

FEBRUARY 2025

ISSUE
14

Leslie

the weird city's queer voice

**AUSTIN TO GET QUEER
COMMUNITY CENTER?**

**SAN ANTONIO EAGLE
OPENS UP FOR
BUSINESS**

**MEET THE
QUEER TEXAS
LEGISLATORS
FIGHTING FOR YOU**

**LESLIE
OF THE YEAR!**

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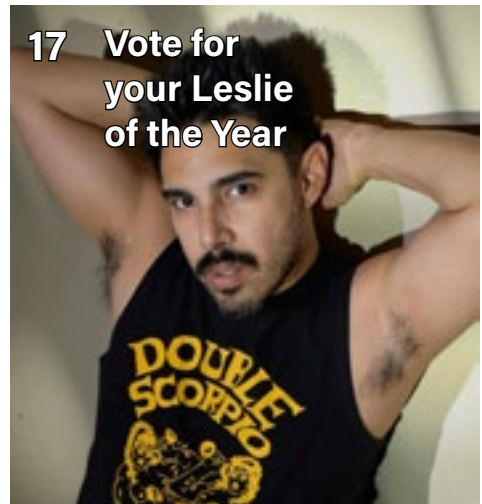
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Texas Queer Legislators Stay Positive Amid All Out Attack on Queer Community

BY: LANDRY RHODES

Legislative bodies have begun their new terms of office, and with Republicans taking further control of power, many in the LGBTQ+ community have expressed their outrage and fear over what policies will affect their lives over the next two to four years. However, legislators within the community are arriving at their respective Capitols with excitement and hope for the future, determined to protect their rights while continuing to work with lawmakers to deliver for their constituents. One of those representatives is Venton Jones, a state rep from Dallas. When the Texas House convened to open the 89th Legislative Session, Jones decided to start his second term with a "deeply personal and historic gesture" when he proposed to his partner, Gregory Scott Jr., on the middle of the House floor, according to a press release from Jones' office.

Surrounded by family, friends, colleagues and supporters Jones, who was recently elected both as Texas House Democratic Caucus whip and vice-chair of the Texas LGBTQ Caucus, got down on one knee and asked Scott to marry him, where he was met "with cheers and a resounding 'YES' from Mr. Scott." Shortly after the proposal, the House proceeded to an unprecedented two rounds of voting for the Speaker of the House, electing Lubbock Republican Rep. Dustin Burrows through a coalition of Republicans and Democrats. While the House has not begun voting on bills affecting the legislative priorities of the government, they have begun voting on the rules and structure over the next session, including a controversial resolution that banned Democrats from

holding chairmanship of committees. However, many on the far right are complaining that Democrats are still allowed to hold vice chairmanships and, in some cases, spots on committees entirely. With the current leadership of Texas being motivated in part by federal pressure, it remains to be seen how deep the Legislature will attempt to target the LGBTQ+ community this session. With the Trump administration taking firmer shape, the first essence of anti-queer bills being pushed nationally are finally being unleashed.

While the Texas House began its session, the United States Congress began its new legislative term in January as well, seeing the Republicans continue to hold onto the House by a smaller margin led by Speaker Mike Johnson. The Texas delegation remained unchanged in their partisan balance, however several seats saw the introduction of new faces into the Rotunda, including former state rep now-Congresswoman Julie Johnson of Farmers Branch. In her inaugural address to the House, she gave key highlights over her record protecting LGBTQ+ Texans while fighting for the middle class across the spectrum. "As the trusted voice for Texas' 32nd Congressional District in Congress, I am ready to deliver real results for my neighbors." said Johnson in her address. "That means working to lower costs across the board; support and expand infrastructure for the fastest growing metroplex in the country; secure our southern border; and make healthcare safe, affordable, and reliable for all Americans."

While Rep. Johnson painted a bright future ahead of



Texas in the next session of Congress, one of her first votes was an all too familiar protection of the LGBTQ+ community by voting against a bill to ban transgender and intersex girls and women from competing in school athletics. H.R. 28 amends existing law to make it a violation of Title IX for recipients of federal financial assistance to allow transgender girls or women to participate in girls' and women's athletic programs, effectively banning all trans girls and trans women from participating on school sports teams. It would also limit the ability of non-binary and intersex students to participate in these programs as well. While the 216-206 vote fell mostly along party lines, Texas Democrats Vicente Gonzalez of McAllen and Henry Cuellar of Laredo voted in favor of the bill. Democrat Don Davis of North Carolina voted "present." The votes on the bill drew sharp criticism from fellow Democrats in the chamber and LGBTQ+ activist groups, calling the bill "an unconscionable attack on transgender girls and women across the country." Rep. Mark Takano of California says the bill being one of the first to be passed by this new Congress taints the very image of the institution. "Once again, Republicans have proved that their obsession with attacking trans people trumps lowering the cost of groceries or investing in our schools." Takano said in a statement.

"It's shameful that one of the first bills to pass the House this Congress limits transgender girls' ability to be a part of their school's community, prevents kids from playing with their friends, and could force any girl to answer invasive

personal questions about their bodies and face humiliating physical inspections to 'prove' that they're a girl, [...] Speaker Johnson and the Republican Conference are more focused on passing legislation that targets transgender children for exclusion and puts all girls at risk than working to address the problems impacting Americans daily."

While the general attitude of the new Republican legislatures appears grim for the LGBTQ+ community, the more seasoned lawmakers are motivated and ready to continue defending the values previous generations of queer leadership had fought for, and hope that keeping their own attitudes positive and hopeful will inspire the same feelings onto their allies in the fight ahead.



Julie Johnson

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Christians “Lay Hands” On TX Capitol Hearing Room To Protect Republicans From Demons And “Jezebel Spirits”

BY: DR. NEIL THOMAS

The recent events at the Texas Capitol highlight a significant intertwining of faith and politics, particularly within the Republican Party. Following the election of Rep. Dustin Burrows as Texas House Speaker, a gathering of Christian worshippers convened to pray for protection against what they termed “demonic influences.” Led by figures like Landon Schott from Mercy Culture Church, these gatherings reflect a broader movement among conservative Christians who seek to embed their beliefs into law.

The rhetoric used by leaders at these

events, including declarations that there is no separation between church and state, underscores an increasing alignment with fundamentalist ideologies. This movement is supported by influential megadonors and aims to promote legislation that aligns with conservative Christian values—such as allowing unlicensed chaplains in schools and displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

The sentiments expressed by key figures, including the Chair of the Republican Party of Texas, reveal a desire to not only influence legislation but to portray political

opposition as a threat to Christianity itself. This perspective has been linked to a broader trend of Christian nationalism within the party, where a significant portion of Republicans endorse the idea of America as a Christian nation.

As the legislative session unfolds, the push to dismantle barriers separating religion from government is expected to continue, with leaders like Rick Scarborough advocating for the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, which restricts political activity by churches. The involvement of churches like Mercy Culture Church

illustrates how religious congregations are becoming increasingly active in political spheres, framing their efforts as part of a spiritual battle.

Experts on Christian nationalism note that the blend of charismatic evangelicalism with political activism represents a new phase of evangelical politics, with implications for both local and national governance. The events in Texas reflect a significant moment in this ongoing struggle, where the lines between faith and political authority are increasingly blurred.



www.leslieatxvote.com/

Texas Openly Queer Senator Molly Cook

BY: LANDRY RHODES

Running for office may not have always been a part of the plan, but sometimes when the needs are great enough are when true leaders rise up. Molly Cook had initially never seen herself taking up the role of a leader, however she has always had a passion for helping those in need. Her helpful spirit and passionate energy has taken her all the way from the medical chaos of the emergency room to the more emotional chaos of the Texas Senate. And being one of the only openly LGBTQ+ members of the Senate of one of the most conservative states in the country, she intends to open doors for generations that were never possible just decades ago.

Molly definitely emerged as an outsider in Texas politics. Holding a master's degree in public health policy, she began a steady career as an ER nurse. She fell in love with the emergency room, however it was in this field where she first saw the struggle of the common man against the system at large. Her shifts became filled with people stuck in poverty-stricken environments and constantly fighting with social services that were underfunded and ill-prepared, and Molly noticed that these systems were designed that way from the top down. A few men were making the rules for everybody, and that was not acceptable for her. Something had to be done, and to Molly, real change comes from the grassroots.

She began working with Democratic campaigns and local advocacy groups, fighting for better healthcare access like improved disability services and accessibility to public buildings. She spoke with members across her neighborhood and learned the deeper impacts of the policies of the state government. From this experience she was able to begin campaigns for broader policy goals, such

as the Fair for Houston campaign, a 2023 ballot initiative that propelled Houston to increase their representation in the regional governing coalition or otherwise withdraw that passed by a 30-point margin. From there, she also ran a group of organizers fighting against the expansion of I-45, fearing it would tear down people's homes and entire communities. Through all of her organizing experience however, Molly would realize that the fight against the system would only grow stronger.

The regional coalition, HGAC, rejected the city's proposal to increase Houston's representation on their council, however the city renewed it's membership, and to make matters worse, TxDOT approved the plan for widening I-4, threatening several acres of wildlife and hiking trails. Again and again, Molly continued to face the frustration of the back and forth fighting the system. But then came the opportunity that would change Molly's path and introduce her to the world of public service.

In December of 2023 John Whitmire was elected as the Mayor of Houston, requiring him to vacate his current seat in the Texas Senate. Molly knew that constantly fighting with the system was effective at keeping peace, but to make real change, leaders need to rise when the occasion needs them to, and threw her hat in the ring. Throughout her campaign, she focused on her long standing connections with the Houston metropolitan area and fighting for better conditions all across the board. After securing a spot in the runoff elections for the democratic nomination, Molly overcame a nearly 8,000 vote lead to win the special election last May, as well as the nomination three weeks later. She handily won the general election that

November.

In the time between the May special election and the November General election, Molly knew this small window could provide a massive opportunity to show how well-represented her district would be. Whitmire, her predecessor, was frequently criticized for his support of the I-45 widening project as well as his more conservative stances in the Senate. Molly knew she wanted to project a difference in her office to reflect more power to the people that brought her to office. She has hosted nine legislative workshops in her just six months in office, providing comprehensive 1:1 knowledge on what the legislature is and what it does so that people will want to be more involved in government. To her, every person in her district is a constituent whether they voted for her or not, and is worthy of good service and connections with her community to get the job done.

As a lawmaker, Molly has always looked up to the queer figures of the past such as Barbara Jordan. Molly has noted that people in her community were often pressured to conceal their relationships publicly out of fear of persecution, and is proud to follow in her footsteps as an open bisexual woman thanks to those courageous fighters of the past. To her, when other lawmakers enter the room and shake her hand, they have to look her in the eyes and accept her as part of their body, and this will help normalize LGBTQ+ people in the legislature and across Texas in general. And ahead of her first full term of office, she is ready to hit the ground running with an office already well-established in the halls of the Senate.



Senator Molly Cook

See it for what it is: Old-Fashioned LGBTQ-Bashing

BY: DOUG GRECO



Though I've lived in Austin most of my adult life, I moved to Los Angeles for about 3 years, mostly to work in the LGBTQ movement. When the landmark Supreme Court Obergefell decision legalizing same-sex marriage came down in 2015, I was fortunate to be serving as Director of Programs with Equality California. The LGBTQ community and allies had struck a historic victory nationally.

But within the year, anti-LGBTQ groups began testing the waters for a "bathroom bill" type ballot measure in California, narrowing their attacks to the trans community in the hopes of striking a quick victory after Obergefell. But after it was clear that EQCA and other LGBTQ groups would organize to defeat it, they pulled the plug.

So the right wing moved the anti-LGBTQ bathroom bill fight to red and purple states, where they thought it would gain more traction. I worked as Chief of Staff to Gina Hinojosa in the Texas House in 2017 after I had returned to Texas. The bathroom bill was one of the marquee fights of that session, and fortunately a broad coalition of pro-LGBTQ organizations, legislators, allies, and business

leaders defeated it.

But once again, borrowing cookie-cutter legislation from other states, anti-LGBTQ Texas legislators looked to further divide our community. They again narrowed their attacks in the 2023 session to parts of our community the general public is less familiar with. This time it was trans kids. And this time they struck a victory against gender-affirming care, as well a handful of other pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation.

There has been a lot of talk after the November 2024 elections that the Democrats focused too much on issues impacting the transgender community. But what this analysis misses is that legislatively this has been primarily in DEFENSE of the trans community in the face of coordinated attacks across the country.

Yes, we should be smart in how we fight back and shouldn't always take the bait, but legislators and public officials who oppose anti-trans legislation are standing with those immediately targeted and with our entire community.

Let's be clear: these attacks are old-fashioned "gay-bashing", or more specifically, LGBTQ-bashing. And now that the right wing has scored some wins against a part of our community, they are now broadening those attacks to our community as a whole. Just look at Trump's recent executive orders rolling back federal protections for the trans and broader LGBTQ community.

Throughout our history, anti-LGBTQ forces have branded our community with some version of three stigmas: that we are criminals, sinners, or sick. And those exact same tropes have been used against those that stand with trans kids, trans adults, and our whole community. So let's be clear, this is part of a long-term strategy of attacks and requires a long term fight. And while it seems like the struggle for LGBTQ rights sometimes goes back and forth, the world only spins forward.

Doug Greco is an organizer and writer living in Austin, Texas.

Meet The Queer Texas Legislators Fighting For You

Legislators Fighting For You

BY: LANDRY RHODES

Rep. Jessica Gonzalez-

Rep. Jessica Gonzalez is returning to Austin for her fourth term as state rep for District 104, encompassing parts of the Dallas area. This past November, Rep. Gonzalez was elected as Chair of the House LGBT Caucus after previously serving as its vice-chair. Gonzalez uses her diverse background as a personal injury attorney to help address civil liberties in Texas to ensure everyone has the rights they are entitled to. During the 87th Legislative Session, she was recognized as Texas Monthly's Bull of the Brazos, received the Matt Garcia Public Service Award from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and was named one of USA TODAY's Women of the Year.

Rep. Venton Jones-

Rep. Venton Jones is making his second term in the House count by being elected as Vice Chair of the House LGBT Caucus! Rep. Jones has been a trailblazer for House District 100, comprising South Dallas, and has used his bright personality to deliver real results for his constituents! On top of serving as Vice Chair of the LGBT Caucus, Rep. Jones also serves as the House Minority Whip, ensuring that the party has the proper knowledge on how votes will be cast. Rep. Jones has made history as the first openly gay black House member, as well as the first House member to openly have HIV, in Texas, and he continues to advocate for his community to make his District a better place to live!

Rep. Lauren Ashley Simmons-

Bursting onto the scene is a fan favorite of the Leslie, the newly elected representative from Houston has already been a fierce advocate for the LGBT community here in Texas! As previously covered, Rep. Simmons swept social media last year challenging the State of Texas for its lack of investment in public Schools. She continued to make headlines earlier this

year for her primary challenge to Rep. Shawn Thierry, the lone Democrat to vote for banning transgender athletes in school. Following her victory, Simmons quickly swept the general election, bringing an important voice for LGBT Texans for House District 146, and for Texas. Despite being a freshman, Simmons has already branched into a name for themselves, being appointed as a deputy whip for the Democratic Caucus in her first term! She has pledged that protecting her community is one of her top priorities ahead of the next legislative session.

Rep. Christian Manuel-

Returning for his second term in the Texas House, Rep. Christian Manuel has been hard at work for the constituents of District 22 and is ready to continue fighting this session! Rep.

Manuel has deep connections to the Texas Legislature, working for several representatives since he was 18, and has been serving Jefferson County since 2023. Rep. Manuel was awarded Freshmen of the Year by the Texas Legislative Black Caucus after sending six bills to the governor's desk, boosting the local economy and creating jobs in historically under-supported areas. For the upcoming session, Rep. Manuel has prioritized focusing on providing more funding for mental healthcare and family wellness services. Rep. Manuel is proud to serve his hometown and bring real change to his community by continuing to work with both sides to deliver real, effective results.

Rep. Jolanda Jones-

Rep. Jolanda "Jo" Jones returns to the



Meet the queer people taking up arms as Donald Trump moves back into the White House

BY: GREG OWEN (LGBTQ NATION)

With two weeks to go before President-elect Donald Trump is inaugurated for a second term, queer people around the country are purchasing guns, joining gun groups, and taking up arms in preparation for a worst-case scenario that may or may not come to pass. "This country is not, I wouldn't say, on very solid footing," nonbinary gun owner Doug told the Philadelphia Inquirer recently. "As a Boy Scout, I'd rather be prepared." Doug is among a growing number of LGBTQ+ people going on offense in the face of what they fear will be a worsening climate for queer people under an administration openly hostile to them. "We're not looking to arm up and storm the Capitol," one gun owner said. "We just don't want to be put in concentration camps."

Following a national election that saw \$215 million spent attacking the trans community, as well as bans on healthcare for trans people, a continuing crusade to erase LGBTQ+ identity from schools and libraries, and



increases in violence directed at sexual minorities, groups like the Pink Pistols, Rainbow Reload, and the Socialist Rifle Association, whose motto is "We Keep Us Safe," are growing in popularity among queer people fearing for their lives. A spokesperson for the national Liberal Gun Club said his group has received thousands of training requests since the election, more than in all of 2023. He estimates about a quarter were from LGBTQ+ people. The head of the Delaware Valley chapter of the Pink Pistols, a longtime gay gun group with the slogan "Armed Gays Don't Get Bashed," said he's received a sudden flurry of emails inquiring about gun training. "There's definitely a feeling among a lot of LGBT individuals: 'If I can't protect myself, who will?'" said Madeline Shearman, a trans woman based in Pennsylvania who runs a "2A social group" devoted to exercising gun rights granted by the Second Amendment. "I feel that way myself."

"Three months before the election, that's when the alarm bells started to ring," said a trans woman and new gun owner who identified by the initial A. to protect her privacy. She bought her first gun on November 2. "Minorities that are armed are more difficult to legally oppress," she said. She found peace of mind "in the event of hate crimes or terrorist attacks, knowing that, 'OK, I'm personally armed and I can protect my property and people that are close to me.'" Now she's applying for a concealed carry permit in Pennsylvania. While gun ownership numbers for queer people are hard

to come by, a shift in the buying patterns for arms indicates a change over the last four years, a peak for gun purchases. David Yamane, a Wake Forest sociology professor, calls the change "Gun Culture 2.0."

Twenty-one million background checks were conducted for the sale of a firearm in 2020, a 60 percent rise over the previous year, mostly concentrated among white men, particularly conservative men in rural areas. Four years ago, NBC News found, about 24 percent of Black households owned guns. Now it's 41 percent. The same percentage of Democratic households now own guns, up from 33 percent in 2004.

Yamane's research shows that new gun owners are "more female, more racial minority, more urban," he told the Washingtonian, and it's likely gun ownership among LGBTQ+ people is more common than in the past.

Those increases accompany a rise in violence directed



at the LGBTQ+ community, particularly trans people. A 2021 report from UCLA's Williams Institute found trans people are more than four times as likely as cisgender people to be victims of violent crime, while one in four trans people say they've been physically attacked because of their identity, according to a poll conducted by health-policy research nonprofit KFF and the Washington Post. The FBI's tally of hate crimes based on gender identity jumped 32 percent from 2021 to 2022. Those facts and attacks on women's bodily autonomy, seen in the 2022 Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, catalyzed Lilah, who sees "a rising tide of fascism in this country." She learned to shoot as a child and had lost interest; encouraged by her partner Rachel, whom she met at a SCOTUS protest, she's shooting again. "All the people who want to kill the people I care about have guns," Rachel says. "So I do, too."

Last year, more than half of registered voters in an NBC News poll said they live in a household where someone owns a gun.

Trump signs executive orders targeting LGBTQ Americans

BY: TAMMYE NASH (DALLAS VOICE)

Within hours of being inaugurated, Trump signed an executive order defining sex as strictly male or female and ordering federal agencies to rescind protective policies



Donald Trump wasted no time attacking LGBTQ Americans

Donald Trump wasted no time in rolling back years of hard-won progress for transgender Americans, signing an executive order declaring that the federal government will no longer recognize trans people within hours of being sworn in as the 47th president. He signed a second executive order, "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions," which revokes several LGBTQ-inclusive Executive Orders issued by President Biden, including executive orders preventing discrimination against LGBTQ people and protecting trans people in the military.

"Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" defines sex as strictly male or female based on the "immutable biological reality of sex" characteristics at birth and will, the administration claims, "defend women's rights" and restore "trust in government itself."

The order mandates immediate changes, directing federal agencies to rewrite policies and remove any reference to gender ideology, and allowing government-issued ID to reflect only an individual's gender assigned at birth. Schools, shelters, and workplaces that receive federal funding will no longer be required to accommodate transgender individuals' gender identities transgender women in prisons and detention centers will be housed with men, regardless of their safety.

Among the executive orders addressed in Trump's "Initial Rescission" order are: 13985, Advancing

Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government; 13988, Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation; 14004, Enabling All Qualified Americans To Serve Their Country in Uniform; 14020, Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council; 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce; 14075, Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals; and 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. The Congressional Equality Caucus and Lambda Legal issued statements decrying Trump's orders, both vowing to fight his right-wing agenda. Rep. Mark Takano, chair of the Congressional Equality Caucus, said, "Donald Trump spent his first day back in the Oval Office seeking to both erase the existence of transgender people and curb government efforts to protect and support transgender people, as well as the wider LGBTQ+ community. "The president and the federal government should be working to support all Americans — not singling out transgender and LGBTQ+ people for exclusion," Takano continued. "Make no mistake: These attacks on our community are part of a larger strategy by Republicans to use anti-LGBTQ+ attacks to distract Americans from the massive tax cuts they want to

CONTINUES ON PAGE 9

give to their billionaire buddies — cuts they are going to pay for by cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid."

Lambda Legal released a statement from CEO Kevin Jennings, condemning Trump's executive orders "targeting LGBTQ+ people, everyone living with HIV and communities of color," and pledging to challenge those orders in the courts.

Jennings said, "These executive orders include direct attacks on LGBTQ+ communities, particularly transgender people, youth and families whose lives, dignity and safety would be further jeopardized in this already-fraught moment when over two dozen states have already passed anti-LGBTQ+ laws since 2022."

He noted that the administration is targeting "transgender and intersex people, especially youth, denying them access to essential public facilities, school programs and the same medically recommended health care that is readily available to their cisgender peers; anti-bias programming and protections in the workplace; and transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people who only seek to have accurate identity documents. "The impact of these executive actions will be devastating — stripping away health care access, weakening workplace protections from abuse, inviting exclusion and harassment of vulnerable school children and giving a green light to discrimination throughout public life," he said. Jennings said the Trump administration's "appalling approach" prioritizes limiting protections against sex discrimination and abuse and that it "denies science and will make life immeasurably harder for intersex,

nonbinary and, of course, transgender people." He continued, "Lambda Legal secured the first U.S. passport with an 'X' gender marker for our brave client, Dana Zzyym, and we'll continue to stand with Dana and all intersex, nonbinary and transgender people to defend their right to identity documents that accurately identify who they are and their equal protection rights against targeting and exclusion by their own government. "While much of what is called for by the executive orders signed today will take time to implement, we will vigilantly monitor and be ready to challenge when they take effect. Lambda Legal has been at the forefront of these and other fights for more than 50 years, and we will not back down now."

Jennings said Lambda Legal is "exploring every legal avenue to challenge these unlawful and unconstitutional actions, launching the "Fearless+ Fighting Back campaign" because "This is not only about politics and ideology, but also about real people's lives. ... Our community will not be erased, and Lambda Legal will never stop fighting for justice. In the next four years, we may not be able to litigate every odious anti-LGBTQ policy change, but rest assured, attacks on our communities will not go unanswered. We stand ready to fight alongside our colleagues who likewise are standing up for justice to ensure no one is left behind."

Jennings ended with a call for "Congress, state leaders and all allies of equality to reject these attacks and stand in defense of the rights of LGBTQ+ people."



"The president and the federal government should be working to support all Americans — not singling out transgender and LGBTQ+ people for exclusion."

- U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, chair of the Congressional Equality Caucus



"The impact of these executive actions will be devastating — stripping away health care access, weakening workplace protections from abuse, inviting exclusion and harassment of vulnerable school children and giving a green light to discrimination throughout public life."

- Kevin Jennings, CEO of Lambda Legal



The Sleep Apnea Cure Can Be Sexy

BY: LANDRY RHODES

Like most people, Chadwick Denman had a dream for a simpler life. After bouncing around from different dentist's practices, Chadwick was initially drawn to Austin for its vibrant music scene and planned to spend his life continuing his own dentist practice in the city and whisking away to tunes with his partner, Justin. However, life did not always pan out as lucky as it seemed.

Chadwick's father passed away at 60 due to an undiagnosed sleep apnea, a condition in which a person's breathing stops while they're asleep. Embattled by the loss, Chadwick wanted to ensure that no one else had to endure the same pain that his father hadn't even been aware of. So he and his brother sold the dentistry and founded Sleep Cycle Center, Austin's premier Sleep management center. At the Sleep Cycle Center, professionals help create awareness of sleep disorders and provide new knowledge and treatment options for those afflicted.

A graduate of the International Academy of Sleep, Chadwick worked with healthcare professionals to

use the latest cutting-edge technology to identify sleep disorders and provide better care options for the community to determine new methods to treat sleep apnea. Chadwick has always noted that people found CPAP machines to be noisy, hard-to-clean, and not to mention expensive. But his practice has utilized new methods to deliver oral appliances so that people can have a more affordable option to treat sleep apnea. Not to mention, every patient gets a complimentary CT scan so that they are best able to identify potential issues.

And Chadwick has always run this practice with care for the community being his first priority. "I think this about trying to make a difference, not just for me but for my dad's unseen business." Chadwick told Leslie Media. "I want to change the landscape as to how doctors recognize this disease and offer new choices for patients." Chadwick says that anyone in the community looking for a gay-owned business to help with snoring problems to visit his website at sleepcyclecenters.com



Dr. Chad Denman

The Time is Now For An LGBTQ Center in Austin

BY: DOUG GRECO

There should be no more debate: Austin needs an LGBTQ center to serve the entire Central Texas LGBTQ community. Although there have been efforts over the past few decades to create a center, it hasn't happened for various reasons, including a sense that Austin is a progressive and welcoming city throughout which doesn't need a single LGBTQ center.

The critical turning point, for me at least, came last year with the implementation of Texas's new anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) law targeting universities. This led to the shuttering in 2024 of UT's Gender and Sexuality Center (the combined LGBTQ and Women's Center that had existed for over 20 years), UT's Multicultural Center, and the Monarch Program for students who are immigrants. Not only did UT killed the student's LGBTQ center, Austin had no LGBTQ Center to welcome them to.

It is unacceptable that neither Austin, one of the most progressive cities in the country, nor UT, a flagship university, have no LGBTQ center. LGBTQ centers play a critical, and life-saving role in providing a hub for services, civic and political engagement, cultural events, and education for LGBTQ communities. They vary widely in scale

and mission, from larger multi-purpose facilities with health clinics, counseling, and youth and senior programming like the Montrose Center in Houston, to storefronts centers in smaller cities like Bakersfield or Fresno California that provide meeting space and a safe haven for the LGBTQ community in more conservative areas.

Before the advent of the modern LGBTQ rights movement and gay liberation, safe places for LGBTQ community largely consisted of gay bars, political organizations, and periodicals. Eventually gay-owned businesses also served as community hubs. In the 1960's, Gay rights activist Craig Rodwell, an early member of the Mattachine Society and a key figure in the Stonewall riots, ran the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore in New York City's Greenwich Village. The first non-pornographic LGBTQ bookstore in the US, Rodwell's shop acted more as an LGBTQ community center and a hub of activism.

One of Rodwell's former boyfriends, Harvey Milk, visited the bookstore in the late 60's during his pre-activist days, and vowed to open something similar when he moved to San Francisco. Milk didn't open a bookstore, but did open Castro Camera (depicted well in Gus Van Sant's biopic of Milk),

which became ground zero for activism and political activity for Milk and the burgeoning gay community in San Francisco's Castro district in the 70's.

The City of Austin LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, a citizen's commission tasked with bringing recommendations to City Council, called on the City in 2024 to fund an LGBTQ+ Cultural Center. In the past the city has partly funded, with bond money, the creation of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC), the African American Culture and Heritage Facility, and the Asian American Cultural Center.

City Council recently approved a \$180,000 feasibility study sponsored by District 3 (East Side) Council Member Jose Velasquez. The LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission is working with the City real estate office to identify potential locations. They will hold Town Hall on the issue on Monday, March 3rd at 6:30pm at the City of Austin Planning and Development Center (PDC) near the ACC Highland Campus.

Funding for a Center is far from certain unless the LGBTQ community and allies show broad support. City Council is considering bond packages in fall of 2025 and/or fall of 2026 and there is already a push for other big ticket city priorities including climate bond initiatives, "caps and stitches" for the planned I35 expansion, and remaking parts of Congress Avenue downtown into a pedestrian friendly "event venue". With an LGBTQ population well over 100,000 in Central Texas, there is no reason our community shouldn't have a center. But we are going to have to organize and fight for it.



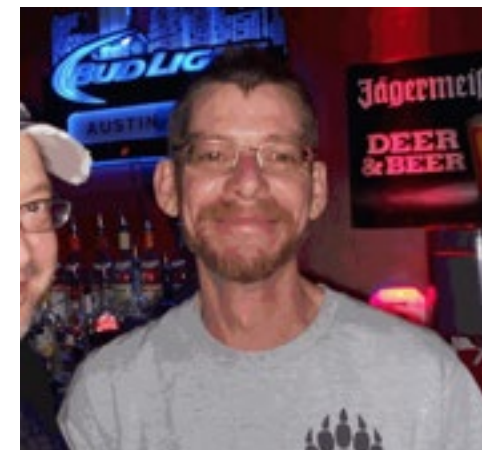
Obituary for Darrin Joseph Wedige

BY: SEGER FUNERAL HOME

Darrin Joseph Wedige passed away on Thursday, January 23, at his home in Austin, TX after a lengthy battle with cancer at the age of 60 years and one month.

Darrin (DJ) was born on December 23, 1964 in Atkinson, NE to Donald G. and Brenda E. (Cole) Wedige. His mother said he was supposed to be the New Years Baby but, she had to change a tire! He attended grade school and Jr. High at Atkinson Public, graduating the eighth grade from St. Joseph's. In December of 1983 he left West Holt High School and worked for his dad in the family business, Wedige & Sons Salvage, in Atkinson. He later moved to Lincoln and received his GED from Lincoln South East but, was always a proud member of the class of 1984. Shortly after, he enlisted in the United States Army and served proudly for several years in Texas, visiting Canada and several European countries before his discharge.

Darrin was quiet and gentle, an exceptional mechanic, artist, singer, runner, fantastic business man and an accomplished cook. Growing up he spent many weekends at the Crystal Ball Room roller skating and going to area dances with his family and friends. He began serving Mass at St. Joseph's at the age of ten and continued all through school, helping with weekly Masses, funerals and weddings. Filling in for others any time Father would call



Darrin Joseph Wedige



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for help. He was a member of the West Holt choir, boy's group and the swing choir. He ran cross-country all four years and served as the manager of the boy's basketball team.

After leaving the Army he decided to stay in Texas and made his home in Austin, growing a very large and loyal friend group. Darrin was a wizard at business! He took several of the restaurants and bars he worked for from almost bankrupt and closer, to thriving! During this time, he began having seizures and was no longer able to drive so, he would take the bus to work. When he was later diagnosed with cancer he told his family that he would not allow it to kill him! He endured several surgeries, chemo and radiation, severe infections, several heart

attacks and major weight loss. And still he prevailed!

Spending time with his family and friends was a great joy for him. When his parents went to visit he made sure to introduce them to all of his friends and escorted them around the city, showing them all of the "cool" places in Austin. He greatly enjoyed coming home to Nebraska but, was a die-hard Texas Longhorn fan, much to the chagrin of his little sister, a die-hard Husker fan! He was very outgoing about his beliefs and views and was greatly loved by many.

Darrin was survived by his five brothers: Alan and wife, Coleen, of Kearney, Steven and Charlotte Kloppenborg of Emmet, Todd

and wife, Marilyn, of Lincoln, Michael and wife, Marilyn, of North Richland Hills, TX, and Troy and Kandi Karo of Fort Calhoun. One sister, Jill and husband, Larry Gettert, of O'Neill. Two Aunts, Gladys Cole of O'Neill and Patricia Bouska of Stuart. Many nieces, nephews and cousins. He was preceded in death by his young daughter, his parents, grandparents, many aunts and uncles, and several cousins.

A private family burial will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Atkinson at a later date. Seger Funeral Home of Atkinson in charge of arrangements.

The Eagle San Antonio Finds a Perch

BY: HARDY HABERMAN

Look for the Eagle in San Antonio and you might be confused, but it's there. Just not where you'd expect it.

The Eagle name has long been associated with leather bars since the first Eagle's Nest in New York City. That bar was a metamorphosis of a place known as the Eagle Open Kitchen, formerly a longshoreman's bar on the lower West Side. Shortly after the Stonewall riots it was acquire by a new owner who transformed it into what we now would recognize as a leather bar.

It just popped up on the gay scene.

In November, appropriately on Black Friday, the Eagle SA opened inside Knockout, a bar already known for it's buff and bear crowd. Seems like a natural fit for an Eagle.

"We have not had a leather bar formally years," says John Barker owner of the new Eagle San Antonio. "So many organizations are reaching out to hold events and express their excitement for The Eagle SA. We have received an overwhelming response."

Already the Eagle SA has become the home bar of the San Antonio Leathermen organization and with the bar hosting Gear Night, and Bear Night Out already the future for the new establishment looks bright.

John Barker says, "We are glad to provide the community with a place to gather and are excited to see the community grow!"

The Eagle SA is at 1420 N. Main St. with s side door entrance on Evergreen.



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WHO'S SHADING WHO?

op-ed

BY: D'ANNE WITKOWSKI (DALLAS VOICE)

In the days following the election, some Democratic lawmakers and talking heads were blaming Vice President Kamala Harris's loss on transgender people — or, more specifically, on Democrats being too nice to transgender people.

"The Democrats have to stop pandering to the far left," Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Democrat from New York who won reelection, told The New York Times. "I don't want to discriminate against anybody, but I don't think biological boys should be playing in girls' sports."

Another Democrat, Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, told NYT, "Democrats spend way too much time trying not to offend anyone rather than being brutally honest about the challenges many Americans face. I have two little girls. I don't want them getting run over on a playing field by a male or formerly male athlete. But as a Democrat, I'm supposed to be afraid to say that."

You know, saying, "I don't want to discriminate against anyone, but..." just smacks of true sincerity, especially when you follow it up by targeting an extremely small and specific group of marginalized people.

And no, Rep. Moulton. It's not that you're supposed to be "afraid to say that," it's that you should know better. Again, you're a grown-ass man, and you're blaming Democrats for not viciously demonizing a specific group of kids.

With all due respect to these guys and others who want to blame election loses on trans people: Fuck off.

Anyone who thinks that the Democrats' best chance of success is to become MORE like Republicans is kidding themselves. Too many people already believe that there's no difference between the parties because too many people don't see who sits in the White House as directly impacting their lives.

If you're someone who actually pays attention to politics, you know that, on the whole, Republicans and Democrats are actually quite different when you look at their platforms as a whole. But most people don't pay attention to politics.

And that's something a lot of folks who live and breathe campaigns and elections forget. On Nov. 12, the Times published an opinion piece by Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, a Democrat leading a state that went for Trump by 30 points. Beshear knows that abandoning our "important values and principles" isn't a winning strategy.

"As governor, I have vetoed numerous anti-



Democrats blaming Harris' loss on trans people need to take a better look

LGBTQ and anti-choice bills, yet I still beat Mr. Trump's handpicked candidate last fall," Beshear wrote. "That happened because even if some voters might have disagreed with the vetoes, they knew my focus and effort was on their daily needs and that our gains as a commonwealth would help every single one of our families."

Beshear continued, "Earning trust and showing people you care about them [requires]...that we are not afraid to share our 'why.' For me, my why is my faith, and I share it proudly.

"I vetoed anti-LGBTQ legislation last year because I believe all children are children of God. And whether people agree with my decision, they know why I'm making it. They know where I am coming from."

The reasons why Trump won again are many, and there's no simple solution. Anyone who is telling you that treating trans people like fully human beings sunk the Democrats isn't doing much work to ensure Dems don't lose again.

It's lazy and unproductive.

Erin Reed, a journalist who writes extensively about LGBTQ issues and politics including her own experiences as a transgender woman, published an exceptional piece on her Substack Erin in the Morning on Nov. 6 in which she places this election in historical context and reminds us that even when things are dark, there is some light.

"There's a famous quote: 'The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward.' When I look back, I see that the fight for rights is rarely a steady path forward; it's

a journey filled with turbulence, despair and hope appearing in the most unlikely places and times.

"Today, this truth resonates deeply: this has always been a generational fight — one few of us ever chose but one we've been drafted into nonetheless."

Reed reminds transgender people that their very lives are a testament to forward movement: "The greatest thing you can do is live; continue to exist and continue tending the seeds we're planting today," she writes. "They will grow into trees that will shade those who come after us — and with luck, we may get to enjoy some of that shade ourselves."

And if that takes throwing shade at Democrats who want to throw trans people under the bus, so be it.

Time to get serious

BY: RABBI DR. DENISE L. EGER (DALLAS VOICE)



Rabbi Dr. Denise L. Eger
Special Contributor

It's hard to believe I have now lived in Texas for nearly two years. I moved here from Los Angeles during the last Texas Legislative session. Now a new session is beginning.

And if you thought the proposed anti-LGBTQ legislation and subsequent anti-LGBTQ laws passed were bad in 2023, buckle your seat belts fellow queer Texans. It gets worse during this session in 2025.

The sheer number of proposed bills is mind boggling. Let's face it: We are a small part of the overall population, but we are clearly the large boogeyman in the minds of Texas Republicans.

In the Texas House, there are 44 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced, and, in the Senate, another 14 bills have been introduced for a total of 58. Many bills are designed to further derail everything dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion in the state of Texas. Yet other bills introduced will restrict gender to male and female on government documents.

Many of the bills are related to education; some will require parental consent for sexuality education, and others are a Texas version of Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill. Other proposed legislation further targets trans individuals who may be incarcerated and where they can be housed, while yet other bills deal with funding, code changes and restriction of the sale of hormones and other drugs used for gender reassignment surgery.

In the last legislative session, Equality Texas claims it was able to fight back effectively, thus preventing 96 percent of the anti-LGBTQ legislation. That is an impressive number.

But it doesn't tell the whole story.

Even many of the bills that are introduced and now listed for this session will never even get assigned to a committee. The inner workings of the Texas Legislature will

keep many of these so-called bills from even seeing the light of day.

But some of them will be assigned committees, and some will make it out of committee to the floor to be voted on, passed and signed by the governor to become law. In fact, in the super-majority Republican state of Texas most of those who make it to committee will make it to the floor and many will become law.

And it is here that Equality Texas must do a better job.

During the last session Equality Texas did our community a great disservice, in my opinion.

They went for street theater rather than progress.

While street theater and protest have an important role to play, it rarely changes minds of politicians. It's red meat for your base and for maybe some allies, but the real art of politics and the real science of changing minds is done slowly by engaging in conversation, in appearing before committees and in choosing wisely who carries those messages.

I appreciate a good drag show. I love it, actually, and our community's drag

performers have done some heavy lifting — especially when their careers and dignity were attacked in the last session.

But also — and this is not a binary — we need to be swarming the legislature with everyday LGBTQ folks, making appointments with our legislators and presenting the varied face of our community. We must meet with them even if they oppose us — because that is how politics is done.

The Republican and Democratic legislators must see those of us who are teachers, business owners, parents, grandparents, preachers, office workers and laborers.

We in the LGBTQ community also must help Equality Texas understand that sometimes you must do things incrementally. In a state like Texas, where there is a supermajority of Republicans who oppose any advances of our liberty, we must not just say, "It's all or nothing," tilting at windmills.

Instead we must build, often incrementally, which means sometimes we as a community will lose. But we will also build, incrementally, our successes.

If Equality Texas wants to succeed, I say leave the street theater outside the Capitol. Save it for a rally. But inside, let's make real progress

in having them getting to know us, see us as their neighbors, teachers, preachers, bosses, employees and constituents.

I know I'm relatively new to Texas. But I came here after 44 years in leadership of the LGBTQ Jewish community of Los Angeles. I have done my share of dying in the streets to raise awareness for HIV/AIDS, getting arrested for our civil rights, organizing and fighting for marriage equality and against "Don't Ask Don't Tell," fighting heinous anti-LGBTQ bills and propositions in California and nationally.

I have worked with both sides of the aisle toward our liberation — methodically and, yes, talking to people who don't want me to breathe or succeed in life. We must engage the other side rationally, even when they are not rational.

The time has come for Equality Texas to stop with the theatrics and do the serious work of lobbying and enacting a real plan for our liberty and freedom and civil rights.

Rabbi Dr. Denise L. Eger, a resident of Austin, is a noted human rights and LGBTQ activist, author and executive coach. She is the founding rabbi emerita of Congregation Kol Ami in West Hollywood, Calif.

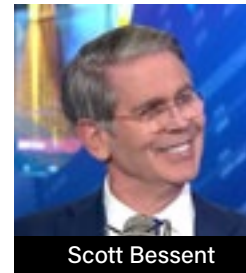


Op-ed

You won't believe these 10 LGBTQ+ figures who have endorsed Donald Trump

BY: IAN HELMS & DANIEL VILLAREAL (LGBTQ NATION)

While former President Donald Trump's policies and rhetoric have regularly antagonized the LGBTQ+ community, a small but vocal contingent of LGBTQ+ individuals have publicly supported the former president nonetheless, citing reasons that range from economic policies to personal admiration for his stance against political correctness. These endorsements challenge the assumption that LGBTQ+ voters are universally aligned with progressive politics, highlighting the diversity of political thought (and prejudices) within the community. Below are 10 LGBTQ+ public figures who have endorsed Trump, each with a unique relationship to him, ranging from financial backing to active participation in his campaigns.



Scott Bessent

Scott Bessent, an openly gay American investor and founder of Key Square Group, has a long history of political involvement, donating an estimated \$10 million to \$15 million to Republicans. He is reportedly on Trump's shortlist for Treasury secretary. The Wall Street Journal reported.

Bessent literally ran to join Trump onstage at an August 14 rally in Asheville, North Carolina, after Trump called him "one of the most brilliant men on Wall Street." In his brief comments, Bessent said, "Look, this is a Trump economy. This is a Trump stock market," implying that the economy is thriving in anticipation of Trump winning in November.

"At the end of the day, Donald Trump wants to have a good economy, and he won't do anything to take the economy off the cliff," Bessent told Barrons.

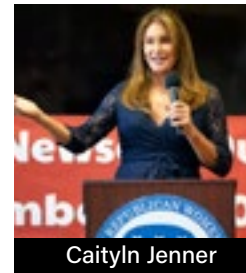


Sophia Hutchins

Sophia Hutchins is the young transgender manager of right-wing trans conservative Caitlyn Jenner. Hutchins has distanced herself from the broader LGBTQ+ community, describing herself as a proud Roman Catholic and MAGA conservative.

Hutchins has worked for the transphobic right-wing media outlet Fox News and is a board member of the Log Cabin Republicans, a self-proclaimed group for LGBTQ+ conservatives that actively opposes transgender civil rights.

Sophia endorsed Trump during the 2023 Republican primaries and attended the victory celebration after he won the January 15 Iowa caucuses, taking photos with some of Trump's inner circle.



Caitlyn Jenner

Caitlyn Jenner, who came out as transgender in 2015, is an American media personality and former Olympic gold medalist who nonetheless opposes allowing trans athletes to partake in competitive sports.

Though she claimed to vote for Trump in the 2016 presidential election, that may have been a lie. In October 2018, she withdrew her support of Trump — saying he "relentlessly attacked" the trans community by rolling back protections for trans students and banning trans people from the U.S. military.

"I have gotten more flak for being a conservative Republican than I have for being trans," the transgender millionaire said. In 2021, she said, "Obviously I would support" Trump's 2024 presidential campaign. In a May 1 Instagram post, Jenner endorsed Trump, writing, "We had world peace, unity, and law and order under President Trump!"

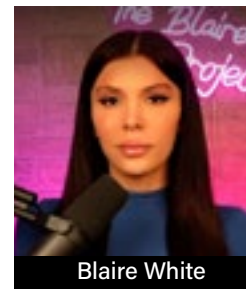


Azealia Banks

In November 2023, bisexual rapper Azealia Banks endorsed Trump because voting for President Joe Biden, she said, was "elder abuse." She has continued to support Trump even after Biden dropped out of the presidential race.

When she endorsed Trump, she said she thinks he's "funny," said she'll be voting for him in 2024, and added, "He's been through how many bankruptcies? How many wives? How many television shows? Seriously, nothing can take him down."

Banks has called gay men "f****" in the past and has made disparaging comments about transgender people, said she feels "way safer" in red states than in blue states because more people have guns. She used to live in California and now lives in Florida. In July 2024, she was spotted at a Trump rally in Miami, Florida.



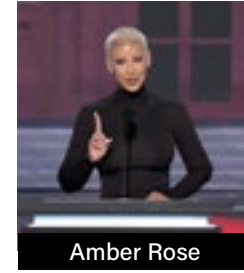
Blaire White

Blaire White — a conservative transgender YouTuber and political commentator with over 1.5 million YouTube followers and over 556,000 Instagram followers — told The Hill in August 2024, "There's a million reasons why I'm supporting Donald Trump in this election." She said one of the biggest reasons she has endorsed Trump is to oppose the media's support of his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris.

"We have an entirety of the corporate press that's stacked against Donald Trump," she said. "Just on principle ... I don't want to live in a world where we have the media completely constructing a reality and setting the window of accepted thought. So for me, a vote for Trump is a vote just against the media."

White gained notoriety in November 2017 when she recorded an assault she experienced after crossing a police line meant to separate Trump supporters from anti-Trump protestors in Los Angeles, California. Before this, she became notorious for her right-leaning YouTube videos criticizing feminists, "social justice warriors," the media, as well as other trans or gender-nonconforming people, Newsweek reported. She considers gender-affirming care for minors as a form of child abuse.

news



Amber Rose

Amber Rose, a bisexual model and media personality who once organized a massive SlutWalk through New York City as a protest against misogynist street harassment, endorsed Trump via Instagram in May 2024. She posted a picture featuring herself, Trump, and former First Lady Melania Trump at a black-tie fundraiser with the caption, "Trump 2024 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸."

Rose spoke in support of Trump on July 15 at the Republican National Convention (RNC). There, she claimed supporters of former President Donald Trump "don't care if you're Black, white, gay, or straight — it's all love."

"The left told me to hate Trump and even worse, to hate the other side, the people who support him," Rose said in her RNC speech. "When you cut through the lies, you realize the truth: American families were better when Donald Trump was president. We were safer, wealthier, and stronger. A vote for Donald Trump is a vote to put money back in our pockets and good food on our kids' plates."

Rose's appearance at the RNC and endorsement of Trump shocked many, especially since Trump has repeatedly advocated against women's bodily autonomy as well as racial inclusivity and LGBTQ+ rights.

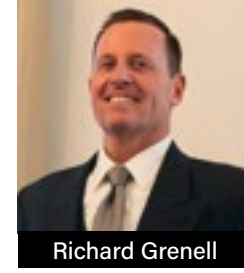


Lady Gaga

Lady Gaga, known onstage as Ryan Woods, is a gay, Mormon conservative drag performer who has used his platform to endorse Trump and support Republican values.

Woods came up with his MAGA-themed creation in 2019 and has been ostracized by his local Salt Lake City drag community. In March, Lady Gaga took selfies with attendees of the far-right CPAC conference. She calls herself a "costume artist" these days, and claims that drag performers "destroyed their credibility with predatory filth." Her views coincide with right-wing figures who accuse drag queens of "sexualizing" kids.

She attended Donald Trump's Million Man March in December 2020, where she spoke to the crowd of election deniers on the Washington Mall, weeks before the January 6, 2021 riots at the U.S. Capitol. Dozens of white nationalists screamed abuse at her during her Million Man speech.



Richard Grenell

Richard Grenell made history as the first openly gay man to serve in a U.S. Cabinet position when he was appointed Acting Director of National Intelligence under Donald Trump. Though Grenell initially described Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign as "unserious" and "dangerous," he deleted all his social media criticisms of Trump and began praising him when Trump won the Republican nomination.

Although Grenell claimed in August 2020 that "President Trump is the most pro-gay president in American history," nothing backs up that claim. During his time in the Trump administration, Grenell said he worked with Trump on a campaign to end the criminalization of homosexuality around the world, but the campaign seemingly accomplished nothing as Trump officials said that pressuring foreign countries to repeal their anti-LGBTQ+ laws would violate "religious freedom." Grenell similarly opposes the Equality Act, legislation that would provide federal LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination protections, claiming it would be an attack on religion.

"Donald Trump doesn't care if you're gay or straight, Black, brown or white, or what gender you are," Grenell said as the only out gay person to speak at the Republican National Convention. His claim stood in strong contrast to the other RNC speakers who repeatedly attacked many people's genders. "He knows that we are all Americans and that it's time to put America first," Grenell added.



Dave Rubin

Dave Rubin, a gay political commentator and former progressive who was recently accused of being paid well to push Russian propaganda online (allegations he has denied), said he voted for Trump in 2020 because of Trump's opposition to the "woke left" and critical race theory in schools and government.

"But, I see Trump, basically, as the last bulwark to stop the radical left," Rubin told Fox and Friends in late October 2020, adding, "This isn't just a counter vote, I think Donald Trump has actually done a lot of good."

Along with his husband, Rubin is expecting children via surrogacy and has used his platform to champion conservative values, often aligning with Trump's rhetoric on free speech and social issues, including his support of "Don't Say Gay" legislation banning LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum in schools.

"If I found out a teacher talked to my 6-year-old about gender or sexuality, I might kill that person," Rubin said on the September 15, 2022 edition of The Rubin Report streamed on YouTube.



Tammy Bruce

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Spilling Tea with Kelly Kline

BY: KELLY KLINE



Marilyn Williams

1. Tell us about you please?

My name is Marilyn Williams, I am 30 years old and have been performing for almost 10 years. I am a proud trans latina woman. I'm someone who has a love for many things in life. Music, make up, fashion/ sewing, etc. I try and live my life as authentically as I can while being unapologetic for it.

2. Tell me about your title of Miss Austin Pride and why is it important?

As the current reigning, I get to represent our community to the city of Austin alongside with the Austin Pride court, and showcase ourselves as entertainers. This title means a lot to me because with this platform I want to advocate for the trans community, but also for those who live with HIV. To end the stigma and promote the campaign of U=U (undetectable = untransmittable). You can live a long and healthy life just by taking the recommended medication you need, and for everyone to KNOW THERE STATUS! get tested every 3 months. If you're not on prep but want to make sure you're able to have fun without having any worry of potentially being exposed. Start Prep take that extra step to protect yourself.

3. Tell us about working at Kind clinic?

I have been working there coming up on 3 years now. I started off working as a medical receptionist, but now work as a medical assistant after wanting to learn more in what we specialize in, develop skills, and understand the healthcare

industry a bit more. This has truly been a great and rewarding experience, and to top it all off the medical staff that I work with make the job just as amazing and are the reason I live my job. We are a great team who care for every patient that is in need whether it's Prep, STI, Gender Affirming, or HIV care.

4. What are some of your favorite drag memories?

Any pageant I've done have been great to think and look back on. I've learned from each one to better myself as an entertainer. Getting to tour in the USofA Newcomer Top 5 tour will always be something that I'm grateful to have experienced and had the opportunity to do, but nothing takes the cake then looking back on the times I had when I first started doing drag and competed in a local bar competition called "Drag Survivor" to see me then and look now at the entertainer I've become is truly eye opening. I thank that competition for help starting my drag career.

5. What do you think our community needs to do to thrive during this political climate?

We are seeing with these new laws being set into place that are specifically targeting the LGBTQIA+ can be something for all of us to be stressed and worry about. As cliché as it may sound. The best the thing to do is to support one another in these tough times and be there for one another, but in order for that to really happen I think something that needs to be resolved is the strain we have within the community where even though we are all one. We still end up dividing ourselves and at times tear one another down to feel superior (I say this from my perspective). Once we have truly acknowledged the problem and can come together to resolve this. There is nothing we can't withstand that is thrown at our direction together.

6. What do you do for self care?

I'm a simple girl. The things that I enjoy treating myself to are getting my nails re-sharpened and done, a pedicure, and from time to time buying myself a new handbag or some new clothes,

7. In your opinion what do you feel is an area of opportunity in our community?

Something that can change in my opinion is some of the bars in Austin requiring when there is a show that they only want us to perform high energy, upbeat songs. That can be nice but it also gets boring at times. Let the girls who want to do a slow number do it. It's changes up the mood and energy in between entertainers when they watch something different instead of just constantly

seeing everyone split, kick, or death drop. Not saying there isn't anything wrong with any of the of course. I'm not ashamed to say that I like to park and bark. I get to be more engaging with the audience, sometimes set the mood. Everyone should be allowed to perform what they want to perform.

8. Do you feel that it is important for businesses to support trans individuals and why?

It absolutely is! It lets us know that you are inclusive and supporter of not only the trans community but overall the entire LGBTQIA+ community it shows you are a safe space for us whether you are a small local business or larger business. We will want to come back and continue supporting them plus we can always mention/ recommend them to other within the community to help build up there clientele or foot traffic. When you have our backs, we got yours.

9. What can we expect from you in the next 5 years?

Hopefully still performing! Even though I don't perform a lot it's only because I've shifted my focus to my work in the medical field. It's been a thought only in my head so far, but have had the aspiration to want to go to school to become a registered nurse (still only a thought but who knows). I love drag, the art, and performing. I know it will always be there for me, and who knows also still do a little pageant here and there from time to time.

10. I know that you are a very viable person in our community what advice do you have for someone who might want to do drag or volunteer their time with Kind Clinic?

For those who want to do drag my answer would be. GO FOR IT! but the only thing I'd say is, and this is not to discourage anyone but if you're wanting to do this. Do it for the right reason(s) not just because it's popular right now for example "Rupauls Drag Race". For me it was my saving grace, my light at the end of tunnel when I was going through some tough struggles at the time.

If you're someone who has a sense of just wanting to help or just wanting to give back to the community. Please come and volunteer, we have a great volunteer co-ordinator that makes you feel right at home and will greet you with open arms. We appreciate any help that is given to us and the work you do will feel absolutely rewarding.

11. What events do you have coming up in the next few months?

Right now I think the 2 significant events the



Kelly Kline

I have coming up is the Miss Austin Sweetheart pageant that I co-promote along with Diamond Dior Davenport. This is year 4 for us and each year it has gotten better and better, and we hope this year is no exception. Aside from that the only other thing I look forward to is my step down as Miss Austin Pride, and getting to pass it along to the next incredible entertainer that is deserving of the opportunity.

12. The world is very scary right now, what words of advice do you have for someone who doesn't have a supportive family or group of friends?

Find something that you'll love to do..... it may sound silly, but when you've found that thing that brings you happiness or helps you feel at ease, gives you comfort, makes you want to better yourself in that craft, and gives you that drive and determination.

LEARN IT! It will be your saving grace, your light at the end of the tunnel. It truly helps when it's come to staying optimistic and giving you that confidence you need.



XoXo Maxine

Cathedral of Hope celebrates Drag Sunday

BY: PETER W. PARKER

In an act of defiance and response to the Lieutenant Governor's priority bill SB 18 to ban drag performance along with numerous bills introduced into the Texas House that further attack drag performers and transgender people, Cathedral of Hope will host its second Celebrating Drag Sunday on Sunday, Feb. 16 at its 8.30 a.m. and 10 a.m. services. During the services, they will bless and affirm those who use drag as an art form and affirm their transgender siblings made in the image of God.

In a statement, the church acknowledged, "We understand that gender and gender identity has been highlighted in recent weeks. We understand that there is a difference between drag as an art form and transgender as an identity. However, these are often conflated and politicized, often determined as sin by Christianity. Our aim is to lift up these communities as a part of the LGBTQ+ community and their impact on our movement."

"We do not believe that God makes mistakes", said the Rev. Dr. Neil G Thomas, senior minister of Cathedral of Hope UCC. "God is beyond gender and invites us to bring our whole selves into the world to make it a better place. Drag has a long history in our community and targeting them will be resisted. As a community of faith, we stand with our drag and transgender community. Using faith language as a mandate for these targeted attacks is a travesty and an infringement of civil liberties."

The guest preacher will be the Rev. Brooke Dooley, associate pastor for youth and young adults at Friends Congregational Church in College Station and youth director for the South-Central Conference of the United Church of Christ. Dooley is also known as Brooke Bottom, a well-known drag king performer throughout the DFW region.



TEXAS BEAR ROUND-UP™ 29
BEARS IN WONDERLAND

Registration

March 13-16, 2025
Hyatt Regency | Dallas, Texas | Bear Dance

WWW.TBRU.ORG

LESLIE Q&A

Leslie sat down with Peter N, chair of Austin Roundup, a 12-step recovery conference for LGBTQ+ people here in Austin. They host sober events throughout the year for the community and bring together different 12-step fellowships from around town. Their tentpole fundraiser is a drag show with dancing, lip-syncing, and this year, horror icons from throughout the ages.

LESLIE: What inspired Austin Roundup to partner with ARU Drag Productions for "ICONIC"?

Austin Roundup (AR): We've always believed in the power of art and community to bring people together, and ARU Drag Productions shares that vision. Their creativity, energy, and commitment to celebrating LGBTQ+ culture make them the perfect partners for an event that not only entertains but also uplifts and supports the recovery community.

LESLIE: How does "ICONIC" align with the mission of Austin Roundup?

AR: Our mission is to provide resources, support, and community for LGBTQ+ individuals in 12-step recovery programs. "ICONIC" aligns beautifully with that mission by celebrating the resilience, individuality, and authenticity of legendary figures, qualities that resonate deeply with those on a recovery journey.

LESLIE: What impact will the proceeds from "ICONIC" have on Austin Roundup's initiatives?

AR: Every ticket purchased for "ICONIC" helps us fund our annual conference, host events, and create safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery. The proceeds ensure we can continue providing workshops, meetings, and retreats that foster healing, connection, and hope for those who need it most.

LESLIE: What can attendees expect from the event, and why is it important for the community to support it?

THE IRON BEAR
★ AUSTIN, TEXAS ★

CELEBRATING
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ANNIVERSARY HAPPY HOUR
3 TO 7PM | \$2.50 WELLS | \$3 DOMESTIC BOTTLES

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AR: Attendees will experience an unforgettable night of dazzling performances, heartfelt tributes, and vibrant celebration—all while contributing to a vital cause. By supporting "ICONIC," the community not only enjoys incredible entertainment but also becomes part of a movement that empowers individuals in recovery to thrive.

LESLIE: How does "ICONIC" reflect the spirit of Austin's LGBTQ+ recovery community?

AR: "ICONIC" is a perfect reflection of the strength, creativity, and inclusivity that define Austin's LGBTQ+ recovery community. It's about honoring the icons who paved the way for self-expression and showing that recovery

is a journey of reclaiming your identity and embracing who you truly are.

LESLIE: What message do you hope resonates with attendees of "ICONIC"?

AR: We hope attendees leave with a deeper understanding of the importance of recovery and the impact their support has on the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. "ICONIC" is a celebration of resilience and transformation, both in the lives of the icons we honor and in the recovery journeys of those we serve.

LESLIE: What are Austin Roundup's goals for the future, and how can the community get involved?

AR: Our goal is to expand our reach and

continue providing essential resources for LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery. Community involvement is key—whether it's attending events like "ICONIC," volunteering, or donating. Together, we can create a stronger, more supportive environment for those in recovery.

"ICONIC" premieres on April 4 and 5 at the Dougherty Arts Center Theater. All proceeds go to Austin Roundup to support LGBTQ+ recovery initiatives. Join us for a night of unforgettable performances while making a meaningful difference. For tickets and more information, visit AustinRoundup.org.

INAUGURAL PRIDE NIGHT AT RODEO AUSTIN

BY: TODD GARETT

"Out at the Rodeo" Grassroots Pride Night at Rodeo Austin Friday, March 21, 2025

Austin, TX - The United Court of Austin (UCA) is proud to announce the inaugural "Out at the Rodeo" Grassroots Pride Night, set to take place on Friday, March 21, 2025, at Rodeo Austin. This historic event will feature all the excitement of the rodeo, the lively atmosphere of the fair, and a special concert by the acclaimed Randy Rogers Band.

Rodeo Austin, known for its authentic Texas charm and thrilling entertainment for the past 87 years, does not host themed nights. Recognizing an opportunity to celebrate inclusivity and diversity, the United Court of Austin took the steer by the horns to organize this groundbreaking Pride Night.

The initiative is spearheaded by Todd Garrett, Emperor XXX of Austin, a retired rodeo competitor who now serves as a beloved rodeo announcer. With his unique perspective and passion for both the rodeo and LGBTQ+ communities, Garrett brings a wealth of experience and heart to this event.

"This is more than just a rodeo—it's a celebration of who we are as a community," said Garrett. "Out at the Rodeo is about showcasing the vibrant diversity of Austin while honoring the traditions that make Texas great. Whether you're a long-time rodeo fan or a first-timer, everyone is welcome to join the celebration."

The evening's festivities will include:

- **The Fair:** Fun and festivities for all ages, with food, games, and entertainment.
- **The Rodeo:** Thrilling events that showcase the grit, skill, and tradition of Texas rodeo.
- **Randy Rogers Band Concert:** A high-energy performance by one of Texas' most beloved country music acts.

"Out at the Rodeo" is the perfect blend of tradition and inclusivity, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate unity and pride.

Tickets for "Out at the Rodeo" on March 21, 2025, are available through Rodeo Austin's official website www.rodeoaustin.com. Don't miss this historic night of fun, community, and music! You can also visit the Facebook event page of the United Court of Austin for more information.



LGBTQ+ EVENTS, BARS AND PARTIES AROUND AUSTIN

Reach out to us if you have an event you'd like listed. carolinelsavoie@gmail.com

IRON BEAR

301 W. Sixth St., Austin, TX 78701
Sundays: Drag Brunch from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Planet Fabulous Karaoke 9 p.m.
Sunday Funday: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Monday: Musical Mondays at 10 p.m. Happy Hour All Night
Thursday: Unbearable first Thursday, every other week.
Friday: Country Night every first Friday of the month 9 p.m. to close.
Saturday: Underwear Night every other week 9 p.m. to close.

RAIN ON 4TH

217 W. Fourth St., Austin, TX 78701
Sunday: Sunday Funday 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Thursday: Vegas Backyard Bingo 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Friday: Come Dance the Night Away.
Saturday: Body Beautiful hosted by Rachel Mykels at 10 p.m.

SECOND SUNDAY IN AUSTIN

Join Marty Bender and a group of Texas Friends

who get together on every second Sunday of every month brunch and drinks. They meet at 3 p.m. for a few hours of fellowship. Contact Marty Bender or the group at Second Sunday in Austin on Facebook.

OILCAN HARRY'S

211 W. Fourth St., Austin, TX 78701
Sunday afternoon: Join us every Sunday starting at 4 p.m. for TDRL: Total Drag Request Live hosted by Celia Light and; guests. It's say-what-you-want Sundays, a drag show where the audience gets to choose what goes down! Buy a drink, request a song - it's that easy! DeeGee Rey and Celia Light are ready to entertain and make sure that your Sunday Funday is the best!
Sunday night: Welcome to THE DRAG IS RIGHT - a weekly show full of jokes, hijinks, and drag-ified versions of your favorite game show games, hosted by Sir Maxim and Iggy Bank. And at this show, YOU are the contestants! Tune in on Sundays at 6 p.m. to end your weekend right!
Thursday: Thursdays are a RIOT with host Riot Girl and cast Venus Rising and; Titty Androgynous!
Join them every Thursday night starting at 8 p.m. for RIOT FAIR - a drag spectacular that will bring down the house! Join us every Thursday at midnight for Spank Bank, Austin's hottest all-trans, sex-positive drag show hosted by the tantalizing Iggy Bank at Oilcan Harry's! Embrace the celebration of trans joy and self-expression as we delve into the world of sex and kink, all with style and grace. Featuring the incredible talents of Ryan and Jenna Talia, this is a night you won't want to miss. Mark your calendars, tell your friends

and your friends with benefits, and let's make Thursday nights unforgettable!
Friday: Host Celia Light along with Salem Ofax and; Harlot are putting the YAY in FriYAY! Join them every Friday night starting at 10:30 p.m. for Whipped - the definition of sexy, sickening and stupid!
Saturdays: Got a Late Night appetite for Drag? We've got a midnight snack just for you. If you're ready to drink, dance and; sing your face off to some of your favorite songs, then Oilcan Harry's is the place to be! Ritzy Bitz and company stun, dazzle, delight and; surprise with The Late, Late, Late Show!

AUSTIN EAGLE

8201 Cross Park Dr. Suite B2, Austin, TX 78754
Tuesdays: Two Steppin' Taco Tuesdays - 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Country night - Free dance lessons with Jay Lykel and James Heath 8 p.m. to close
Wednesdays: Steak Night 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Karaoke - 9 p.m. to close
Kennel Karaoke - Every third Wednesday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Fridays: Sports Gear Night, first Friday from 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Leather and Fetish, second Friday
Underwear Night, last Friday
Onyx Pearls Bar Night, 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Saturdays: Austin Gears Gear Night, every first Saturday from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Dirty Divas, every second Saturday
The Foundry Gear Night, third Saturdays from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Otter Space with DJ Mark Irwin, every fourth Saturday from 10:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sundays: weekly brunch
Special Events:
Oct. 27: Slut Super Heroes vs Slut Villains from 9:45 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Oct. 28: Halloween Party from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.
HALCYON COFFEE SHOP
218 W. Fourth St., Austin, TX 78701
Happiest Hours: Monday through Friday 4 p.m. - 8 p.m., all day Sunday
\$2.5 Wells and Domestic
Reverse Happy Hour: Monday 12 a.m. - Close
Tuesdays: World Music
Thursdays: Live Music At 6 p.m.
Saturdays: Drag Brunch

HIGHLAND LOUNGE

404 Colorado St., Austin, TX 78701
Fridays: Re-tucked Drag Show from 11 p.m. to 3:30 a.m.
Saturdays: Dance Party with DJ Eman Domi from 9:30 p.m. to 3:30 a.m.
Oct. 28: Yaas Witch! Halloween Bash ft. Laganja Estranga
Oct. 29: Uncanny Attractions Presents: Drags and Dropkicks, doors open at 5 p.m.

events

RUTZ NUTZ

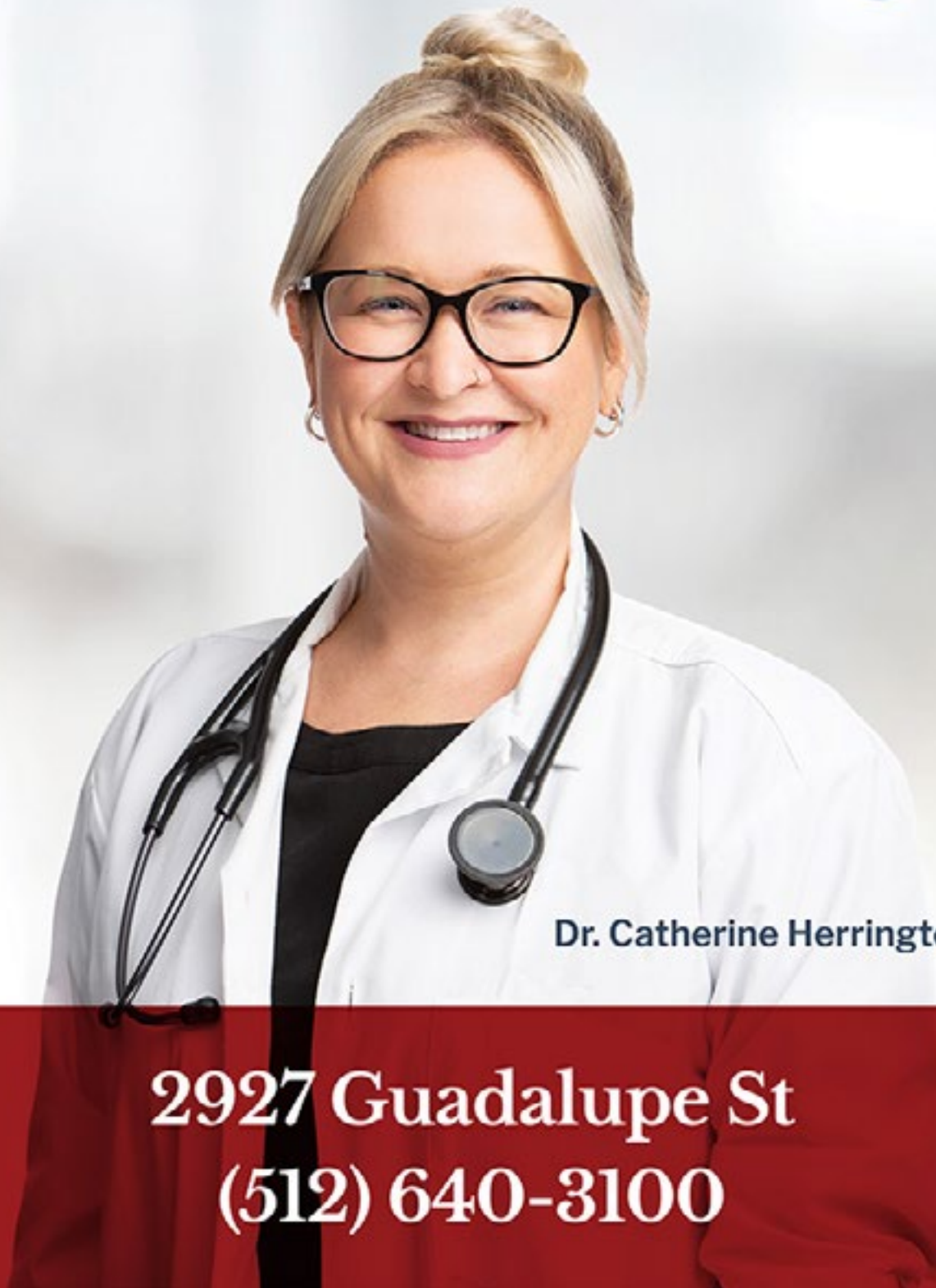
MONTHLY LEVITY FROM ARTIST, CHRIS RUTZ

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Dr. Catherine Herrington, MD

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