Road, which church officials say has been targeted by a hate group since at least June 25, were damaged early Sunday, July 23, in a firebomb attack, according to reports in the Dallas Morning News.

The church went ahead with Sunday services as usual despite the attack, with extra security provided by Plano police.

A police spokesperson told Dallas Morning News they could not confirm whether the firebomb attack was a hate crime. The church's current Facebook cover photo speaks to LGBTQ equality, and a photo posted previously to social media shows the church flying the rainbow flag from its sign alongside the U.S. flag.

Unitarian Universalist churches are traditionally very progressive and very welcoming to LGBTQ people.

According to a post on the church's Facebook page, sometime between midnight and 12:30 a.m., someone either threw "an incendiary device with a chemical accelerant" at the church's front doors or walked up and placed the device there. The fire and smoke from the device set off the church's monitored alarms, which notified church personnel. About the same time, a passerby saw the blaze and called 911.

"Because of the quick action of Plano's first responders, the damage to the church property was limited to the front doors, the materials directly outside the front doors and the entrance foyer," the church's Facebook post noted. "There were no injuries."

The post continues, “Church officials have been reviewing building security and working with the Plano Police Department since the intrusion of a hate group in the church building during and after Worship Service on Sunday, June 25. That group has posted video of their activities inside the church on various social media sites.”

— Tammye Nash

## Chamber cuts ribbon at FASTSIGNS of East Dallas

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— David Taffet

### Police chase ends with wreck, shooting near Love Field

A Dallas police officer was involved in a shooting Tuesday afternoon, July 25, in the 7100 block

of Lemmon Avenue, at Love Field, after an accident involving a stolen U-Haul truck. The incident resulted in Lemmon Avenue being closed in both directions for about an hour.

According to police reports, the incident began around 11 a.m. when, as officers were surveilling the stolen truck at a location in Northwest Dallas, the suspect intentionally rammed the truck into an undercover DPD vehicle then fled in the truck.

That resulted in a chase down the North Dallas Tollway, involving about 10 police cars. The

suspect eventually exited the Tollway, and officers caught up with him when he crashed into several vehicles in the northbound lanes of Lemmon Avenue before crossing over the center median and crashing into the southbound lanes.

The suspect left the truck and was running

toward a private hangar, shooting at an officer who was running after him. The officer returned fire, hitting the suspect in the leg. The suspect was taken into custody and transferred to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

— David Taffet

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## Splashing bullies with reality

Let trolls be trounced  
with the truth

**V**icarious pleasure from movie violence can be cathartic, but what does it say about us?

During an interview with director Barry Jenkins by Ta-Nehisi Coates at The Atlantic LGBTQ Summit in November 2016, a friend and I applauded when Jenkins mentioned the scene in his film *Moonlight* where Chiron strikes back against the bully. Coates turned and looked at us. He said he understood our reaction.

The scene was crucial to the film but was also tragic, the actions landing Chiron in the criminal justice system. Hitting someone over the head with a chair is not acceptable, but that scene was important because it showed Chiron finally standing up for himself.

We have to assert ourselves against bullies. But we need a more constructive method than violence. One inspired response to bullies was the making of that film, which won an Oscar for Best Picture.

Our republic would best be rescued without recourse to mayhem. But the bullies on the right have shown a penchant for violence wrapped in false patriotism. Their America is a monochromatic fantasy in which everyone looks and thinks like them. They seem to think they can erase all literature and history that doesn't conform to their blinkered vision.

If we don't deliver a strong rebuke at the polls — and if the instigator-in-chief does not face consequences — the insurrections are likely to keep happening. The MAGA horde is still fighting the first civil war. Trump uses them to threaten anyone who crosses him, such as prosecutors. He vows retribution if he regains the White House.

In MAGA World, cruelty and inhumanity run rampant. We are seeing not just a surge of know-nothingism, but a frontal assault on reality.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis's State Board of Education, for example, has adopted standards that require teaching children that slavery benefited slaves by giving them valuable skills. Quick show of hands: How many of you are eager to experience those alleged benefits yourselves? The Peculiar Institution, as it happened, did not give the enslaved a choice.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman tweeted on July 19, "The 14th Amendment was designed to protect and enfranchise Black people. I can't believe the caucosity of the Supreme Court to use it to limit students of color from accessing higher education."

Those who responded by calling him racist displayed the odd conviction that Black people are not entitled to defend themselves.

Pro-life, did someone say? CNN reported on July 20, "Nearly two years after Texas' six-week abortion ban, more infants are dying." Meanwhile, Gov. Greg Abbott showed his concern for human life by installing barriers in the Rio Grande that cause migrants to drown, and officers patrolling the border have been ordered to push people — children — back into the river, where razor wire has been placed, and to refuse to give people water to drink.

On another front, the fear-mongering about medical care for gender-variant



minors is not only full of misinformation, it is a cynical diversion, since those stoking panic over it also seek to ban it for adults. This is hardly a surprise given the speed with which the "states' rights" pose on abortion was replaced with calls for a nationwide ban.

Connecting with people across multiple divides is hard. Sometimes we do it with music. Beloved singer Tony Bennett, who died on July 21 at age 96, ended his farewell concert with Lady Gaga in 2021 with his signature song, "I Left My Heart In San Francisco." Despite his advancing Alzheimer's, he was strong vocally and deft in his shaping of the lyric: "The morning fog may chill the air. I don't care. My love waits there ...." Music stays with us.

Everyone, however, is not stirred by the same music. Look at the controversy over "Try That In a Small Town," sung by Jason Aldean, which traffics in right-wing paranoia and encourages vigilantism.

It isn't just lies, gifting, and reckless-

ness that lovers of liberty and justice for all must reject. We must reject the suppression of votes, literature and history. We must reject gaslighting. We must reject bigotry. We must reject the recruitment of fake electors and the incitement of mobs to overturn elections. We must reject corruption on our high court.

We must reject the absurd notions that we are terribly fragile and that diversity is a weakness.

Let us appeal to people's better angels and common sense. This was neatly demonstrated in a recent Biden campaign ad consisting entirely of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene describing how Biden is carrying on the work of FDR and LBJ. Greene evidently considers Biden's efforts to help ordinary Americans shockingly offensive. Let's keep telling the uplifting truth until her MAGA bubble breaks. A beleaguered republic is in our hands.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rrosendall@me.com. Copyright © 2023 by Richard J. Rosendall. All rights reserved.



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# Love conquers all

## BEHIND THE CURTAINS

'Chicken and Biscuits' director serves up flavor with a side of love for Uptown Players

**RICH LOPEZ** | Staff writer  
rich@dallasvoice.com

**D**irector Akin Babatunde is renowned in the local theater world — and beyond. Here, he has already established himself as a premiere director with acclaimed shows at Undermain Theatre, Dallas Theater Center and Stage West. But this week marks a first for Babatunde: "This is my first show with Uptown Players," he said.

Exciting sounding in his voice, he continued, "I've always known and respected their work. And the respect they have given me has been just wonderful."

Babatunde is not only making his debut at Uptown Players, he's directing the company's closing show of the season, which happens to be the regional premiere of Douglas Lyons' comedy *Chicken and Biscuits*. The show opens today and runs through Aug. 13 at the Kalita Humphreys Theater.

The story centers on the Jenkins family as family members reunites for a funeral. That gathering ends up being a portal to family secrets, chaos and more.

For Babatunde, the story was a perfect fit.

"This is right up my alley. When I was getting my master's from UT Dallas in 2008, my thesis was on the mourning process of African-Americans and the structure, humor and tradition of that," he explained. "Plus, I grew up attending a lot of family funerals, and it really was my first introduction to the beauty of theater. When I read this, I surely knew I was the right one for this."

There is, Babatunde said, a certain grandeur that accompanies Black funerals. In fact, he added, there's nothing else quite like it.



"The sending off of a loved one in the African-American experience is unparalleled. There is the tragedy mixed with the pomp and the drama," he said.

But these funerals remain a very personal experience, too. So when casting happened, Babatunde said, he had to be sure his actors knew the deal.

During the audition process and then callbacks, he had conversations with the actors. When he asked if they had attended a funeral, he said they were very aware of that experience.

"We all had our laughs about that. But from a theatrical standpoint, I want to respect a tradition. It's not just comedy for comedy's sake," he said. "That was the vision I had. We're not going to just make you laugh. This story is based on love."

In the show, Rodney Richardson and Blake McNamara play the couple of Kenny and Logan. If there weren't already drama with the funeral itself, Kenny bringing home his white boyfriend for the first time definitely adds to the drama quotient.

"That is a no-no," Babatunde said. "In the African-American church, many families don't talk about those things. So this setting is very true to that."

In the play, Kenny's grandfather — the deceased — had accepted Kenny. The rest of the family ... well, that was still to be determined.

Babatunde said that the two actors bring a heartfelt touch to their characters. "They give a wonderful peek into that struggle. As the two lovers, they are superb, and when that clash of cultures

comes, boy, what a clash," he said.

"And this still exists in families today. Nobody wants to talk about or condemn it, but the gay presence in the Black church is very much often overlooked. It really can be a 'don't ask, don't tell' situation."

But with all that, *Chicken and Biscuits* is far from any buzzkill. Babatunde appreciates how Lyons created this piece mixing tragic elements, comedy, absurdism and conflict into one piece.

But the takeaway, he said, is not about any of those elements: "The takeaway is that love transforms all things — different loves like family, heritage, background, relationships; love conquers and resolves all things and I truly believe that."

For tickets, visit [UptownPlayers.org](http://UptownPlayers.org).



# PSSA pitches in for Legacy

## COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Softball Association remodels kitchen at Founders Cottage

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**P**egasus Slowpitch Softball Association remodeled the kitchen at Legacy Founders Cottage in Oak Cliff earlier this month. They completed the entire redo in six days and unveiled it on July 20.

Legacy Counseling Center, now known as Legacy Cares, opened Legacy Founders Cottage in 1996 as a hospice for people with AIDS. As new medications became available that allowed people to live with HIV, the cottage became more of a respite facility. And by 2006, the cottage was doing more respite care than hospice work.

Brooke Henderson ran the cottage for 10 years and is now executive director of Legacy Cares. She said PSSA got involved when members of the teams were volunteering at the facility, doing work gardening around the house. They noticed then how badly the kitchen needed to be remodeled.

Troy Steakley, who plays on the Woody's Crew team, spearheaded the work. Steakley, who has 20 years' experience as an art director doing TV, film and print work, designed 10 of HGTV's dream homes. He was at the cottage with the team of PSSA volunteers who were pulling up tall weeds and dead bushes and replacing them with new plants. They also replaced pillows and blankets around the house.

When they toured the house, it was obvious to Steakley the kitchen needed to be remodeled. Not only had more than 25 years of wear-and-tear taken a toll, the basic configuration of the space was a big problem. An island of cabinets sticking out into the living room impeded access to client rooms for first responders as well as making it more difficult for wheelchairs and even walk-



PSSA players recently renovated the kitchen at Legacy Founders Cottage. (Photo courtesy of Brooke Henderson with Legacy Cares)

ers to get through.

"Once we saw the need, we had to do more than just blankets," Steakley said.

He said they were able to work with existing plumbing, but some of the electrical wiring needed an upgrade. Floors were worn, and so were cabinets. And after 25 years, appliances desperately needed to be replaced.

The work took six days. While they were at it, Steakley said, they also replaced a dryer that no longer worked

and installed an ADA-compliant toilet in the house.

PSSA has added community service work to its bylaws as a requirement for member teams. Each team must complete 40 hours of community service in order to qualify to participate in the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance World Series. Steakley and his crew have far exceeded the requirement.

Henderson said she was very grateful

for the work done on the cottage and that her clients are benefiting from it. She added that PSSA's new community service requirement will benefit not just her agency, but organizations throughout the community.

As for the cottage, Henderson said, they still provide hospice care when needed. While people with HIV are living full lives, she said this fiscal year, they've lost two clients who had co-morbidities. One had complications from



COVID and the other had lung cancer.

But most clients recover at Legacy.

Henderson repeated how grateful she was for Steakley's work and PSSA's contribution: "They thought of everything," adding that during the six days of construction, PSSA even catered in lunch and dinner for the residents. ■



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# Learning lessons from history

## HISTORY ON DISPLAY



The advent of Black Harlem was no accident, as one exhibit in *Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow*, now on display at the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, explains. (David Taffet/Dallas Voice)

A new exhibit at DHHRM illustrates how SCOTUS can grant rights and take them away

**DAVID TAFFET** | Senior Staff Writer  
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A new exhibit at the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum reminds us that before some of the really terrible recent Supreme Court decisions, there was a series of awful decisions through the second half of the 19th century.

And if history repeats itself, yes, our rights can be taken away.

*Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow* explores how Black Americans advocated for civil rights from the 1857 Dred Scott decision through the dawn of the 20th century. The new exhibit, creat-

ed by the New York Historical Society, stands as a great companion to *Rise Up*, this spring's history of the LGBTQ rights movement dating from Stonewall.

While that exhibit extolled the great strides we made in the Supreme Court over the past 20 years, the current exhibit explains how the court can just as easily trample our rights.

In Dred Scott, usually considered the worst decision ever made by the Supreme Court, the justices ruled that no Black person, free or enslaved, could ever be a U.S. citizen.

In 1866, the year after the end of the Civil War, the Republican Congress passed a civil rights law over Democratic President Andrew Johnson's veto. The states also ratified the 14th Amendment. Both of these legalized citizenship for Black Americans.

The 13th Amendment, passed in 1865, abolished slavery. The 14th Amendment says, in part, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States ...



are citizens of the United States. ... No State shall ... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The same amendment created to protect the rights of former slaves was used in the three landmark LGBT rights cases — *Lawrence*, *Windsor* and *Obergefell*.

But, even though Dred Scott was overturned, that doesn't mean the Supreme Court stopped issuing terrible decisions.

Homer Plessy, a Black man, volunteered to be arrested for sitting in a whites-only train car in Louisiana. His white attorney, Albion Tourgee, argued that racial segregation of train cars violated the 14th Amendment.



The Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that public facilities that are separate but equal could remain segregated. Other cases followed that institutionalized "separate but equal" until the 1950s.

With these new Jim Crow decisions in place, the U.S. government abandoned the cause of Black equality. And new leaders created new organizations that demanded racial justice.

Even when Black soldiers fought in America's wars, their patriotism wasn't recognized. During World War II, African-Americans waged a "Double V" campaign for victory abroad and at home. Not until after the war did Presi-

dent Harry Truman desegregate the military.

The exhibit highlights the case of Sergeant Henry Johnson. On May 15, 1918, Johnson was standing guard on the battle field in the Argonne forest. He and another soldier were ambushed by about a dozen German soldiers. Although shot multiple times, Johnson wounded four enemy soldiers, forced other to retreat and saved another American from capture.

The story was recounted in newspapers across the U.S., and Johnson received the Croix de Guerre avec Palme, France's highest military honor. In his own country, though, his valor wasn't officially recognized until 2015 when

President Barack Obama posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor.

*Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow* teaches that the Jim Crow Era didn't end until passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. And recent Supreme Court rulings have chipped away at the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act.

The first program in conjunction with the exhibit is *The Impact of the Harlem Renaissance in the Age of Jim Crow* on Aug 9 at 7 p.m. ■

*Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow* runs until Dec. 31 at the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, 300 N. Houston St.



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# New chapters

## BEYOND THE STAGE

Queer actor finds his dreams in 'The Book of Mormon'

**RICH LOPEZ** | Staff writer  
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**S**am Nackman recently began his first national tour as one of the leads in *The Book of Mormon*, which runs Friday through Sunday, July 28-30, at Bass Hall in Fort Worth. The queer actor plays Elder Cunningham. It is a role that's been on his radar for some time. Now, he's bringing the character to life across the entire country.

"It's been such a whirlwind, but dreams do come true," Nackman said. "I've dreamt of doing this role since I knew I wanted to pursue acting."

As Elder Cunningham, Nackman plays half of a pair of Mormon missionaries sent to a Ugandan village to spread the word of faith to a community dealing with bigger issues and problems. Written by Matt Stone and Trey Parker, the show is an irreverent and funny approach to religion — among other major topics.

The subject matter, as one might expect, elicits a variety of reactions in audiences, and Nackman has gotten to experience a variety of those reactions with each of the show's stops. He expects that to continue with upcoming performances, as well.

"It's very interesting. Some people know that the show is funny and satirical. Some come into it blind. That all causes a lot of different directions," he said. "Some people are shocked because the show gets wild and crazy at some points. It's just so funny from the stage though to hear these different reactions."

For fans of the original *Book of Mormon* that premiered more than a decade ago on Broadway, Nackman notes that the show has been updated. In a relatively short time, the world has changed — and so has the show.

"We are in a different world now, so



Sam Nackman, right, as Elder Cunningham, speaks to Ugandan villagers in the touring production of *The Book of Mormon*.



Sam Nackman, right, is Elder Cunningham in *The Book of Mormon* on stage this weekend at Bass Hall.

yes, a couple of things have been updated. Some jokes have been tweaked to be more relevant, but I think the updates only improve the show," he said. "Some jokes give the characters more agency, but the songs have really remained the same. I think it all works great for the

show."

Elder Cunningham wasn't just a dream role for the actor; Nackman said he and the elder are almost cut from the very same cloth and that he relates to his character almost a little too precisely — which isn't a bad thing.

"Well, I do think I am very like him and to a fault. He's just this loveable goofball. Biggest heart you've ever seen," Nackman said. "He loves everyone around him. I think I am similar in that way. I think everyone's great, and I look for the best in people. But sometimes that can lead to him — and me — getting carried away in things we say and do."

Nackman's notable differences are charming.

"I'm not that silly all the time, and I like to think I have more self control than [Elder Cunningham] does. He's a bit of an impulsive person," the actor said.

As a bi/pan identifying person, Nackman is aware of that intersection of queerness and religion in the show. But still, he said, he finds the show's message certainly to be uplifting.

"It's very much encapsulated in one line: 'Who cares what happens when we're dead.' And that was such a beautiful sentiment that it brings me to tears hearing that," Nackman said. "As long as you can make this life the best it can be, that's what is important — especially for this world we currently live in."

Visit [BassHall.com](http://BassHall.com) for tickets.



# Category is ...

## COMPETITION

'Ms.' category joins 'Mr.' in Hidden Door contest

**TAMMYE NASH** | Managing Editor  
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**T**he reigning Mr. Hidden Door, Euphonious, will be handing over his title to the 2023 winner to highlight the annual contest happening Oct. 20-21.

But this year, producer Dan Perry notes, there's more to look forward to: This year there will also be a Ms. Hidden Door contest, happening Nov. 3-4.

"We've had a lot of women asking about a Ms. Hidden Door competition," Perry said this week in announcing the new contest. "We've had a whole lot of leatherfolks — men and women — who have ended up at The Hidden Door since Dallas Eagle closed. But just because of the changes in the neighborhood, we've had a lot more women in general coming to The Door regularly over the last several years, and a lot of women have been asking about a Ms. Contest," Perry explained. "So we looked at the idea, and we talked about it. And we just decided to do it."

Perry stressed that the Mr./Ms. Hidden Door contests are not leather competitions, per se, but that most of the competitions to which the winners would be eligible to advance are leather-identified. But, he added, although the winners will be eligible to compete



to those contests, they are not required to.

To be eligible to enter, contestants must be a Texas resident of legal age, and they must identify as male for the Mr. category and female for the Ms. category. Winners will be required to commit time to representing the bar and "doing good stuff in the community," Perry said. "They will need to be ready and able to show up at Hidden Door functions, like the bar's anniversary party and the Firedancers' annual Ruby Slipper event."

Perry said details of the new Ms. competition are still being finalized, and that a meet-and-greet for interested women is being planned and will be announced soon. He said that the contest organizers are looking for people who want to be serious about competing and helping the community but who also want to have a good time.

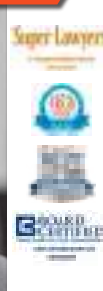
"I want people to know this is about doing good stuff for the community, but it's also about having a good time, too," he said. "You have to be serious about competing for the title, but at the same time, if you are not having fun, it's not worth doing it." ■



**LEGACY OF LOVE DONATION** Following several recent incidents of vandalism at The Legacy of Love Monument, including anti-LGBTQ hate speech graffiti, The Anthony Bobrow Trust has stepped in to donate money towards the continued restoration and upkeep of the monument, which sits at the intersection of Oak Lawn Avenue and Cedar Springs Road. Harvey Meissner, left, general manager of The Hidden Door and co-trustee of The Anthony Bobrow Trust, is pictured presenting a \$25,000 donation to Adam Murphy, vice president of The Oak Lawn Committee, for that purpose. (Courtesy photo)

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# A parent's experience

## GENDER AFFIRMING MEDICAL TOURISM

What happened when I traveled to Mexico with my FTM son for his gender-affirming surgery

SEAN HAMILTON | Special Contributor

*Editor's Note: This is Part II of Sean Hamilton's story about his experience supporting his transgender son. Read Part I, in which Hamilton discusses details of planning a medical tourism trip to Mexico for the surgery, at [DallasVoice.com](https://dallasvoice.com). All monetary sums are in U.S. dollars.*

It's January, 2023. My son (FTM) sends me a text — just an aside in the middle of a conversation about movies or philosophy or something: “Also!! Top surgery on June 27th.”

I open my calendar to start making plans. It's something he's been working on for more than a year. We tried going through my insurance, and while the insurance promised to cover the procedure, we were unable to find anyone willing to do the procedure under insurance. They all wanted no insurance, payment in full up front.

Most doctors were holding new patients to a six-month, one-year, or even two-year waitlist to even have an initial consultation. And then, it would cost approximately \$16,000-\$18,000. And, to be honest, the doctors he talked to in person were cold-shouldered, unfeeling and just chasing profit.

So, my son was researching medical tourism, which is traveling to another country to have surgery done cheaper and faster than what the United States could provide.

Some may not agree with us on this, but his mother and I put the burden of achieving this goal on our son. We had him in gender-affirming care, including hormone replacement, and were fully supportive of his pronouns and recognition of his gender. But we wanted this surgery to be something he owned, something he made happen for himself, not something we gifted him.



Heading into surgery

It is part of life's journey that we struggle to accomplish the things most important to us, the experiences that define us. Gifts don't do that; struggle does.

But that being said, we were not going to just abandon our son. We wanted to be supportive. So I helped with flights and told him I was willing to pay for my own accommodations to be there with him during his transformation.

I made sure that everything I did was my expense to be there with him, but he COULD have done this completely on his own. That was important.

So I scheduled our flights, and then I began thinking:

I'm a native Texan, but in all my years, I've never been to Mexico. And as far as Texans go, my Spanish is terrible, good for little more than reading a restaurant menu. And I've been fed a media diet that looks down on Mexico as a third world country, rife with crime and danger and filthiness.

Let me just say that, as open-minded as I am and as much as I try to be non-prejudiced, our media in the U.S. is insidious and pervasive. I was worried about this trip because of everything I'd heard in our media.

Were we at risk of being kidnapped? Are the hospitals there terrible? Do the toilets work? Are we going to get sick if

we inadvertently drink the water? Is my kid safe having surgery here?

But life is an adventure. So I booked our flights and he booked our AirBnB and the recovery house. And we prepared for our adventure.

His surgeon was located in Guadalajara, which has a strong medical tourism industry. It's not as prevalent as in Mexico City or other cities in Mexico, but it is established. There are multiple surgeons and surgery centers and recovery houses available there.

It is a large city, with all of the modern aspects you would expect any large city to have. Uber and AirBnB are common and easy to use. We made extensive use of Google Translate and the translation functions of WhatsApp to communicate, and it made our lives much easier.

We arrived a day before my son was to have his initial consultation. He booked a cute little AirBnB for the first two nights, as it was much cheaper than the Recovery House. For these two nights, a one bedroom AirBnB in a nice part of town was about \$50 a night. It had an upstairs bedroom with an air conditioner, bathroom and shower, and a futon in a little living room and a kitchen on the first floor. I've certainly stayed in worse places for more money.

The next morning, my son was sched-

uled for his blood draw and in-person consultation with the surgeon. I must say that one of the most striking differences in the health care practices in Mexico versus the United States is the simple practicality of Mexico's process.

We arrived at the surgeon's office for the blood draw and consultation. My son talked to the lady running the lab desk. She took his payment — \$30 — and then sat him down right there and did the blood draw, giving him a receipt to take to the surgeon. Including the delays for translation of instructions and payment, we were there about 10 minutes.

Then we walked upstairs and told the desk he was there to see his surgeon. We waited about five minutes, and then were escorted back to meet with the surgeon in person.

Now, to be clear, this is a person that my son had been talking to over email and in messages for months, with electronic consultations. My son had sent him a wire transfer of \$500 to secure the surgery date, and this day was the first time they had met in person.

The doctor was very supportive, spoke fluent English and answered all of our questions, multiple times. While my son was getting changed for the physical aspect of the consultation, the doctor addressed me, saying (paraphrased), “It is so nice when I see family come with my patients. It is love. It is love to support them.”

I'm sure there are some that will say this was just him keeping his paying clients happy, but I felt it was more than that. Yes, he is a plastic surgeon conducting cosmetic surgery. And mostly their center does breast enhancement. But this felt different. I genuinely feel that he wanted to help my son feel more confident and at home in his own body.

So my son consulted with the doctor. And, upon seeing my son in person, the surgeon changed his plan a bit before scheduling surgery for 8:30 a.m. the next day.

Our challenge then was to get from the AirBnB to the Recovery House, get set up and go straight from there to surgery. Fortunately the recovery house





was very accommodating and were able to pick us up early in the morning with enough time to move our gear and get us to surgery — with time to spare.

A note on traffic: Traffic in Guadalajara is much like traffic in any larger city, except where, in the U.S., stop signs mean stop, in Guadalajara, stop signs are a mild suggestion. Stop lights are more serious — but not much more. It was common for our drivers to see a stop sign or a stop light and just check that the intersection was clear, and, if it was, just blow through it. So I do recommend using official taxis and Uber drivers to get around unless you are an adventurous driver.

I had heard about people trying scam tourists with bad or fake taxi services, but I think the Uber phenomenon has supplanted that. We used an official taxi service to get from the airport to the Airbnb, then we used Uber after that. We had no problems at all with any of these services.

On the day of surgery, we arrived at the surgery center. From what I could determine, we were the only patients there that morning, so we had the building and the staff to ourselves. The rooms were very plain and simple compared to surgery rooms in the U.S., and very practical: a bed, a seating area for supporting relatives, a bathroom and some basic medical equipment such as heart and blood pressure monitors. And that's all.

Now I'm going to go into some differences in procedures and treatment.

In the U.S., top surgery — more officially, double mastectomy with chest sculpting — involves the patient being put fully under anesthesia — intubated and completely down. However, this anesthesiologist did not feel that was necessary, so her plan was to put my son in twilight with an epidural. The option was always there to take him fully under if necessary, but she didn't feel it was needed.

Again, practicality.

This surgery required no cutting of muscles or bones; it's just skin and fatty tissue work. This made my son a bit anxious, but it worked out very well. Surgery took about four hours during which time I used the local wifi to work.

I took a picture, and I remember vividly that last moment, watching my son walk into the operating theater to his transformation, knowing that the person I would meet a few hours later would be fundamentally different.

It was a long wait. But finally they

rolled him back from surgery, already awake and talking. He recovered quickly because of the lower anesthesia, and at about four in the afternoon, we called for our ride to take us back to the Recovery House.

During this time, we needed to make the final payments for the surgery, and here is how understanding and nice they are: My son had already paid half upon arrival, and the other half was due prior to surgery starting. However, their system glitched, and they were not able to process the payment before surgery started. But they went ahead with the surgery.

While he was in surgery, the system cleared, and I worked with them to complete payment. I can't imagine that we would have had the same understanding in the U.S.

They were instructing me on the post-operative care my son would need in the recovery house — prescriptions, bandages, anti-septics, compression wraps, gauze, cotton — and the nurse, while my son was recovering post-surgery, literally walked with me down the street to a pharmacy, ordered the prescriptions and picked out all of the items we would need. I just paid drug store prices for all of it.

No stupid \$300 for Tylenol markup, just go to the pharmacy and buy these things to use in recovery. Very practical. And you can get Tramadol over the counter for pain management.

After we left the surgery center and returned to the Recovery House, the same nurse that walked me to the pharmacy came there to help my son shower, clean and change his bandages and rewrap everything.

According to my son and his peers who have had top surgery in the U.S., this is very different. In the U.S., they have been told to stay in their bandages for a week, maybe two weeks before changing anything. Here, they wanted the bandages changed, the wounds inspected every day and pictures sent to the surgeon to monitor healing.

My son got to see the shape of his new chest the next morning, unlike his peers in the U.S. The nurse helped him shower, and even washed his hair, the very next morning after surgery. I can't even express how good this was for my son's morale.

If you aren't aware, having this surgery often requires having drains present to siphon off bodily fluid that is generated by the surgery. This means plastic

tubes coming out of the chest to drain into a container. In the U.S., doctors often just let the patient heal for a week with these drains in, no changing of bandages or other care. For my son's doctor this was different. It still took a little more than a week before the drains were removed, but in that time my son was able to shower every day, view the progress of his healing every day and feel better every day.

There were some issues with pain. Even though this surgery did not involve cutting any muscle or bone, it did involve removal of breast tissue and lactation glands, liposuction and nipple replacement, with long cuts across the chest to sculpt the skin. My son is generally opposed to opioids, but on the second night, the pain was rough. Fortunately tramadol is available over-the-counter, as I noted, and I was able to walk to a nearby pharmacy and get some serious pain relief for him. This got him through the next couple of nights until the healing crested and the pain began to subside.

The Recovery House provided for everything he needed. All meals were covered and included protein, fresh fruits and vegetables and, usually, fruit or vegetable juice. They had direct access to his doctor's office for any questions.

They did not provide items such as soap, shampoo or toothpaste or any of the materials needed for recovery. You provide those yourself. But they did clean the rooms and laundry every day, including our personal laundry.

There was a nice sitting area, wifi, a patio and comfortable places to just be and listen to the birds or enjoy the weather. The house was gated and protected by electric wire, and the gates were always closed. I never had a sense of being unsafe.

Because Guadalajara is not "zoned" the way many neighborhoods in the U.S. are, there were many options for food and supplies within easy walking distance. Less than five minutes' walk in three directions there were convenience stores and pharmacies as well as cafes, restaurants and other shops. It was easy to simply walk out the gate down to the 7-11 or the pharmacy, pick up some gauze or tape or prescriptions and return.

Two weeks of watching your kid recover is a long time, so I read a lot of books on my computer and worked with my teams in the U.S. We watched Netflix at night until he was tired.

After about eight days, the doctor felt the fluid drainage had subsided enough to remove the drains. So we went into the office where he snipped the ends of the sutures holding the drains in and smoothly removed them. My son said it felt weird but was not painful.

It's important to know that this surgery requires compression to make sure the skin reattaches to the underlying body fascia. So this whole time, my son was wearing a layer of gauze over the wounds, a layer of cotton over the gauze, and an elastic bandage wrapped multiple times around his torso to provide compression. With the drains in, this was uncomfortable for him. Once the drains were removed, a lot of that discomfort went away, and a day later he felt ready to go out and see something other than the inside of the recovery room.

Fortunately, there were a lot of options nearby. Just a 10 minute walk away was a nice shopping area with a casino, several restaurants and some shops. You only need to be 18 to gamble, so we spent a few hours on the slots until he got tired, and we walked back and had a nice dinner to celebrate.

It was not lost on me, by the way, that my son had his transformative surgery during Pride Month.

He continued to heal over the next week and, finally, on the day before we were to return the U.S. he saw his surgeon for a final check-up. All this time, the surgeon had been getting daily photos of my son's healing process, and now it was time to snip the sutures. This was painful, but it also marked the final step.

This is where the full reality of transformation really hit home. My son was crying with happiness. And his surgeon showed so much compassion and care; he spent easily a half an hour with us, even as he had other patients to care for, to make sure that my son was okay.

As has always happened anytime I travel, I completely re-evaluated my expectations, threw away prejudices I was not aware I had (mostly due to U.S. media) and came to a greater understanding of our shared humanity. I was privileged to watch a person I love become more of who they want to be, and I was privileged to meet people who gladly helped him make this transformation. From the surgeon to the housekeepers, everyone was supportive, smiling and friendly.

I went to Mexico to support my son and found I was only one of many people willing to be his support. ■



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# Bollywood nights

## CULTURAL & COMFORTABLE

Event aims to give South Asian LGBTQ people in DFW a chance to celebrate in a comfortable atmosphere

**TAMMYE NASH** | Managing Editor

nash@dallasvoice.com

**L**iving openly and proudly as an LGBTQ person can be a very difficult prospect for many people, especially those who are living far away from home and the culture and customs they are used to. South Asian LGBTQ people living in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, for example, often find themselves faced with two options when they want to go out: They can either go to an LGBTQ venue where they can be open about their sexuality and/or gender identity but find none of their culture, or they can go to a South Asian-focused venue where they are surrounded by their culture but likely are not comfortable being openly LGBTQ.

Vishal Rajpal is looking to change that.

Rajpal, who is from “a very small town” in India, moved to Texas in 2014 to get his masters. Not long after he moved here, Rajpal said, he was introduced to a group of LGBTQ people in the South Asian community. (“When we say the South Asian community we mean people who trace their origins to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri-Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Burma,” he explained.) The group’s primary focus, Rajpal said, is to “make a safe space where people can be themselves without being afraid,” through small meet-ups and other opportunities to mingle with other LGBTQ South Asians and to educate themselves and other people.

“A lot of these people are still in the closet. They don’t really have anybody who supports them, who tells them it is ok to be gay or lesbian,” he said.

Unfortunately, the group has been “slowly diminishing. It’s activities are

diminishing,” Rajpal said. “I’m not the president of the group or anything; I am just a part of it. But one day, I realized I wanted to do something.”

That something, he said, is a Bollywood party he has planned for Saturday night, Aug. 5, at Alexandre’s.

“Everybody else has their own bars,” Rajpal said, referring to the Black and Latino LGBTQ communities. “So why don’t we [South Asians] have something somewhere?”

“Lots of straight clubs have Bollywood nights like this, but those are not places, really, where LGBTQ people can be comfortable being themselves,” he continued. “I recently went to a club where the DJ for my event was playing so I could get video of her working. My friend who was there told me everyone was staring at me. I don’t care; it doesn’t bother me. But a lot of people don’t have that kind of confidence.”

Rajpal said he first starting thinking about staging a Bollywood night party about two years ago, if not longer. “But I was married at the time when I first thought of it, and my husband was not very supportive,” he explained.

After getting divorced, however, he put his plans into high gear, contacting Alexandre’s owner Lee Daugherty through a bartender at the club. Daugherty responded immediately and enthusiastically.

“I really want to thank Lee for everything,” Rajpal said. “This was really just a very vague idea I had, and he has been very helpful in making this happen. He is very excited about it, and I am really happy to have met him.”

Right now, the goal is to hold this event and make it a success, and then plan other events on a regular basis moving forward, he said.

“We have such a rich culture,” Rajpal said. “We have approximately 35 different languages in the South Asian culture. Every city has a different food. Each city is unique.”

“For a lot of people, when they think of ‘Bollywood,’ they just think of the cows and of poverty. But the South Asian countries are so much more than



Diana

### Chameli Night

Chameli Night — Aao Kabhi Haveli Pe, Saturday, Aug. 5, 9 p.m., at Alexandre’s, 4026 Cedar Springs Road. Presented by Vishal Rajpal with Masala Nights, and featuring music by DJ Mini, drumming by Soni Dholi, drag performance by Noor Janah and others, bellydancers and more. Tickets are \$20 if purchased by July 29, or \$22 if purchased by Aug. 4 and \$32 if purchased the day of the event, available only at masala-nights.ticketleap.com.

that. I don’t really know the best way to convey that message, but I want to do something to educate people about who we are.”



Vishal Rajpal



Noor Janah



Lee Daugherty





# BLACK TIE DINNER GUEST ANNOUNCEMENTS



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EMMY-NOMINATED  
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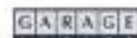


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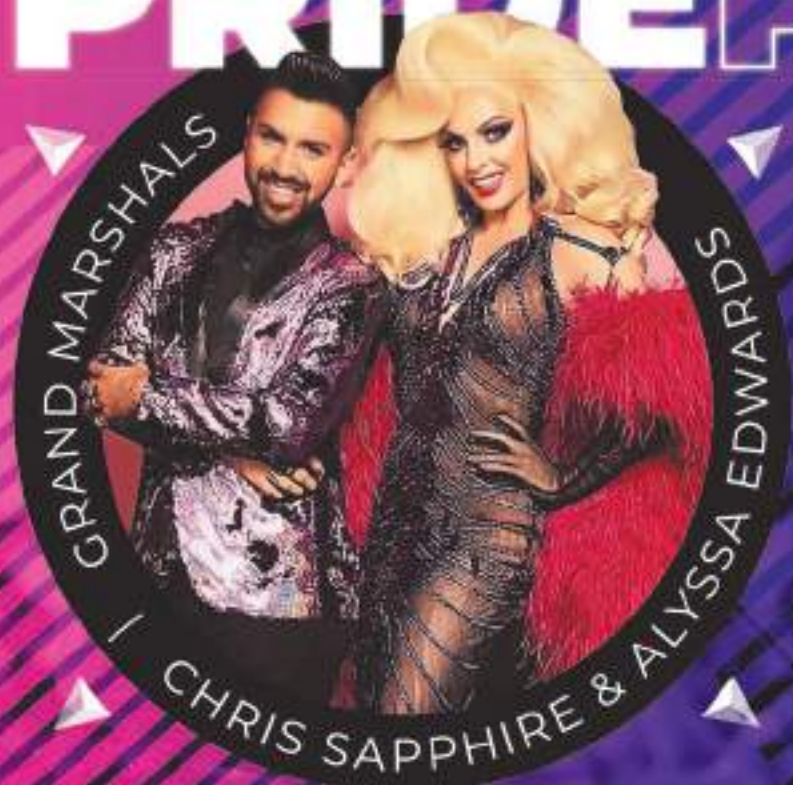


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## In Memoriam

**Kirk Myers-Hill** - Founder of Abounding Prosperity and Dallas Southern Pride

**Jesse Tafalla, Jr** - President of LULACs Dallas Rainbow Council #4871 and long time LGBTQIA Community activist.



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# PLAN YOUR WEEK - The Gay Agenda... Our LGBTQ community calendar!



Rio Grande Valley Bears host RGV Bears Summer Camp July 28-30 at Grizzly Pines in Navasota. Visit [GrizzlyPines.com](http://GrizzlyPines.com) for information on the campground.

- Red for community events
- Blue for arts and entertainment
- Purple for sports
- Green for nightlife
- Orange for civic events and holidays

## ■ Biweekly: Hope Cottage Foster Parent Information Meeting

Hope Cottage holds information meetings for those interested in becoming foster parents. The meetings are held alternately on Saturdays at 10 a.m. and Thursdays at 6 p.m. For information email Clyde Hemminger at [chemminger@hopecottage.org](mailto:chemminger@hopecottage.org).

## JULY

### ■ July 28-30: RGV Bears Summer Camp 2023

A weekend of activities with the Rio Grande Valley Bears at Grizzly Pines, 16930 Whippoorwill Road, Navasota. Weekend info at [RGVBears945@gmail.com](mailto:RGVBears945@gmail.com). Campground info at [GrizzlyPines.com](http://GrizzlyPines.com).

### ■ July 28: 'The Taming of the Shrew'

Bard in the Barn presents a gender-inclusive version of the William Shakespeare play as a fundraiser for Finn's Place, a nonprofit community center for the transgender and gender-diverse community. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. at The Big Red Barn, 5860 I-20 Service Road in Fort Worth. Tickets start at \$10, available at [Zeffy.com](http://Zeffy.com). Show runs each Thursday-Saturday, through Aug. 5.

### ■ July 28-30: 'The Book of Mormon'

Bass Performance Hall, E. 4th Street at Calhoun Street in Fort Worth, presents *The Book of Mormon* at 7:30 p.m. nightly. Tickets start at \$77, available at [BassHall.com](http://BassHall.com).

### ■ July 29: FIITT Camp

Wil Turner hosts FIITT Camp, a health and wellness group fitness workshop, every Saturday from Aug. 5 through November from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Reverchon Park, 3505 Maple Ave. Register at [LivingWellWithWil.com](http://LivingWellWithWil.com).

### ■ July 29: Penny's Top Models Show & Underwear Auction

The United Court of the Lone Star Empire presents *Penny's Top Models Show and Underwear Auction* beginning at 6 p.m. at The Hidden Door, 5025 Bowser Ave. Proceeds benefit the Greg Dollgener Memorial AIDS Fund. Visit the Facebook event page for more info.

### ■ July 29: SCUM! Gear and Dance Party

El Ro Productions and Circuit Kings present SCUM! Gear and Dance Party at 10 a.m. at 11311 Harry Hines, featuring DJ Moos. Tickets start at \$22, available at [Universe.com/SCUM](http://Universe.com/SCUM).

### ■ July 29: BuZzn' BabeZz Drag Brunch

Daphne Rio hosts BuZzn' BabeZz Drag Brunch at 1 p.m. at The Brewers Arms restaurant inside BuzzBrews Kitchen Lakewood, 5815 Live Oak St. Tickets are \$15, available at [EventBrite.com](http://EventBrite.com).

### ■ July 29: Truth & Alibi Drag Brunch

EM Productions presents Drag Brunch at Truth & Alibi, 2618 Elm St., with seating starting at 12:30 p.m. and the show at 1 p.m. Tickets start at \$15, available at [EventBrite.com](http://EventBrite.com).

### ■ July 30: The Queer Club

Fern Connections presents a book club at 2 p.m. the last Sunday of every month. Register at [FernConnections.com/events](http://FernConnections.com/events).

### ■ July 30: Furball Dallas: Heat

Joe Fiore and Deseled present Furball Dallas: Heat from 5-11 p.m. at The Nines — Deep Ellum, 2911 Main St. DJ Rue-D headlines with DJ Josh Sanders opening. Tickets are \$15, available at [FurballNYC.TicketLeap.com](http://FurballNYC.TicketLeap.com).

### ■ July 30: Professional Lacrosse

Watch The Waterdogs lacrosse team play The Archers lacrosse team at 2 p.m. at The Star at Frisco, 1 Cowboys Way. Sign up at [Eventeny.com](http://Eventeny.com) for free tickets.

## AUGUST

### ■ Aug. 1: Classic Chassis

Classic Chassis Car Club meets 6-8 p.m. at Ojeda's, 4617 Maple Ave.

### ■ Aug. 3-5: 'The Taming of the Shrew'

Bard in the Barn presents a gender-inclusive version of the William Shakespeare play as a fundraiser for Finn's Place, a nonprofit community center for the transgender and gender-diverse community. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. at The Big Red Barn, 5860 I-20 Service Road in Fort Worth. Tickets start at \$10, available at [Zeffy.com](http://Zeffy.com).

### ■ Aug. 3: Queer Factor

Stefan G hosts Queer Factor at Dallas Comedy Club, 3036 Elm St. Doors open at 8 p.m.; show starts at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 at [Prekindle.com](http://Prekindle.com).

### ■ Aug. 5: Miss LEO Pageant

An evening of cocktails and competition at The Hidden Door, 5025 Bowser St. from 8-10 p.m.

### ■ Aug. 5: Chameli Night

Masala Nights presents Chameli Night with DJ Mini starting at 9 p.m. at Alexandre's, 4026 Cedar Springs Road. Features drag performance by Noor Janah, drummer Dohl, Bollywood music and bellydancing.

### ■ Aug. 5: FIITT Camp

Wil Turner hosts FIITT Camp, a health and wellness group fitness workshop, every Saturday from Aug. 5 through November from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Reverchon Park, 3505 Maple Ave. Register at [LivingWellWithWil.com](http://LivingWellWithWil.com).

### ■ Aug. 12: Landmark Dinner

Celebrate 50 years of Lambda Legal at the Landmark Dinner at the JW Marriott Dallas Arts District. [LambdaLegal.org](http://LambdaLegal.org).

### ■ Aug. 12: Dallas Bears Club Night

On the patio of The Hidden Door beginning at 8 p.m.

### ■ Aug. 12: FIITT Camp

Wil Turner hosts FIITT Camp, a health and wellness group fitness workshop, every Saturday from Aug. 5 through November from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in Reverchon Park, 3505 Maple Ave. Register at [LivingWellWithWil.com](http://LivingWellWithWil.com).

### ■ Aug. 12: Decades with Mel '70s Disco Party

DFW Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence host "Decades with Mel: '70s Disco Party" from 7-10 p.m. at The Hidden Door, 5025 Bowser St. The event is a fundraiser for Dallas Hope Charities. They are accepting donations of cash, shampoo, conditioners, gel and other such items.

### ■ Aug. 17: Log Cabin Dallas

Log Cabin Republicans meets with happy hour at 6 p.m. and a presentation at 7 p.m. at Mattito's, 3102 Oak Lawn Ave.

### ■ Aug. 19: Under the Sea Gaybingo

Gaybingo at 6 p.m. Play for a chance to win cash and prizes. Station 4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Tickets at [myresourcecenter.org/gaybingo](http://myresourcecenter.org/gaybingo).

*Have an event coming up? Email your information to Managing Editor Tammye Nash at [nash@dallasvoice.com](mailto:nash@dallasvoice.com) or Senior Staff Writer David Taffet at [taffet@dallasvoice.com](mailto:taffet@dallasvoice.com) by Monday at 5 p.m. for that week's issue.*

*Look for extended listings online at [DallasVoice.com](http://DallasVoice.com)*



The Waterdogs take on The Archers in a professional lacrosse game Sunday, July 30, at The Star at Frisco. See listings for details.



# Cassie Nova

## ASK A DRAG QUEEN

### Homophobes at the Salvation Army store

Mornin’ glories! When I was a baby drag queen, I got so much of my drag at thrift stores. I absolutely love going to thrift stores. Even now that I can afford better drag, I still will pop into a Goodwill or resale shop just to see what they have. There is no better feeling than finding something you like, and then it actually fits!

The other day, I found a pair of heels that were perfect for me. I CANNOT wear super high heels anymore. It fucking hurts, and I walk like a baby giraffe. So, when I found a sensible shoe in a cool color — and it fit! — you betta believe I snatched those bitches up! For \$8, you can’t beat it.

Y’all know the Salvation Army store on Inwood? I hadn’t been there in years but decided to stop in the other day ..... It was dreadful.

Twenty-plus years ago it was a cool place with lots of drag options, and it felt clean. Now it looks like a gutted-out Gibson’s or K Mart, and the quality of the clothes was horrendous.

Now I will tell you the real reason I have not been to that Salvation Army in over 20 years. I used to go by there once or twice a month and find all kinds of weird and eclectic clothes, costumes or accessories. Back then, to the back left of the store, they had a room that was just the better-quality women’s clothing and costume jewelry. It was a poor drag queen’s wet dream.

Plus, they had sales all the time. Each item had color-coded price tags, and, on certain days, one particular color would be 30, 40 or even 50 percent off. But they wouldn’t sell you anything that did not have a price tag on it. They were strict about it, too. It kept people from pulling tags off to get stuff cheaper.

On this particular day, I found the most fabulous champagne-colored shear robe — with marabou feathers along the sleeves and a ton more feathers along the edge — that just billowed across the floor. It was gorgeous. I had to have it. Then I noticed that it did not have a price tag.

Well, fuck! I figured it wouldn’t hurt to ask if they could find out a price because I really wanted it.

In my head, I already had a song picked out to do in it. I knew what hair I wanted to wear. I had some great big, special occasion Dragon Lady jewelry that would be so perfect to wear with this classy sheer robe/dress. I would wear a nude bodysuit underneath it to give it a hint of naughtiness. I even had the perfect shoes to finish off the entire ensemble.

So, I go to the counter to talk to the little lady that was working the back room. I asked her if she could please find a price for the dress. I basically told her money was no object; just name your price, and I will pay it. Normally I would never do something like that, but I had a wad of cash from working a full weekend just burning a hole in my pocket.

Bills be damned; I wanted a new piece! The little lady — by the way, her name was Eunice or Agnes or some other old-ass name — told me, “Yes sir. I will be right back. Let me take this to the back and see what I can find out.” I thanked her profusely and went back to shopping.

Like I said, the back left of the store was upscale ladies clothing; the back right was a room of collectables that had books, tchotchkes, tools and a variety of weird and cool stuff. Between those two rooms was their employee area, and it had a set of double swinging doors.

The weird thing was that the walls between the three rooms didn’t go all of the way to the ceiling. There was about two feet of open space between the top of the wall and the ceiling, so you could easily hear people talking in the employee area. And I could hear Little Miss Eunice Bitch burst through the double swinging doors and announce, very loudly, to the other people in the room that “There is a homosexual out there that would like to know how much this fabulous dress is!” And then she started laughing.

She said it so fucking loud that every person in or around that back room lifted their heads and looked at me.

I was not embarrassed or sad about it. But I was fucking pissed.

I walked out of the back left room and stormed to the employee area. I literally kicked the swinging doors open and yelled, “This HOMOSEXUAL has changed his mind, and you can shove that dress up your ass!”



I turned and stomped my gay ass towards the front door to leave, all while cussing and mumbling: “This was fucking ridiculous; fucking rude-ass bitch; I am never coming back here!”

By the time I get to the front door, the store manager, a big country preacher-looking guy, is asking me to please stop, asking how he could make the situation better. I stop and listen, because I still want that fucking robe. (By the way, the store manager guy was always nice to me. He always said hi and would make small talk. I had heard rumors that the Salvation Army were not very gay friendly, but that store manager was never anything but nice.)

I explained the whole situation, and he shakes his head at Agnes Bitchface. He asks me to wait one moment while he talks to her. A few seconds later, the old battle axe walks over to me and asks if she can talk to me in private. I’m like, “Naw son, I do not wanna talk to your bitch ass.” but I did. She walks me out the front door and says, “I’m sorry, I just felt like I could say that because I’m a lesbian.” But she said it “lesbian.”

I said, “What the fuck ever? You are a lesbian?” She said yes but nobody at work knew and for me to keep it between us.

She was no more lesbian that I am straight. I told her, “Okay, if you are a lesbian, then name one lesbian bar.” Back then there were lots of lesbian bars — Sue Ellen’s, Buddies and, one of my favorite hangouts, Jugs. Hell, I would have been okay if she said the name of any gay bar. She gives me a deer in the headlights look and says she doesn’t go out to the bars. Okay sure, but if you are a lesbian, you can name one lesbian bar. She thinks about it for a second and said, “Dykies!”

I walked back into the store and told her manager — and the rest of the store — that she was trying to convince me she’s a lesbian, and that she’s a fucking liar and a horrible person. She then lets her true self slip out as she mumbles, “Fucking faggot!” Luckily the store manager heard her and fired her on the spot. He told that ho to get her stuff and never come back. I started to walk out as the store manager chased me down again. He gives me a speech about how the Salvation Army is a Christian company that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ and although he doesn’t agree with my lifestyle, it is not up to them to judge me, but I will need to get right with the Lord.

I roll my eyes and walk to my car all while their ex-employee, short-termed lespian and self-professed child of God is yelling, “You goin’ to hell, faggot!”

You just gotta love a good Christian.

Needless to say, I did not get that fabulous fucking dress. At that point, it wasn’t worth it. It was tainted with hate. A few weeks later, I see a drag queen wearing it onstage, and it was as beautiful as I remembered. I’m still a little bitter about it. Oh well. Goodwill and other thrift stores for me. I won’t even put spare change in the bell ringers’ bucket at Christmas time. I can hold a grudge. Any who!

Remember to always love more, bitch less and be fabulous! XOXO, Cassie Nova

### this week’s solution

E	A	R	S	T	R	A	D	E	H	I	V	E
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# Texas T Brunch at FLZZ

(photos courtesy Joey Robinson)



# Shania Twain Queen of Me Tour

(photos courtesy Rich Lopez)



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Cody and Cody



Maria, Lane and Jesus



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Solution on Page XX

- Across**

  - 1 Dumbo's "wings"
  - 5 It may be rough
  - 10 Sweet spot
  - 14 Respond on one's knees
  - 15 What to scan in poetry
  - 16 Architecture, to Philip Johnson
  - 17 1964 movie of Rock & Doris
  - 20 Yoko of *Double Fantasy*
  - 21 Harley Quinn and Batgirl
  - 22 U-turn from NNW
  - 23 Bruce Wayne kept his Dick in one
  - 25 Ethnic suffix
  - 26 Emulated Neil Patrick Harris
  - 28 Win \_\_\_ nose
  - 30 Where the Dutch girl stuck her finger?
  - 32 With 35-Across, 1959 movie of Rock & Doris
  - 35 See 32-Across
  - 37 Cheese from Gide's country
  - 39 You might pick one up in an alley
  - 41 *West* \_\_\_ *Story*
  - 44 Animated dog
  - 45 It can make hair straight
  - 47 No to Rimbaud
  - 48 Fictional Italian town
  - 50 *Barney Miller* actor Jack
  - 51 Erect
- 53 Most likely to use a condom

55 Red Guard members

57 1961 movie of Rock & Doris

60 Wang in fashion

61 Oral performances

62 Part of an old Madonna bra

64 Steamed up

65 Italian sauce

66 Apple that isn't a fruit

67 Culture Club's \_\_\_ *Miracle*

68 Check for electronic bugs

69 Anderson Cooper's area
- Down**

  - 1 Race site in Auden's land
  - 2 Gladiator area
  - 3 Was excessive with the mouth
  - 4 *Providence* lead role
  - 5 Some Feds
  - 6 Poet Vivien
  - 7 Water molecule threesome
  - 8 Flew in the face of
  - 9 Gardner of mystery
  - 10 Left in the field
  - 11 "\_\_\_ my case!" (*Perry Mason* close)
  - 12 What Shakespeare wrote in
  - 13 Made less difficult to bear
- 18 Streep of *Silkwood*
  - 19 Port in the land of samurai
  - 24 Off-Broadway prize
  - 27 Disney frames
  - 29 Errol Flynn's *The Sun* \_\_\_ *Rises*
  - 31 Agenda listing
  - 32 Dress namesakes of an opera ship
  - 33 Picks out, with "for"
  - 34 Home of the Baylor Bears
  - 36 Part of a TV archive
  - 37 They're tops on the beach
  - 38 "The enemy will soon come upon us!"
  - 40 Rose to Dorothy, on *Golden Girls*
  - 42 Non-S&M "Beats me"
  - 43 They may be split
  - 45 Part of a vacuum that sucks
  - 46 It may be removed in SRS
  - 49 Burning Man state
  - 52 Vitamin B acid
  - 54 Cops flirting in a tearoom
  - 56 Fable fellow
  - 58 Your first mate, and others
  - 59 River to the Seine
  - 60 Caesar's lucky number?
  - 63 Playwright Albee and others, for short



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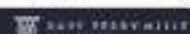
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