



NEWS



UPMC LOCKS OUT TRANS YOUTH CARE FOR A DECADE

Settlement will keep gender-affirming medical care out of reach for young transgender patients across the Pittsburgh health system.

UPMC stopped providing gender-affirming medical care to patients under 19 in June 2025 amid pressure from the Trump administration, forcing transgender young people and their families across Western Pennsylvania to search for alternative providers. QBurgh has followed the fallout from that decision for more than a year, including protests, legal complaints, opposition from UPMC healthcare workers and a separate battle over federal demands for patients' private medical records.

The new settlement now threatens to turn what was already a devastating loss of care into a decade-long reality. The agreement includes a 10-year moratorium on UPMC providing gender-affirming care to young transgender patients, although the complete terms of the

settlement had not been publicly released as of press time.

In announcing the settlement, the Justice Department said its investigation examined possible violations of the False Claims Act, Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act and other federal healthcare laws, including allegations involving billing practices.

The DOJ announcement makes the distinction that the claims against UPMC are allegations; no liability has been determined, and UPMC has expressly denied them.

UPMC characterized the deal as a resolution that protects patients, families and employees while avoiding continued litigation.

Continue reading pg. 4

FEATURE

Building a Home for LGBTQ+ Elders

At Mosaic Apartments, LGBTQ+ elders are finding affordable housing, chosen community, and freedom to age without hiding.

By Bill Zlatos. Photos by Ava Grace.

On weekend nights in the 1970s, Beth Kukucka, then a high school senior in Cambria County, dodged rocks and bottles hurled at her when she left a gay bar in Cresson. In a sort of evening ritual in the '80s, she returned home in Squirrel Hill from work, and a neighbor sitting on his porch with his cigarette glowing in the dark spat out the slur, "Dyke." And about once a month in the '90s, a teenager slashed the tires of her Pontiac Sunbird, his identity protected by her Bloomfield neighbors.

This half-century of abuse has weighed on Kukucka, now 67. But last year, she found some solace by going every few weeks to the garage roof of the former Hampton Inn to admire the construction of Mosaic Apartments, the first housing complex for LGBTQ+ people and their allies in Western Pennsylvania. Little did she know that she was staring into the very window of her future home.

"Most of us have really been through at least some form of discrimination, and so it's nice

Continue reading pg. 2

City Drops 'Fruit Loop' as Site for Public Works Facility

Mayor Corey O'Connor's administration says Prospect Drive is no longer being considered for a new public works maintenance facility.

pg. 5

Don't Just Vote. Organize.

Casting a ballot matters. But defending LGBTQ+ rights takes more than one vote, it takes all of us showing up, speaking out, and getting organized.

pg. 10

Faces & Places Brookline Pride

Brookline rolled out the rainbow carpet! Check out all the photos!

pg. 13



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(Mosaic Apts cont'd)

to feel celebrated instead of discriminated against," she said.

Safe, secure and comfortable



Open since November 2025, the \$28.5 million project on Forbes and Craft avenues in Oakland provides a haven of safety and affordability for 53 older adults.

At Mosaic's end-of-summer bash on Labor Day, about 35 persons gathered, recognizing the late LGBTQ+ rights activist Kathi Boyle. They dedicated the community room in her honor. Ariel Bartunek, 65, recalled that 10 years ago, after hearing LGBTQ+ people complain about housing discrimination, Boyle approached Presbyterian SeniorCare Network with the idea that became Mosaic.

"She wanted to make sure we would have a place where we'd be so safe, secure and comfortable," Bartunek said.

Boyle's idea has grown, protecting residents like Shekinah Rose, 65, a transgender woman who has lived 41 years with HIV/AIDS.

Rose, who has a spinal cord injury, sat in a power wheelchair in her living room, decorated with a "Love is Love" fan in the trans colors of light blue, pink, and white and a burnt wooden square of a wheat wreath inscribed with "Walk by Faith." She sported an ombré teal hairdo, loopy earrings, a tie-dye top, denim shorts, and pink sandals. And in a soft voice, she recounted a troubled life.

She grew up in the area – she declined to say exactly where – in a family that taunted her for being a girl. She was forced instead to be someone she is not – a male. Older men preyed upon her with alcohol, lies, and force.

"I'm a childhood sexual assault survivor," she said.

In the last three years, Rose has been assaulted three times at public places in the city but not in Mosaic where she moved on July 1. The building features double-doorway entrances and cameras monitoring public spaces.

"I'm hypervigilant every day. Since I moved to Mosaic, it's reduced," said Rose, an advocate for trans people and those living with HIV/AIDS. "I don't feel threatened. I'm more relaxed. I can sleep."

Bartunek added, "It's a safe place – physically safe and also safe in that I don't have to worry about someone being homophobic."

Service coordinator Caitlin Sanders, a social worker, said one resident told her that he feels safe here, but that residents at his previous apartment harassed him so much that he was afraid to walk in the stairwell alone.



"Many older adults in the LGBTQ+ community came out during and lived through times much less safe and affirming than our current times, though, of course, things are getting much less safe now," she wrote.

The mere appearance of Mosaic is comforting. Artists consulted with residents on the themes of murals inside and out. With the triangular projections of its panels on the facade, the five-story building actually changes color and shimmers in sundry shades when pedestrians and motorists pass by.

"The range of color, shades of blues and shades of green, represents the range of gender and sexuality of this population," said Daniel Rothschild, the architect of the building from Rothschild Doyno Collaborative in the Strip District.

Elder boom

The building signals the national increase in housing serving LGBTQ+ people. Since 2015, at least 27 of these developments with 1,756 units have been built nationwide, according to SAGE USA, a New York City-based group that helps older adults in the LGBTQ+ community. That's a 350% increase over the past decade. Triggering this growth is the boom of older LGBTQ+ people. SAGE estimates there are nearly 3 million LGBTQ+ older adults in the nation and expects that number to more than double to about 7 million by 2030.

The big problem for this group is finding housing that is safe – emotionally and physically – and affordable, advocates said. Josh Dubensky, manager of housing for SAGE, said, "LGBTQ+ adults have to wonder if they have to hide who they are. Over the years, that takes a toll on you."

Seniors in the LGBTQ+ community, often victims of job discrimination, may have faced the whammy of lower pay that brings smaller savings and lower Social Security benefits. All that poses difficulty in finding an affordable place to live in their golden years.

Kukucka, for instance, retired from a career in photography and switched to making inspirational films and writing books. But she lives mostly off Social Security. She declined to specify her rent, but it is a fraction of the \$1,600 a month that she paid five years ago for a smaller apartment in Los Angeles.

Income restrictions at Mosaic are \$60,840 for one person and \$70,720 for two. Residents pay 30% of their annual gross income for rent, topping out at \$1,500 a month.

Bob Kunkle, 73, who identifies as gay, finds the \$943 a month he pays for his one-bedroom apartment in Mosaic cheaper than the \$2,500 a month he paid for his four-bedroom house in Homestead. "I like not having to maintain a 1957 split-level, which, as I got older, proved to be harder and harder," he said.

He likes Mosaic's garage and elevator. He and his constant companion DeeDee, a Miniature Schnauzer, also appreciate the building's dog run and spa with a dog-washing station. Paul Kovacik, 72, a retired architect who describes himself as a "sexual independent," lives in an eclectic apartment decorated with a 1960 Jeep windshield doubling as a mirror,



mirror, a red lamé cardinal’s outfit with mitre and a Sergeant Peppers jacket.

With his \$250 subsidy, Kovacik spends \$750 a month on rent plus about \$65 for electricity. He likes the building’s location on two bus lines, his neighbors, and the electric charging station in the garage. “I feel blessed to be here,” he said.



Living alone

Another issue for older LGBTQ+ adults is isolation. SAGE reports that this population is twice as likely to live alone, five times less likely to have married, and twice as less likely to have children.

Kukucka said, “Many of us don’t have kids, so what happens to us when we’re on a fixed income, we’re getting older, maybe a little compromised physically, and we need some help?”

Some residents cited issues with occupants. Jody Harrington, 70, a lesbian originally from Vermont, complained that one resident steals from others, and she wonders why all the residents are not LGBTQ+. Other residents said an occupant harassed a trans man who lives there – one of the reasons he plans to move.

Jonathan Szish, Presbyterian spokesman, said the development is investigating the allegation of theft. He said fair housing requirements at the federal, state, and local levels prevent the limiting of Mosaic units only to people who are LGBTQ+. Sanders called disrespect of trans residents the biggest problem at Mosaic. “(T)his is something perhaps non-LGBTQ+ older adults are not overall very comfortable with or do not understand very well,” she wrote.

Upon move-in, every resident signs a behavior standards agreement indicating that bullying will not be tolerated. “People who don’t follow the agreement get a lease violation and consequences up to and including eviction,” Szish texted.

For the most part, though, Mosaic residents talked about how much they like their neighbors. The building’s waiting list of 118 persons – more than twice the number of current residents – demonstrates the strong demand for affordable housing to serve this group. That even surpasses the expectations of Presbyterian, the nonprofit group that manages the building.



Jim Pieffer, president and CEO of the network, said it would be “delighted” to consider launching a similar facility. He added, “It’s very difficult to find the right location and put together the type of financing needed to make this successful, but we are open to the possibility.”

In the meantime, Kukucka takes pride – gay pride – in knowing that the marches and rallies have paid off.

“Every rock that was thrown at us is part of why this is now being offered,” she said, “because it takes a lot of courage to be different.”



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(UPMC cont'd)



SHAME ON UPMC

According to a statement from the health system, the agreement contains privacy, confidentiality and non-prosecution protections for patients, legal guardians, providers and employees. UPMC said it entered the settlement in part to prevent further disclosure of sensitive personal and medical information. For much of the past year, transgender young people and their families have been fighting a Justice Department subpoena seeking extensive information concerning patients who received gender-affirming care through UPMC.

In March, Chief U.S. District Judge Cathy

Bissoon blocked the federal government from forcing UPMC to produce the records. In her ruling, Bissoon sharply criticized the government's rhetoric surrounding transgender healthcare, writing that it demonstrated "callous indifference, if not abject cruelty."

The Justice Department initially appealed. Then, in August, it backed down.

The government moved to dismiss its appeal, ending its attempt to obtain the records at the center of the Pittsburgh case. Families represented by the Public Interest Law Center and Ballard Spahr had led the legal effort to stop their information from being turned over. Barely a month later, UPMC has now settled the broader federal investigation.

The Public Interest Law Center, which represented UPMC patients and families in the medical-records fight, sharply criticized the hospital system following the announcement. "Gender-affirming care is legal in Pennsylvania, and gender-related discrimination is not," Public Interest Law Center Executive Director Mimi McKenzie said in a statement.

McKenzie also said the organization views gender-affirming healthcare as life-saving for transgender youth and condemned UPMC's decision to settle.

The agreement comes while UPMC is already facing a separate challenge over its treatment of transgender young people.

In September 2025, the Women's Law Project and Berger Montague filed a complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission on behalf of five former UPMC patients. The complaint alleges that UPMC discriminated against transgender patients when it stopped gender-affirming treatment for people under 19 while continuing to provide some of the same medications to cisgender patients for other medical purposes. Those allegations remain separate from the federal settlement.

The federal investigations grew out of a directive issued by President Donald Trump in 2025 instructing federal agencies to pursue restrictions and enforcement actions involving gender-affirming medical care for minors. The Justice Department says its investigations

of other healthcare providers remain ongoing. Transgender patients, families and advocates have challenged aspects of the investigations in court, including the government's attempts to obtain detailed patient records. In the UPMC records case, the federal district court rejected the government's subpoena and the DOJ later abandoned its appeal.

For Pittsburgh's trans youth and their families, the agreement closes one chapter of the confrontation between UPMC and the federal government while potentially cementing the loss of local care for years to come. The government did not obtain the private patient records it fought for. But gender-affirming medical care for young transgender patients at UPMC remains shut down.



COME ONE. COME ALL.

We're offering more LGBTQ+ wellness programming than ever before.

Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation is launching young adult programming for people ages 19–24! In addition, we offer services for youth ages 12–18, seniors ages 55+, and programming for all ages. Interested? Email us at info@hughlane.org to learn more.





NEWS

City Drops ‘Fruit Loop’ as Site for Public Works Facility

Mayor Corey O’Connor’s administration says Prospect Drive is no longer being considered for a new public works maintenance facility after determining the site is “not suitable.”

By Jim Sheppard

City of Pittsburgh has dropped Prospect Drive in Schenley Park, the longtime queer gathering place known as the “Fruit Loop,” from consideration for a new Department of Public Works maintenance facility.

Mayor Corey O’Connor’s administration announced the decision in an email from the City’s Office of Community Affairs to residents. Friends of Schenley Park shared the email publicly over Labor Day weekend. “Following our evaluation, Mayor O’Connor and his staff have determined that Prospect Drive does not meet the needs for the relocation and therefore is not suitable,” the City wrote. The announcement marks a significant change from plans unveiled this summer. On July 27, the City issued a request for proposals for architectural and engineering services for a new Schenley Division maintenance facility, explicitly identifying Prospect Drive as the location.

The proposed facility, estimated at approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet, would support the DPW division responsible for maintaining Schenley Park and other parks in the surrounding area.

The proposal quickly drew opposition from Friends of Schenley Park and nearby residents over the use of parkland for a municipal maintenance operation.

But Prospect Drive is also much more than an undeveloped piece of Schenley Park.

As QBurgh reported, the secluded road and surrounding landscape have served generations of LGBTQ Pittsburghers as a gathering place. Its history includes cruising, but also picnics, community events, sunbathing, volleyball, Pride gatherings, HIV-prevention outreach, and AIDS remembrance.

The area became known within the queer community as the “Fruit Loop,” and historical accounts document queer activity in and around Prospect Drive going back decades. In 1992, a Pittsburgh City Council resolution marking Pride Week noted that the city’s Pride celebration would conclude with a “picnic and community festival on Prospect Drive in Schenley Park.”

During the AIDS crisis, Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force outreach workers distributed condoms, lubricant and safer-sex information in the area. An informal AIDS Memorial Rose Garden was also established there. Shepherd Wellness Community later preserved pieces of that memorial after the City removed the garden.

There is currently no historical marker recognizing Prospect Drive’s LGBTQ history. The O’Connor administration said the decision does not mean it is abandoning plans to relocate the Schenley Park maintenance operation.

“As you know, the Administration is looking at multiple sites to relocate the Division that maintains, services and conserves Schenley

Park,” the Office of Community Affairs wrote. The City said it is continuing to evaluate alternatives and that any future location will need to allow the Parks Maintenance Division to “efficiently, effectively and accessibly maintain Schenley Park.”

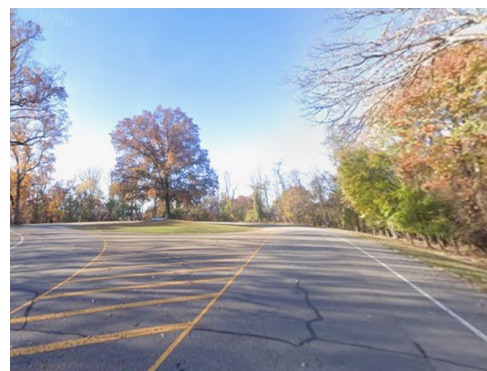
Once another site is identified, the administration said it will conduct a community process and establish an EngagePGH website where residents can receive updates and provide feedback.

The City did not identify the other locations under consideration in the announcement. Friends of Schenley Park celebrated the decision after spending weeks urging the City to find another location.

“Schenley Park is not a land bank,” the organization previously wrote in opposing the proposal. “We believe that the park should be preserved as a park, not as a location for municipal maintenance operations and non-recreational facilities.”

The organization thanked O’Connor and Prospect Drive neighbors after receiving the City’s announcement.

For the Fruit Loop, at least, the immediate question about its future has an answer. The Department of Public Works facility will not be built there.



EVENTS

Reel Q Takes Over Pittsburgh for Its 41st Season

Pittsburgh’s LGBTQ+ film festival spreads across the city Oct. 2–10 with international cinema, queer history, horror, romance, shorts, and a 30th-anniversary screening of “The Watermelon Woman.”

For nine days this October, Pittsburgh is getting a whole lot queerer at the movies.

Reel Q returns for its 41st season October 2 to 10, expanding across Pittsburgh with screenings at seven venues and a lineup stretching from

lesbian romance in the mountains of Greece to queer truck-stop desire, trans and nonbinary coming-of-age stories, horror, documentary, and a midnight trip back to The Rocky Horror Picture Show.



Founded in 1985, Reel Q has spent four decades bringing LGBTQ+ cinema to Pittsburgh. For 2026, the festival is taking

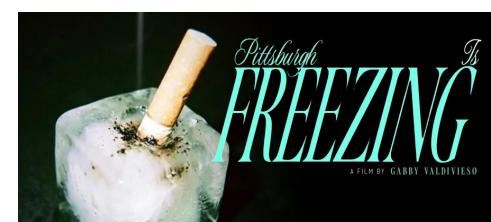
that mission across the city, with screenings at Row House Cinema in Lawrenceville, Row House Cinema Hollywood in Dormont, The Soft Spot in Garfield, City of Asylum’s Alphabet City on the Northside, the Harris Theater Downtown, the Melwood Screening Room in North Oakland, and Carnegie Mellon University’s McConomy Auditorium.

“We’ve selected films from the US, South Africa, Mexico, Greece, Brazil, France, Poland, and that doesn’t even include all the regions represented in our shorts programs,” Reel Q Executive Director T.J. Murphy said. “This may be one of our most diverse lineups in years, and it speaks to why bringing these stories and perspectives to Pittsburgh is so important.”

The festival kicks off Friday, Oct. 2, at Row House Cinema in Lawrenceville with Bookends, an award-winning gay romantic

comedy featuring Pittsburgh-born Oscar winner F. Murray Abraham as a meddlesome grandfather. An opening-night party at Bierport follows before Reel Q heads back upstairs for Black Burns Fast at 8:30 p.m.

From there, Reel Q spreads out.



On Saturday, Oct. 3, The Soft Spot hosts Short & Sweet, a program of queer shorts tackling love, lust, identity and connection. Among the selections is Pittsburgh is Freezing, a documentary short following two Pittsburgh drag performers and their chosen family. The

Continue reading pg. 6



(Reel Q cont'd)

program also includes stories centered on transmasculine desire, intersex identity and public queer sexuality.

That afternoon, The Soft Spot screens *In a Whisper*, following Lilia as she returns from Paris to Tunisia for her uncle's funeral. Her family knows little about her romantic life, and her attempt to understand her uncle's death begins uncovering secrets of its own.

Saturday night shifts to Row House Cinema Hollywood in Dormont for shorts about transition and self-discovery, followed by *Time Warp*, a documentary about a drag theater company performing *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in a western mining town while fighting for acceptance.



Then, naturally, comes the midnight screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* with Pittsburgh's Junior Chamber of Commerce Players.

Sunday brings Reel Q back to Lawrenceville. The afternoon includes *Niñxs* followed by *Bearcave*, a lesbian love story set in the Greek mountain village of Tirna. The film follows farmer Argyro and her best friend Anneta as pregnancy, an impending move and an adventure in search of a mythical bear cave push their relationship toward truths neither can keep buried.

The evening turns darker with *Mineshaft: The Cruising Murders*, examining the controversy surrounding the 1980 film *Cruising* and the protests that erupted over its depiction of New York's gay leather scene.

International queer storytelling continues throughout the week. *Apolo* screens Oct. 5 at Alphabet City, while *Flesh & Fuel* comes to the Harris Theater Oct. 6, following a lonely French truck driver whose life on the road changes after meeting a Polish driver.

On Oct. 7, Reel Q turns its attention toward a giant of lesbian cinema with *Barbara Forever*, an archive-driven documentary exploring the life and work of pioneering experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer. Presented in collaboration with Pittsburgh Sound + Image, the evening at the Melwood Screening Room will also feature a live 16mm projection of one of Hammer's films.

The festival's final stretch moves to Carnegie Mellon University.

Uncle Roy, a documentary portrait of figure skater and influential male nude photographer Roy Blakey, screens Oct. 9. It is followed by *Messy & Beautiful*, a dramatic shorts collection where, appropriately enough, queer people get to be complicated: falling in love, having sex, making bad decisions, confronting expectations, and figuring out what freedom might cost.

Oct. 10 brings a program of shorts about queer young people, followed by a milestone anniversary for a landmark of Black lesbian cinema.

Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* returns to the big screen for its 30th anniversary. First released in 1996, Dunye's groundbreaking feature blurred fiction, documentary and queer film history through the story of a young Black lesbian filmmaker searching for information about an uncredited Black actress from Hollywood's past.

The CMU program concludes with *First They Came for My College*, a documentary examining the transformation of Florida's New College and the larger political fight over higher education and academic freedom.

And because apparently Reel Q refuses to let Pittsburgh go home without one final queer nightmare, the festival closes with *Queer Fear*, a thriller shorts program filled with desire, dread, blood and camp. Its films include *The Dysphoria*, about a trans woman whose satanic ritual has some rather disastrous unintended consequences, and *The Witch of Vihar Lake*, a story in which a village legend gives way to revelations about identity and family. The location for the Oct. 10 program is still to be announced.

For Murphy, putting queer and trans lives on Pittsburgh screens carries weight beyond simply assembling a film festival.

"The importance of queer and trans representation and visibility could not be more important for our community," Murphy said, "along with hosting safe spaces to share our stories together."

Forty-one seasons in, Reel Q is still making the case for something queer audiences have long understood: seeing ourselves on screen matters, but so does seeing ourselves together. Reel Q's 41st annual Pittsburgh LGBTQ+ Film Festival runs Oct. 2–10. Admission to most festival screenings is pay-what-you-can, while *Apolo* at City of Asylum is listed as free. The complete, updated schedule and ticket information are available at ReelQ.org.

The Gayest Bakery in Western PA

In the heart of New Kensington, *Evanly Bakes* is proving queer community can rise anywhere.

By Rachel Windsor.
Photos by Ava Grace

Before he was running "the gayest bakery in Western PA," the owner of *Evanly Bakes* was training elephants.

Evan Morgan-Newphis studied zoology in college and spent ten years training elephants at a zoo. Baking wasn't part of his career plan — that was, until *The Great British Bake Off* came along.

"I think I could do that," he remembers thinking while watching the show.

Morgan-Newphis also credits the film *Julie & Julia*, in which the main character challenges herself to prepare all 524 recipes in Julia Child's cookbook, as inspiration for starting his own baking journey. Prior, his experience amounted to little more than making boxed brownies.

"I was awful at it," he said.

He kept practicing though, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, he had more time to bake than ever. As his hobby grew into something more serious, and he landed a spot on the CW's reality competition *Great Chocolate Showdown*, where he made it to the finale against nine other bakers from all over North America.

Even then, he insisted he would never open a bakery.

"I constantly told them, 'Nope, I'll never start a bakery,'" he said. "That's not going to be me. That's got the worst return on investment."

Yet, just one year later, after a decade working at the zoo, Morgan-Newphis left that career behind and started *Evanly Bakes*, which today specializes in cake jars, brownies and blondies.



The business launched in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 2023. Just seven months later, he and his husband, Jared, moved to Pittsburgh, bringing the fledgling home bakery with them.

"Pittsburgh rallied really hard behind us very early on," he said.

One of the first things Evan discovered about Western Pennsylvania was its farmers market and outdoor market culture.

He started selling at the Plum Borough Farmers Market, followed by the Verona Farmers Market, the Greensburg Night Market and Neighborhood Flea in Pittsburgh's South Side.

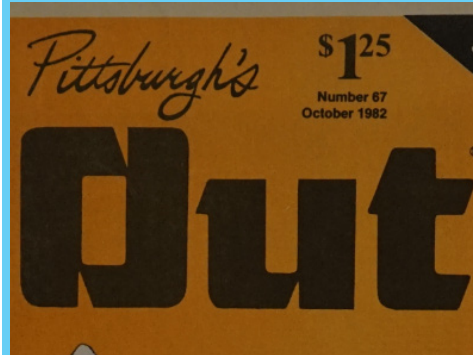
Each market offered another opportunity to meet customers, build relationships and introduce people to *Evanly Bakes*. For a small business owner, that network proved invaluable.

"I don't feel like any other city does it as well as Pittsburgh," he said of the region's support for shopping small and local. "They actually stand behind that when they say that they're going to support local businesses."

That support eventually helped *Evanly Bakes* make another leap: opening a brick-and-mortar storefront in New Kensington in 2024 at 945 Fifth Avenue.



FROM THE ARCHIVES



PITTSBURGH'S OUT OCTOBER 1982:

The Mill Hunks became the Steel City Softball League's first champions. More than 2,000 athletes competed in San Francisco's inaugural Gay Games. Former Dodger Glenn Burke spoke publicly about being gay and the discrimination he said shaped his baseball career.

Another story captures what we now know was the beginning of the AIDS crisis. Pittsburgh physician Dr. Stephen Fisher was recruiting 300 volunteers for a year-long study of the still poorly understood Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Reading the clinical language four decades later is haunting. The a community was only beginning to understand what it was facing.

Also reported, the horrifying murders of David Fields, 17, and Kim Loring Rodgers, 27, who were discovered along a Northside riverbank. With no suspect or motive identified, Pittsburgh homicide detectives were looking to the gay community for information.

More at QArchives.com

(Evanly Bakes cont'd)

The couple learned of New Kensington's troubles and severe economic decline following manufacturing closures in the 1970s, and as a queer business owner, Morgan-Newphis knew there might be questions about how a visibly LGBTQ+-owned business would be received.

"If I was going to tell people that this was the safe community for our business to be in, then I was going to prove a point with it," he said. "We live here, too."



More than a bakery

Evanly Bakes has since become more than a place to pick up a gourmet cake jar or brownie.

The business has embraced its identity as a queer-owned bakery and safe space for the LGBTQ+ community.

Early customers frequently told Morgan-Newphis they wanted to bring their queer child, sibling or friend to the bakery. That's when he began to understand what Evanly Bakes could represent within the Rust Belt community north of Pittsburgh.

New Kensington and surrounding communities are outside Pittsburgh's traditional LGBTQ+ hubs, says Morgan-Newphis, and for many locals, finding a queer-friendly gathering place often means traveling into the city.

As such, Evanly Bakes has become something of a queer third space closer to home.

"We've started to realize how beneficial that is," he said. "How important that is for our business."

The bakery is designed to feel less like a

traditional storefront and more like someone's living room. Visitors will find couches, colorful art, and a full back patio where they can relax and be themselves.

"When you go to Evanly Bakes, you can expect to be just welcomed like you walked into someone's house," he says, adding that the space has "this ease and this comfortableness."

Evanly Bakes is also connected to Pittsburgh's broader queer small-business community.

Evan says the Queer Craft Market helped him meet other LGBTQ+-owned and operated businesses, as well as local businesses that have made supporting the LGBTQ+ community part of their mission, such as Trace Brewing and Vellum Fermentation.

"There are so many [local businesses] in Pittsburgh that are not afraid to talk about it

... They do a ton for the queer community."

For Morgan-Newphis, one of the most rewarding parts has been watching people walk into a business that is visibly queer and immediately relax because they know they are welcome.

"There's always a lot of joy and laughter happening in Evanly Bakes. We like to say 'It's cake. It's not that serious.'"

Evanly Bakes is open Fridays 12 to 6 p.m., Saturdays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sundays 12 to 6 p.m. at their retail location, plus appearances markets and pop-ups. The bakery offers online ordering, shipping and catering for cake jars, brownies and blondies. Gluten-free and vegan options are available.

Visit evanlybakes.com for more info or to place an order.

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OPINION

The LGBTQ+ vote could decide Congress. Here are the numbers.

As LGBTQ+ voters grow as a share of the electorate, their ballots could carry outsized weight in the close races that determine control of Congress.

By Mark Segal

In journalism, we're taught never to bury the lede. So here's the lede: The LGBTQ+ community could be an important part of what happens in November's midterm elections.

We keep hearing predictions of a possible Democratic wave that could change control of Congress and, if that happens, place a congressional check on President Donald Trump. But anyone who has been around

politics for more than five minutes knows the old saying: a week is a lifetime in politics. Nothing is guaranteed until the votes are counted.

And Republicans certainly understand what is at stake. Across the country, there are battles over congressional district lines, early voting, mail voting and other election rules. Some of those changes are being challenged in court; others are being fought over in state legislatures.

But rather than simply complain about what others are doing, let's ask a more important question: What role can the LGBTQ+ community play?

You might think we're too small a community to matter. The numbers tell a different story. Here's where I get a little wonky.

For decades, LGBTQ+ voters have been one of the more reliably Democratic voting blocs in the country. In 2004, voters identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual represented about 4% of the electorate and voted 77% for Democrat John Kerry and 23% for Republican George W. Bush.



Look at the Democratic advantage among LGBTQ voters over the last two decades:

- 2004: Democrat +54
- 2008: Democrat +43
- 2012: Democrat +54
- 2016: Democrat +64
- 2020: Democrat +37
- 2024: Democrat +73

Those numbers haven't moved in a straight line. But the larger story is unmistakable: LGBTQ+ voters have remained a heavily Democratic constituency. And something else has happened that may be even more important: we've grown as a share of the electorate.

In 2004, just 4% of voters in the national exit

poll identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. By 2020, major national election surveys estimated LGBTQ+ voters at roughly 7% to 8% of the electorate.

Think about that for a moment.

We aren't simply a constituency that votes heavily for one party. We're a constituency whose share of the voting population has grown substantially.

And that brings us to the races that could determine control of Congress.

Many of the most competitive congressional races will be decided by relatively narrow margins. We don't have reliable LGBTQ+ exit polling for every individual congressional district — the samples are simply too small, but we know LGBTQ voters are present in those districts.

We've already seen what that can mean.

After the incredibly close 2020 presidential election, researchers examining AP VoteCast data estimated that LGBTQ+ voters strongly supported Joe Biden in several of the states

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that decided the election: approximately 89% in Arizona, 78% in Pennsylvania, 73% in Nevada and 70% in Wisconsin.

In other words, in a close election, our votes can matter.

That's the part of this story I don't want anyone in our community to miss.

For most of my life, the LGBTQ+ community fought simply to have a voice in American politics. We fought to be acknowledged by candidates. We fought to have our issues included in party platforms. We fought against laws that criminalized us and treated us as second-class citizens.

Today, our community possesses something generations before us could only dream about: electoral power.

But political power doesn't come from population statistics or exit polls. It comes from actually casting ballots.

So when November arrives, regardless of which candidates you support, remember the numbers. In a congressional district decided by a few percentage points, LGBTQ+ voters don't have to be the majority to matter. We simply have to participate.

We've spent generations fighting for a place at the table of American democracy.

Now that we have one, use it. Vote.

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Register to vote and check your voter registration at [VotesPA.com](https://www.votespa.com)

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HEALTH + WELLNESS

The Modern Miracle of U=U

With treatment and support, people living with HIV can reach an undetectable viral load and live, love, and have sex knowing they won't transmit HIV.

Sponsored by Allies for Health + Wellbeing

U=U. Those three characters stand for "undetectable equals untransmittable," and when it comes to HIV, it's a modern miracle.

If you live with HIV and take your medication, you can achieve an undetectable viral load. When that happens, you are safe from transmitting the virus through sex.

At Allies for Health + Wellbeing, U=U is the goal that staff hope to help patients and clients living with HIV achieve. It's not always an easy process, but Allies staff are trained to address obstacles individuals may have when it comes to keeping up with their care.

"We want to stand behind and support all of our patients to make them feel good in the decisions and care that they're getting," said Jacque DeRubbo, senior director of clinical services at Allies. "Patient-centered care is the healthcare model that we practice, which means that it puts the patients values, goals and preference at the heart of all clinical decisions, which develops a partnership, respect and personalized treatment."

Reaching U=U status is life-changing. It means that people can be intimate without the use of condoms with their partner, even if their partner is not on PrEP, as there is virtually no risk that they can pass on the virus. And staying on treatment to maintain U=U also means their own HIV is being kept in check, so they can let go of the fear that it will progress into something more serious.

Yet too many people, even those living with HIV, don't understand U=U or are inhibited by stigma from embracing this new reality.

"For many people, contracting HIV was a traumatic event that time and access to life-saving medication have not fully healed," said Christy Owens, senior director of programs at Allies. "The emotional wound itself creates just one extra layer of difficulty among all the physical difficulties of securing transportation, facing the weather, taking the time off work, finding childcare, or the dozens of other barriers faced by individuals in southwestern Pennsylvania."

If a patient is struggling with their treatment plan, Allies staff are ready to help.

"They are very on top of patient care," DeRubbo said of the clinic team. "Can we remove any barriers, anything we can do to make it easier? What are the barriers? We want to be able to help navigate those barriers."

In addition to medical care, Allies offers patients and clients living with HIV support groups, therapy and many other services to help you live your best life.

Allies HIV support services include a robust retention in care program that works closely with the clinic staff. When a patient or client has not had an HIV visit in seven months, those individuals are prioritized for follow up with the clinic or case management. Case managers also step in to address support needs if a person is not on track to reach undetectable status.

U=U means hope – hope for a future without HIV, and it's something that can be achieved by anyone living with HIV who has the support they need. Allies is here to offer that support and to assist those living with HIV in reaching that U=U milestone.

If you are living with HIV and are interested in receiving medical care or HIV support services at Allies for Health + Wellbeing, visit AlliesPGH.org or give us a call at 412-345-7456.

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- 10/01- Steel Carabiner @ Blue Moon 9pm
- 10/05- Sapphic Songwriters Circle @ The Soft Spot 6pm
- 10/07- White Elephant Bingo @ Mary's 5:30pm
- 10/10- Bosom Buddies Fundraiser @ The Soft Spot 7pm
- 10/11- Sunday Scaries (Dyke Movie Night) @ Squirrel Hill Sports Bar 6pm
- 10/13- Lesbiyinz in Space @ Space Bar 6pm
- 10/13- Sapphic Silent Book Club @ The Soft Spot 7pm
- 10/14- Sapphic Pool Club @ Squirrel Hill Sports Bar 6pm
- 10/15- Dyke March Fundraiser @ Blue Moon 8pm
- 10/16- Crush Hour @ Red's Good News 6pm
- 10/16- Sapphics Play Poker @ Elements Wellness 6pm
- 10/19- Late Bloomers @ The Soft Spot 6pm
- 10/19- Steel Carabiner @ Blue Moon 9pm
- 10/26 RADAR- Sapphic Singles Night @ The Soft Spot 6pm
- 10/27- Leather Dykes Meetup @ The Soft Spot 6pm
- 10/28- Sapphos's Playhouse @ Mary's 6pm

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COMMUNITY

Brookline Rolls Out the Rainbow Carpet

Brookline's inaugural Pride brought rainbows to Brookline Boulevard and showed that queer belonging can feel beautifully ordinary.

By Josie Byzek.

It's always a pleasure to walk along Brookline Boulevard, and experiencing it festooned in Pride flags made it even more fun. The neighborhood's inaugural Pride was on Saturday, September 12, and most of the open businesses, if not all, joined in.

There were 16 "Pride Stops," or local participating businesses, plus booths strung along Brookline Boulevard. The first stop was at Glass Under Fire, a vape shop that shared space with the official Pride booth and Allies

for Health + Wellbeing, which also ran a mobile clinic offering free STI tests. A van was selling stickers, too, and then came a long stretch to the rest of the festival. It was worth the hike.

Pittsburgh is famous for its neighborhoods, each with its own personality, and I'd describe Brookline's as close-knit, friendly, and welcoming, in a low-key way. Just about every business we visited featured a no-step entrance, highlighting the small neighborhood's inclusive spirit. It's not a tourist stop like the Strip, or even Bloomfield on Little Italy Days. Nor is it a gayborhood like Garfield or Shadyside. Yet, of course, most of the businesses joined in the celebration, with many offering special merch or events.

Amarah Studio and Boutique sold pride-themed T-shirts and hosted a photo booth where customers could play with Pride-themed masks. Owner Amanda Osterberger said she and her team wanted to participate as their mission is to be inclusive and empower everybody. "We really believe in that," she said, and looking around the store, it was

obvious, even in realizing that the boutique clothes went up to 3X.

"We're all about community," added Amarah yoga instructor Deena Jackson. "We want to make sure this is a safe space for everyone who enters."

They didn't make a big deal out of it, but rather their tone was, "Of course we're participating. This is our community."

Other highlights included stumbling across the acapella group Voice Steel warming up for their performance at Antonio's Pizzeria. Five groups in all performed, lovely to hear while walking down the boulevard.

The Coming Out Booth run by Kate Buick was another highlight. It was a pop-up with a rainbow curtain around a small table with a rotary phone on it and a chair. "It's designed to let people anonymously share their coming out story. They'll be posted on social media on Coming Out Day in October," said Kate.

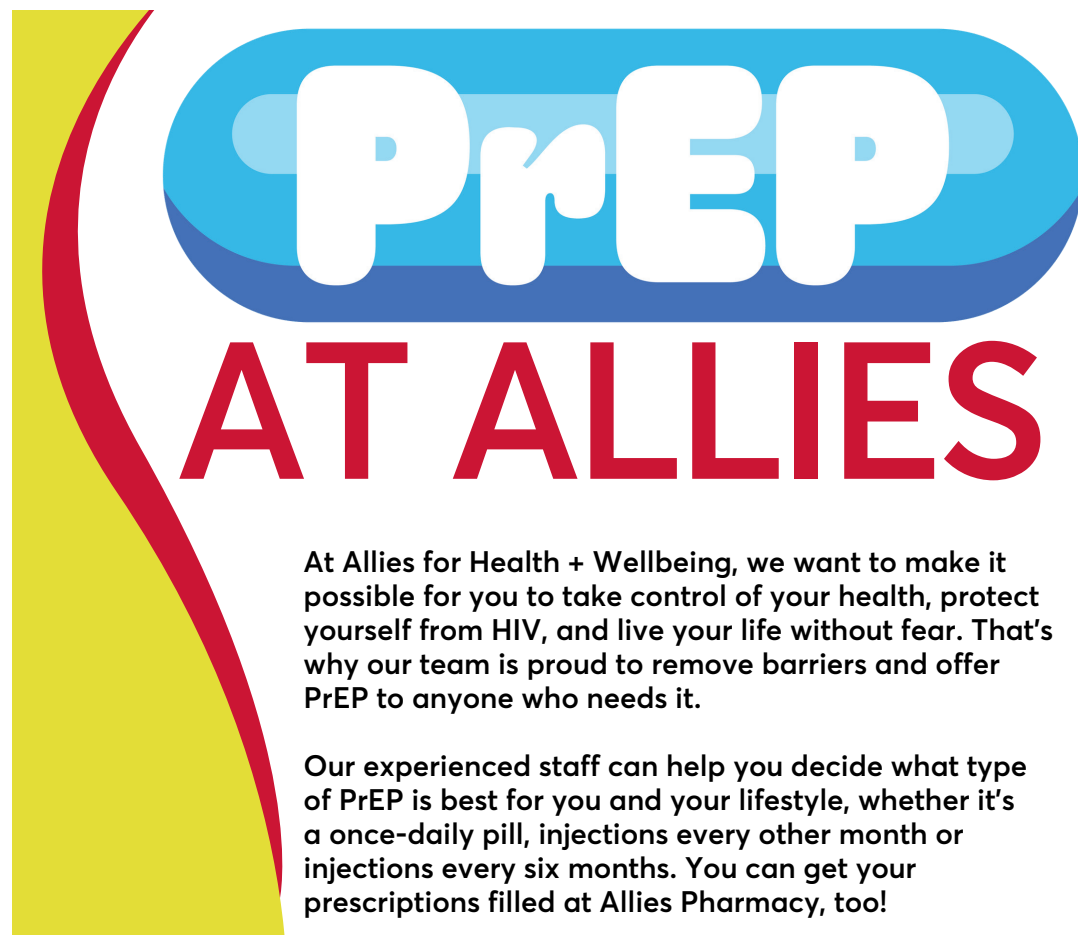
A little further up the street was another

tent, The People's Poem Place, run by Haley Clancy. She writes improvised poems for customers on a manual typewriter perched on her legs. Brookline Pride organizers invited her to attend to write love poems for same-sex couples.

"It's great that people know they are accepted for who they are and be able to embrace that love through poems," said Haley. "It's all about love, and I'm happy I'm here."

I was happy to be there, too.

Local neighborhood Pride fests are becoming more common, and they're a way to bring communities together to celebrate love, inclusion, and, well, us. It's nice to feel welcomed for who we are and have the rainbow carpet rolled out. Most Brookliners will tell you that's just who they are, don't make a big deal out of it. And they're right, it is who they are. Perhaps they deserve a little fuss.



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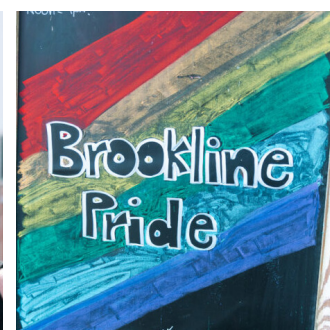


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FACES & PLACES BROOKLINE PRIDE

Photos by Jaye Frances Imagery.
Check out more Faces & Places at
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EVENTS

Serving Hot Looks and Big Laughs

Camp, chaos, and comedy collide as Pittsburgh's drag entertainers battle for a crown, bragging rights, and a spot on the national stage.

By Michael Buzzelli



On Saturday, October 24, a new comedy queen will take the crown in the Miss City of Bridges Comedy Queen 2027 at the Arcade Comedy Theatre in downtown Pittsburgh, hosted by Dixie Surewood.

The event's producer, Leia Way LeStat, said, "Dixie Surewood will host the night. She is a former National Miss Comedy Queen 2018 and is also now part of the Board of Directors. She has hosted the pageant since its inception in Pittsburgh."

It's LeStat's third year producing the pageant. She said, "I believe it's a great opportunity for our community to see a different side of Pittsburgh drag."

It's the first year that the event will be held at a comedy club. LeStat said, "I was looking for a venue that made sense for the pageant but also provided the proper space. Arcade was a great fit. Since comedy makes sense at Arcade, it was a lightbulb moment when I talked with some of my fellow queens in the city about doing the pageant there."

Dixie Surewood will be joined on stage by National Miss Comedy Queen 2026, Geneva

Convention and City of Bridges Comedy Queen 2026, Joemygosh.

Surewood said, "The National Miss Comedy Queen Pageant means a lot more to me than just a pageant. It's become a part of my life that I genuinely care about. I've met incredible people through NMCQ, made friendships and memories that I'll carry with me, and gotten to watch people step on that stage, take a chance, and completely own who they are."

Surewood added, "What I love most is that it gives people a place to be funny, weird, creative, vulnerable, and unapologetically themselves. For me, NMCQ is about the people as much as it is the pageant. It's the laughs, the late nights, the ridiculous moments, the friendships, and the feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself. I'm genuinely grateful to be a part of it, and I hope people know just how much this pageant and the people in it mean to me."

Snoozy Q, last year's runner-up in the Miss City of Bridges Comedy Queen pageant, traveled with JoeMyGosh to Orlando and competed in the National Miss Comedy Queen 2026, and had valuable advice to impart to this year's

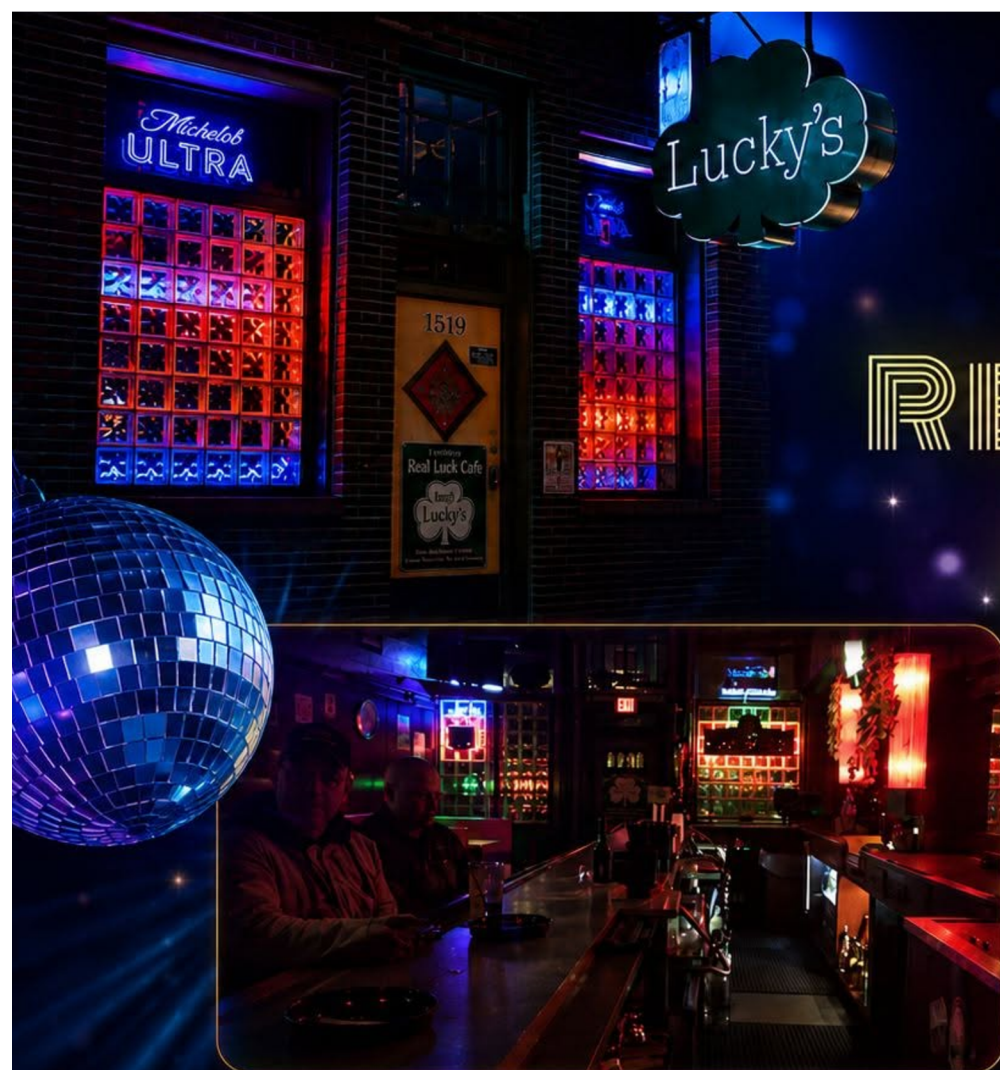
competitors. She said, "The best way to win is to be your authentic self. Don't try to be what everyone else thinks you should be. Just be the best version of you."

The winner will head to Orlando for a chance to win the title of Miss Comedy Queen Pageant in the national competition against 35–40 contestants in a five-day event showcasing some of the funniest, most talented, and most creative entertainers from across the country.

LeStat said, "With two former National Miss Comedy Queen winners in Pittsburgh, Dixie Surewood and Blade Mathews, I'm convinced the city has what it takes to foster another winner."

LeStat added, "With all the turmoil happening in our world, we all could use time to laugh a little more. This is a night of fun, laughter, craziness, and competition that is one you won't forget."

You can root for your favorite comedy queen at the Miss City of Bridges Comedy Queen 2027 at the Arcade Comedy Theatre, 943 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. For more information and tickets, [visit qburch.com/comedyqueen](http://visitqburch.com/comedyqueen)



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COMMUNITY

“The Rocky Horror Picture Show” Is A Queer Ritual, And Here’s Why

For generations of queer misfits, midnight screenings of Rocky Horror have transformed a cult movie into something sacred: a ritual of belonging, liberation, and unapologetic queer joy.

By Jami Gagnon.
Photo by Joel Brewton Photography.



You never forget your first time at The Rocky Horror Picture Show.

For me, it was a chilly October night in 2019. I was a junior in college, and I didn’t have any friends who would want to travel an hour and a half with me to experience the film. So, I took myself to Row House Cinema in Lawrenceville, where I nearly had a panic attack parallel parking on a side street.

Once I entered the theater, I was asked the all-important question: had I seen The Rocky Horror Picture Show in a theater, with a shadowcast? At that point in my life, I had only seen the film on my laptop in my dorm room. So, I answered honestly and was rewarded with a big “V” on my forehead in lipstick. V for “virgin,” of course.

After the opening ceremonies, the theater lights darkened, the 20th Century Fox fanfare blared, as the experienced audience members around me recited the opening lines of what would be some of the noisiest 90 minutes I had ever experienced in a movie theater.

*A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away....
God said, “Let there be lips!”*

*And there were lips.
And they were big, red, and juicy
And they could sing
Sing to us, o lips!*

I walked out of that theater as a new convert to the spiritual practice of Rocky Horror. Three years later, I strutted into the basement of the Hollywood Theater wearing a glittery jumpsuit under a trench coat to audition for the Junior Chamber of Commerce Players (the JCCP), and I became one of the actors I’d watched in front of the screen.

The Creation of A Ritual

Like many religions practiced today, the ritual of Rocky Horror has been passed down for generations since its release 50 years ago, in 1975. By all accounts, the film was a flop, despite being an adaptation of a successful stage show, until it reached the midnight movie circuit. Audience members started showing up in costume as the characters, then timed callbacks in conversation with what was happening on screen, and finally evolved into what is now known as shadowcasting, where actors perform in front of the screen and reenact what is happening behind the screen.

With all its glittery, glam-rock, gender-bending finery, it was a radical film for the time. In 1973, only 2 years before the release of Rocky Horror, the American Psychiatric Association reversed its classification of homosexuality as a mental illness. It would be 28 years before the last anti-sodomy laws in the United States would be overturned. Those darkened rooms of independent theaters were some of the only places queer people, especially queer youth, could express themselves freely among their peers.

The experience of attending a shadowcast performance of The Rocky Horror Picture Show is a secular, but no less sacred, queer ritual. There is a sort of magic with every screening and performance of this musical sci-fi cult classic. It brings people of different backgrounds, gender identities, and sexualities together in the same dark theater, some donning fishnets and lingerie or movie cosplays, others in jeans and T-shirts. There is even a priest, or in this case, the Master of Ceremonies, who guides the audience through the opening rituals, including the rules and the virgin sacrifice — I mean, games.

Continue reading pg. 16

Liza Birkenmeier’s

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WHAT'S QUEER, SPOOKY, OCT. AND GOING ON

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Oct. 9-11 | Steel City Fetish Con

Oct. 10 | Hugh Lane Fall Fest
Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation

Oct. 11 | OUTfest
Schenley Plaza

Oct. 13 | Lesbeyinz in Space
Space Bar

Oct. 15-17 | TransPride YOUniting
Health & Wellness Conference

Oct. 15 | PGH Dyke March:
Freak Show Fundraiser
Blue Moon Bar

Oct. 18 | Silent Sunday
Nightshade Lounge

Oct. 22 | Penguins Pride Night
PPG Paints Arena

Oct. 24 | Steeltown Hoedown
Sherwood Events Center
City of Bridges Comedy Queen
Arcade Comedy Theatre
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5801 Video Lounge
Andi Whorehol Halloween Show***
Blue Moon Bar

The Afters
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Oct. 25 | Hocus Pocus Brunch
5801
Miss Gay Steel Bridges America
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(Rocky Horror cont'd)

Hell, the church of Rocky Horror has its own religious garb—forgoing long robes for fishnet stockings and corsets. For a lot of folks (myself included) who didn't feel welcome in the religion they grew up in, this is where they can lay their problems at the altar of sex, drugs, and rock and roll, where they aren't judged for who they are or who they love or how they live their lives.

In this theater, no matter where we came from, we are all weirdos. From my understanding of spiritual practices, a ritual comprises 4 key elements: the tools, the words, the intent, and the community, and here is my argument for considering this "bad" movie a spiritual practice of its own.

The Tools

A lot of religions and magic practitioners use candles or incense, and in the earlier days of Rocky Horror screenings, audiences would hold up lighters during "There's a Light (Over At The Frankenstein Place)." Nowadays, open flames in a theater are a safety hazard (open flammers are encouraged, though!). There is also the practice of using oil to anoint yourself or the other materials you are working with to prepare for the ceremony ahead. Newcomers to Rocky, known as virgins, are anointed with a "V" on their forehead or hand in bright red lipstick. Glitter is also an acceptable way to anoint yourself. Instead of tarot cards or grimoires, audience members purchase prop bags filled with materials like toilet paper, noisemakers, party hats, glowsticks, latex gloves, and playing cards, with a cue card stapled to the bag labeled for each moment to toss into the air or wear.

Nothing compares to watching a 300-person theater erupt in white streams of toilet paper thrown overhead when Brad says, "GREAT SCOTT!" onscreen.

The Words

There are two sacred texts in the religion of Rocky Horror: the movie's script and lyrics, and the callbacks, or callouts, as they're called in some areas. Instead of "peace be with you" and

"and also with you," it's "asshole!" and "slut!" at the mentions of Brad Majors and Janet Weiss.

Callbacks even vary by cast and by region. For instance, in the song "Toucha Toucha Toucha Touch Me," when Janet sings "I was feeling done in/ Couldn't win," you yell back "LIKE THE FUCKING STEELERS/PENGUINS/PIRATES" (depending on what sport season we're in).

It takes multiple shadowcast screenings of Rocky Horror to memorize some of the callbacks, just like coming back to church every Sunday. But virgins shouldn't be discouraged—even if you don't know the callbacks, sing along if you know the words to the songs! Quote along if you know the lines! It's one of the only times that it's socially acceptable to yell and throw things during a movie; enjoy it!

The only way to be truly blasphemous during a Rocky Horror screening is to yell bigoted things or Nazi slogans at the screen or the actors. That isn't welcome and goes against the safe space that this experience is supposed to be. You will be removed.

The Intent

The intent behind all of the glitter and the shouting and the dancing is as simple as five little words.

Don't dream it, be it.

Even when you leave this theater. Even when you take off the fishnets and the glitter. Even when you pick up the popcorn and cardboard pieces of toast off the floor. If you leave the theater wanting to try something new that scares you (like joining a Rocky Horror shadowcast) or wanting to explore a new side of yourself, then we have done our jobs in this ritual.

The Community

It's quite literally in the words "cult classic."

Magic is even more powerful with a coven or congregation, and the movie wouldn't still be in the public zeitgeist without the



On Heavy Rotation

What's keeping Pittsburgh's DJs, drag artists, and nightlife icons moving? Every month, we ask a member of our community to share the five tracks soundtracking their life right now.

PINEAPPLE HONEYDEW'S TOP 5

This month, Pineapple Honeydew, a drag queen, comedian, content creator, and activist, shares 5 tracks that keep the Sour Sweetheart serving pulp, punch, and pure queer chaos.. Follow Pineapple on Insta & TikTok @pineapple.honeydew

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I Like It Like That — Fcukers

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people who clung to the message of this movie, much like that satin on Fay Wray's thigh, and carried it on for decades to come.

My family went to church every Sunday growing up, and I would look up into the pensive eyes of the giant copper-green statue of Jesus and wonder why I wasn't feeling the same way as everyone else in the pews around me.

Now, I spend most of my Saturday nights yelling profanities in lingerie and lip-syncing the words of a movie I have seen way too many times. When I'm not onstage, I like to watch the audience watch the show. Sometimes when

I look into the crowd, I can see that young, lonely, queer adult I was nearly 10 years ago sitting there, and I watch them come alive as they get swept up in the campy queer joy that is what Rocky Horror is all about.

Amongst the congregation of Pittsburgh misfits and weirdos, I know I'm exactly where I need to be.

If you want to partake in this sacred queer ritual, come to Rowhouse Hollywood to see Pittsburgh's official Rocky Horror shadowcast, the Junior Chamber of Commerce Players, where the ritual of Rocky Horror is performed year-round, not just during Halloween season.

LGBTQ HISTORY

Stonewall and the Judy Garland myth, it's origins

A Stonewall veteran takes aim at one of the uprising's most enduring myths and asks why a stereotype born in the straight press has been allowed to masquerade as queer history for more than half a century.

By Mark Segal

The myth that Judy Garland's death caused the Stonewall riots is offensive to those of us who were there, and to those who spent the following year fighting every day to build the community we have today.

Stonewall was not a Hollywood musical. Nobody shouted, "Hey, let's put on a show!"

It was a riot. It was violent. People were hurt. People were arrested. Windows were smashed. We were fighting back against police harassment,

discrimination and a society that treated us as criminals simply for being who we were.

So how did this ridiculous story become part of our history?

That question leads to a much larger one: Who has been allowed to write our history?

For decades, much of early LGBT history was told by straight journalists looking at us from the outside. Their newspaper articles became historical documents, and later historians naturally turned to those early reports when trying to reconstruct what happened.

But what happens when the original reporting itself is based on stereotypes?

The Judy Garland myth offers a perfect example.

The earliest known appearances of the Garland explanation came in the Village Voice on July 10, 1969, less than two weeks after the riots, in a column by Walter Troy Spencer titled "Too Much, My Dear."

Continue reading pg. 18



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Spencer attributed to a man named Dick Neuweiler the suggestion that the combination of the full moon and Judy Garland's funeral had been "too much for them." In the same piece, Spencer derisively referred to Stonewall as the "Great Faggot Rebellion."

Think about that for a moment.

A community that had endured years of police raids, arrests, humiliation and violence finally fought back, and one of the earliest explanations reduced that rebellion to gay people becoming emotionally distraught over the death of a Hollywood star.

But there's another question.

Who was Dick Neuweiler?

Was he at Stonewall? Was he an activist? Was he a member of the Mattachine Society? Did he later join the Gay Liberation Front? Was he even an eyewitness?

No news organization or individual has ever found independent documentation establishing any of those things.

That does not prove that Neuweiler didn't exist, nor does it prove that Spencer invented him. But it certainly raises a legitimate historical question: Why has an explanation attributed to someone whose connection to Stonewall remains dubious been repeated for more than half a century?

Where is the supporting evidence?

Where are the eyewitnesses who said Judy Garland's death caused them to riot?

I was there.

Nobody around me was talking about Judy Garland.

We were talking about the police.

We were tired of being raided. Tired of being arrested. Tired of being humiliated. Tired of living in a society where simply being gay could cost you your job, your family and your freedom.

Yet once the Garland story appeared, it was repeated. Then repeated again. Eventually repetition turned speculation into folklore, and folklore began masquerading as history.

There's something particularly offensive about the stereotype behind it.

It transforms people fighting against oppression into caricatures of emotional gay men so distraught over Judy Garland that they suddenly took to the streets.

Stonewall wasn't The Wizard of Oz.

It was an uprising.

And it didn't end when the streets became quiet.

In the weeks and months that followed, many of us organized. We joined the Gay Liberation Front and other emerging organizations. We demonstrated. We created newspapers. We confronted institutions. We demanded visibility.

One year later, we marched through the streets of New York in what became the first Pride march.

We weren't organizing memorials for Judy Garland.

We were building a liberation movement.

Fortunately, LGBT people also began documenting our own history. Donn Teal's *The Gay Militants*, published in 1971, recorded the emerging movement from much closer to the people creating it. Decades later, historian David Carter spent years researching Stonewall, interviewing participants and examining the historical record.

That is how our history should be approached: compare sources, question assumptions and never assume that something is true simply because it appeared in a newspaper first, and not from a member of our community

And that brings us to something urgent.

There are still people alive who were at Stonewall. There are still people alive who participated in the Gay Liberation Front, Gay Youth and the other organizations that transformed a riot into a movement.

But our numbers grow smaller every year.

Now is the time to record those voices.

We need oral histories. We need our documents and photographs preserved. And historians need to examine the earliest reporting critically, recognizing that some of it was written by

people who viewed us through the prejudices and stereotypes of their time.

Straight journalists should certainly be part of the historical record. But they should not be allowed to define our history simply because they happened to have the printing presses.

For generations, other people told us who we were.

We fought a revolution so we could define ourselves.

We should do the same with our history.

Stonewall was not a story about gay people crying over Judy Garland.

It was about people who had been pushed around for too long finally pushing back.

Those of us who were there know the difference.

And while we're still here, we're going to make damn sure history knows it too.

MARK SEGAL is a Stonewall riot pioneer, early member of Gay liberation front and the author of "And then I Danced, Traveling the Road to LGBT Equality, which the National Lesbian Gay Journalist Association named book of the year.



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INTERVIEW

Kal Penn, Beyond Kumar

'Harold & Kumar' star Kal Penn on Anna Nicole Smith, Pride and how he never really 'came out'

By Chris Azzopardi.

Photo courtesy of Briarcliff Entertainment.



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, wrote "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 Anna Nicole Smith's orbit.

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 Anna Nicole's chaotic bar magnetism and 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.)

When you look at the path your career has taken, does it surprise you where you've ended up?

This is a really good dinner party question, and I'm going to have to remember it just for other actor friends of mine. I remember there's one

episode of "Law & Order: SVU" that I did back in the day, and it was after I had done a bunch of these comedy movies, and I played this rapist.

I remember some of the feedback from that and from friends of mine was like, "Well, you're obviously the rapist if you're doing one episode of SVU." I was like, "Come on, don't I also get to play the terrible rapist?" But the sentence, "I feel really lucky to play a rapist on SVU," is the wrong sentence.

It's the breadth of the work, right? It's about not always being the Kumar character.

Yeah. And look, I love playing him too. I just think that the characters that are the farthest departure from who you are in real life, at least for me, are always the more interesting ones. And so, playing a doctor of questionable ethics over the course of the film was, for me, really interesting, because it was very juicy about all of the bad decisions that he made.

What was your approach to playing a real person?

I don't think I've ever played somebody who was still alive. The real Sandeep wrote a memoir that the script was based off of. So, at first I had access to this memoir, which is obviously from his point of view, but then he was really open about letting me shadow him and asking all sorts of questions.

He said, "I'm such a big fan and I'm so glad it's you who will do justice to my story." I said, "I got to be honest with you, that's not my job. My job is to do justice to the character as written in the script."

There's this scene where he, in real life and in the film, bought the practice that Anna Nicole Smith was already a patient in from a doctor who was retiring. So, he inherited both her as a patient and, at least at the initial time, her dosage of whatever she was getting prescribed. And you see in that first scene, he's so enamored by her and her celebrity and her fame. And this is that '90s into 2000s era of L.A. I don't know very many people who would be so open about that flaw and how it might make you think differently than you would otherwise. It was that vulnerability that I was most interested in.

You've crossed paths with Anna Nicole Smith before this movie. What was it like to return to those memories and then spend months

inhabiting a story connected to her?

I lived in L.A. at the time that her reality show was on. It's not like I was friends with her or saw her all the time. But there was one particular party that I was at. I remember people being like, "Oh, there's Anna Nicole Smith," and cameras around her. She did not appear sober, but I was at the end of a bar. It was like an L-shaped bar, and I just remember her making out with every person down the bar with her cameras in tow. I was at the end and I got out of the way, because I was like, "Through the transitive property of making out, I don't want to make out with these 14 people."

I was going to ask you what makes her a gay icon, but that specific anecdote makes me think, well, there you have it: the ability to walk down a line of people and make out with each one of them.

[Laughs.] Yeah, I don't even know what kind of bar it was. If memory serves, it was women and men.

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 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."

Continue reading pg. 20

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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.

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ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

Deep Inside Hollywood

By Romeo San Vicente.
Photo by KathClick.

Elvira meets Pumpkinhead



It's officially Spooky Season, and if Halloween is your queer holiday of choice, you'll be thrilled to learn that Cassandra Peterson, the queer actor who's been playing the sexy comedy witch Elvira for well over 40 years, has a new gig heading into the horror-friendly month of October. "R.L. Stine's Pumpkinhead 2," from the mind of the celebrated YA horror author and based on his book "The Haunting Hour," involves young people battling a new Pumpkinhead curse. Peterson plays a character named, conveniently enough, Cassandra, and not Elvira — nobody wants to be typecast if they have a say in the matter — and news is that she's still plenty witchy. We will follow Peterson anywhere. She's a comedy legend, after all. And the movie drops Oct. 2 on Tubi, so gather the family and pass around some pre-Halloween candy while you watch.

Canada's 'Yaga' will haunt your autumn

We're in a "Widow's Bay" moment, with the Emmy-winning horror-comedy series opening the door for more cozy, spooky fare. Case in point: "Yaga," an upcoming supernatural mystery TV series from Canadian playwright Kat Sandler, based on her 2019 play, inspired by the legend of Baba Yaga, the forest witch from Slavic folklore. And the cast? Stacked with queer Canadian royalty. OK, none of them are officially queer, but together they represent the past few decades of queer pop culture. Noah Reid, Dan Levy's love interest on "Schitt's Creek," plays a private detective investigating a disappearance, who encounters

a professor played by Carrie-Anne Moss, every lesbian "The Matrix" fan's forever crush. Queer cinema icon Sheila McCarthy ("I've Heard the Mermaids Singing") and "Letterkenny" co-star Clark Backo have supporting role roles, and "Heated Rivalry" heartthrob Hudson Williams will play a dual role as two as-yet-unnamed characters. There will be suspense, magic and creepy happenings when it hits airwaves this fall in the U.S. on AMC+.

'Tangles' is the serious queer animated film for adults

A hit at Cannes — where it was nominated for both the Camera d'Or and the Queer Palm — and the Toronto International Film Festival, Leah Nelson's "Tangles" could be the queer hit of the upcoming awards season. Based on Sarah Leavitt's graphic novel "Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me," with a screenplay by Leavitt, Nelson and Trev Renney, it's a story of a young queer woman in San Francisco (voiced by Abbi Jacobson) whose visit home to see family turns difficult when it becomes clear that her mother (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) is developing Alzheimer's disease. The voice cast is sterling — Wanda Sykes, Seth Rogen, Bryan Cranston, Samira Wiley, Beanie Feldstein, Pamela Adlon, Sarah Silverman and Bowen Yang — and the festival reviews have been rapturous. Look for it to get an award-qualifying release in late December with a wider rollout in January 2027.

Gregg Araki returns with a movie he won't talk about

When your latest film pops with audiences and critics — that would be this year's delightful, nervy "I Want Your Sex" — and you roll into your next one, with an initial cast of Ashton Kutcher, "Mad Men" alum Alison Brie and "Grey's Anatomy" vet Jesse Williams (at the time of this writing still in contract talks) you can afford to be a little secretive. That's what New Queer Cinema legend Gregg Araki is doing with his forthcoming film, currently titled "The Decline of F-cking Western Civilization," about which we know very little. We understand that it's an ensemble piece, that its cinematic elders are "Election" and "American Beauty," whatever that means, and that production is underway right now in Los Angeles. There will be more news: plot, casting, a shooting start date perhaps. But for now, this is what you get. Salivate.

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Pittsburgh, PA 15206
(412) 345-7456
alliespgh.org

Central Outreach Wellness Center

centraloutreach.com

Aliquippa PA

2360 Hospital Drive, Upper Suite 1
Aliquippa, PA 15001
(412) 322-4151

Northside, Pittsburgh

127 Anderson Street, Suite 101
Timber Court Building
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 322-4151

Washington, PA

817 Jefferson Avenue
Washington, PA 15218
(412) 322-4151

Metro Community Health Center

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metrocommunityhealthcenter.org

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5801pgh.com

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(304) 292-2010
babylonmorgantown.com

Blue Moon

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bluemoononbutler.com

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Pittsburgh, PA 15222
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clubpittsburgh.com

Harold's Haunt

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Millvale, PA 15209
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queerwitches.com

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Mary's

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maryspgh.com

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ptownbarpgh.com

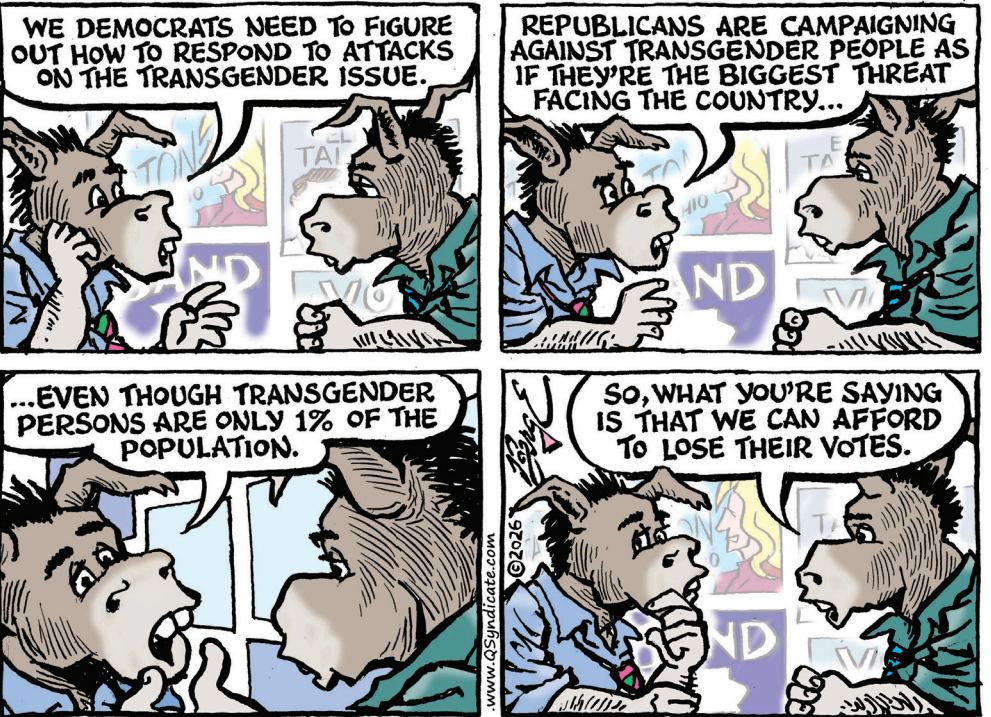


Crossword! Man of Many Faces

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- ACROSS
- 1 Taylor of "I Shot Andy Warhol"
- 5 "Snail-mail" org.
- 9 Closet item
- 14 Straight ___ arrow
- 15 Personal lubricant ingredient
- 16 Slowly, to Sondheim
- 17 Tim Curry's "It" clown
- 19 Capital of Ghana
- 20 Actress Pfeiffer
- 21 From, in France
- 22 "Suzanne" composer Leonard
- 23 Homeland of the Singing Nun (abbr.)
- 25 Tim Curry's operatic villain in "Legend"
- 27 Goes the way of bad milk
- 30 Number of bulbs
- 31 "___ live and breathe!"
- 32 Top draft level
- 34 "Faust" author
- 37 Tim Curry's character in the movie "Clue"
- 40 More like a virgin
- 41 Breakfast waffle brand name
- 42 Jam ingredients
- 44 Foam at the mouth
- 45 Handle on a machine that cuts leaves of grass
- 47 King of Crete
- 49 Dick, for short
- 50 Ivy Leaguer in New Haven
- 52 One of the Village People wears one
- 54 Tim Curry's most iconic role
- 58 Make more potent
- 59 Gallo portrayer in "And the Band Played On"
- 60 Stand next to Cassatt
- 64 Rock Hudson's "A Farewell to ___"
- 65 Not even once, to Dickinson
- 66 Copland composed for it
- 67 Ball-bearing items
- 68 Not hard to get in bed
- 69 Stick your nose in
- DOWN
- 1 "Crash" org.
- 2 Frasier's response to a client
- 3 Connector of continents
- 4 Wanting much
- 5 Motor City org.
- 6 Got some dirt in the skirt, in "A League of Their Own"
- 7 Sat for Diana Davies
- 8 Playground piece for a couple
- 9 Paving material
- 10 Storyteller
- 11 Emulate Leonard Bernstein
- 12 Shrek and others
- 13 Lovemaking responses
- 18 Gutless
- 24 Type of salami you can put in your hero
- 26 Disdained newspaper
- 27 Sounded like Scarecrow's foe
- 28 The way we word
- 29 Hospital fluid
- 33 Motivation affecters
- 35 German philosopher Georg
- 36 With blood rushing to the head
- 38 Cause for a massage
- 39 Like some degrees
- 43 "Chim-Chim-Cheree" residue
- 46 "Horny" animal
- 48 Beds, with "with"
- 51 Totally ridiculous
- 53 It makes waves
- 54 Apartment, to McKellen
- 55 One way to have one's meat
- 56 Top
- 57 Bitch botherer
- 61 Word on a Brazilian map
- 62 Bowie collaborator
- 63 Cut

The Democratic Response



September solution: The Chore of Choreography

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