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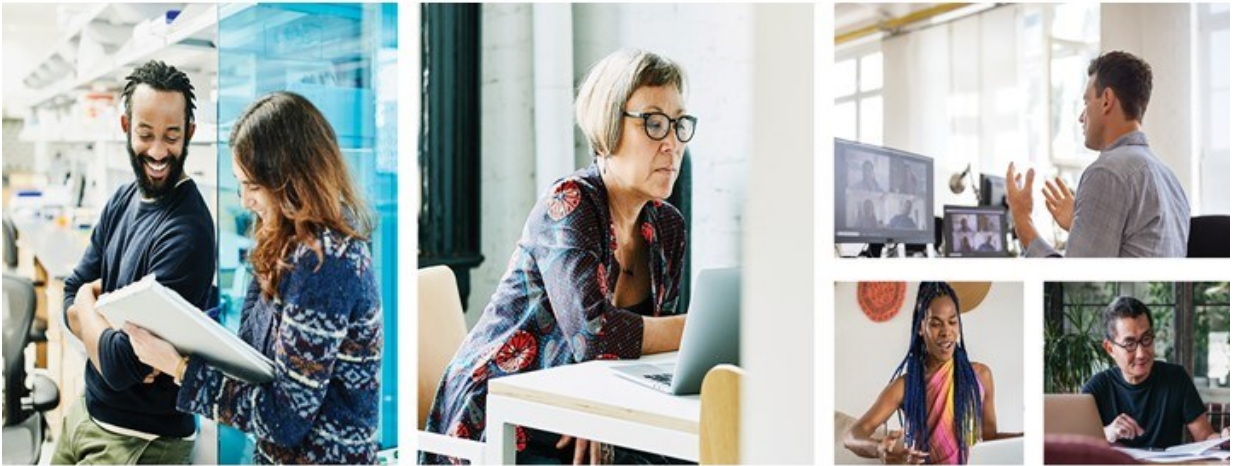




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Jax Gay Magazine is published every first Friday of the month (12 issues/year).

David Vandygriff
Chief Executive Officer

ADMINISTRATION

VP-Development | Adam Plante, Esq.
Business Manager | Carlos Martinez
Administrative Assistant | Jean Joshlin

ART & DESIGN

Art Director | Brandon Massengill
Designer | Michael Swartz

ADVERTISING

Account Executives
James Eddy | 904.349.5562
Will Bray-Kelly | 904.402.5995

NATIONAL ADVERTISING

Rivendell Media 908.232.2021 Ext. 200

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Brenda Wilson | Daniel Galbraith
Desmond Wilkerson | Joey Amato
Penelope Stricklin | David Vandygriff
Jennifer Williams | Janet Livingston
Jacqui Palumbo | Robert Conner
Drew Griffin | David Reimer

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Randy Lesson | Renee Parenteu
David Vandygriff

CELEBRITY HOST

Karrissa Wade | Brittany Moore
Jordyn Sinclair | Diva Cliché

LOGISTICS

Adrian Bray-Kelly

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HOW TO CONTACT US

MAIN OFFICE

664 Bridal Ave.
Jacksonville, FL 32205
Phone 904.900.8027
info@jaxgaymag.com

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WHO WE ARE

Jax Gay Inc. is a Community Marketing and Events organization incorporating Jax Gay Magazine, Rainbow Events, and Drag Queen Aholic.

Our mission as a 502(c)3 non-profit is to promote North Florida and especially in Jacksonville, as a welcoming LGBTQ+ destination through marketing and events. Jax Gay produces many events a year, including Jax Equality Festival in Jacksonville. Other events include the Rainbow Awards Show, White Party, Big Gay Picnic, Taste of Pride and Red Party. Visit www.JaxGayMag.com for more information.

Jax Gay Inc. also plans to launch our Jax Event Center & LGBTQ+ Art Gallery in Fall of 2023.

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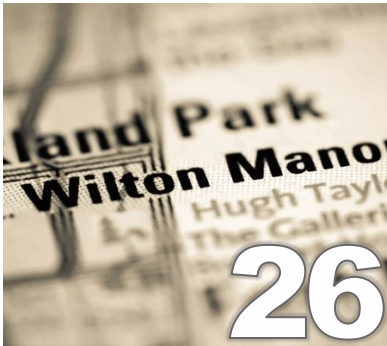
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Cover

Jax Gay's WOW GIFTS Guide
By Melinda Jefferies



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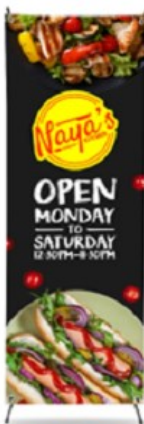
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News & Politics



Sexual Assault, Secret Throuple: Allegations Against Florida GOP Power Couple

By David Vandygriff

Christian Ziegler, the Florida GOP chairman and husband of Bridget Ziegler, co-founder of the conservative anti-LGBTQ+ Moms for Liberty group, is under criminal investigation after a sexual battery complaint was filed against him.

This news, reported by the Florida Center for Government Accountability, adds a layer of controversy to the Zieglers, who are prominent in GOP politics.

The group obtained a police report that outlines that the alleged incident occurred on October 2 at the complainant's home in Sarasota. The report was filed on October 4 with the Sarasota Police Department.

The case is complicated by reports of a previously consensual three-way relationship between the woman and both Zieglers, although the specific incident in question allegedly happened in Bridget Ziegler's absence. Investigators have executed a search warrant on Christian Ziegler's phone and are conducting a forensic analysis. There are also allegations of him secretly recording sexual encounters with the

complainant.

No charges have been filed in the case, and attempts to contact the Zieglers for comments have been unreturned.

The Zieglers are prominent figures in Florida's Republican Party, with Christian Ziegler known for his family values platform and Bridget Ziegler gaining recognition for her involvement in the conservative education agenda, including the "don't say gay" law and her stance against critical race theory in schools.

Alejandra Caraballo, an instructor at Harvard Cyberlaw Clinic, commented about the gobsmacking hypocrisy on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Bridget Ziegler, a Moms for Liberty co-founder and major proponent of 'Don't Say Gay', is a closeted bisexual who has threesomes with her husband. The level of hypocrisy here is stunning."

Further complicating the public image of Moms for Liberty, JaxGayMag reported earlier in November that the group is facing challenges due to its members' affiliations with the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist

militant group. Following the revelation of these ties, Moms for Liberty removed two of its chapter chairs. These actions reflect the organization's struggle to maintain its public reputation amidst allegations of extremism and its association with far-right groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated Moms for Liberty as an anti-government hate group.

Moms for Liberty, known for its advocacy in local school board elections and support for book bans, has recently faced significant electoral setbacks across the United States. This rebuke suggests a growing public resistance to the group's controversial stances and affiliations.

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OUT & HEALTH

My Christmas Gift to Myself: Pride
By Charles Bennett



This Christmas I introduced my boyfriend to my family. It was one of the greatest gifts I ever gave myself. It was the gift of demanding to be seen by the people whom I love in the fullness of myself. It was the gift of forcing my worlds into collision and therefore into singularity. It was the gift of living in truth and walking in freedom.

My extended family has developed the tradition of gathering to celebrate Christmas the week before so that everyone can be home with core family on the actual day. This also has the benefit of allowing people to travel when the roads and airports are less crowded and to go out to activities together when bars, restaurants and entertainment venues are still open.

The celebration location floats around from family member to family member. This year was my first hosting at my home in Atlanta and only my second time ever hosting. When I lived in New York, it was simply too far to ask the whole family to travel, almost all of whom still live in the South.

decided that if my family was coming to my house, they were going to meet the person I was dating. Simple as that.

But to me, that wasn't so simple. I had never had the sense that they were open to queerness. In fact, I thought them hostile to it. My mother was not happy about "Fire Shut Up in My Bones," the memoir I published in 2014, in which I came out to the world as bisexual. She has never called the book by its title. On the few times she has referred to it, she has done so by saying, "You know, that book you wrote."

When it was developed into an opera, only one of my four brothers came to see it. My mother did not, although she did go to see the movie theater showing of it. She didn't tell me what she thought.

But one of my brothers died a few years ago, and that event has completely changed me. I now start every decision with a question: If not now, when? His death has infused my living with urgency and clarity. There is no time or space for fear or indecision. There is no time or space for wasted days and wasted years.

I must live — now, fully,

ferociously. I had to stop being self-destructive and live in self-care and self-forgiveness. In my case, it is not hyperbolic to say that my brother's death not only changed my life but saved it.

I thought I was being rejected, and that plunged me into darkness. When my brother passed and moved into the light, I chose the light.

Part of choosing the light was choosing to shine it into all of my corners, to make sure that all the people I loved knew whom I loved and how I loved.

My boyfriend is a dancer and choreographer. He was in a show in California the day my family arrived, but he took an early flight the next day so that he could meet them before they left. My family had no idea that he would be there. Beyond my children and their cousins, I wasn't even sure they knew he existed.

For two days before they met, I had terrible tension headaches. But I just took headache medicine and told myself that this was a thing that had to be done.

That Saturday, he walked into my place with my entire family there, and I reflexively

introduced him with a joke: "Everyone, this is my boyfriend. He and I have been dating for two and a half years. If anyone is shocked by that, take a deep breath and swallow hard. You'll get over it."

My family responded the way I should have expected them to: They didn't skip a beat. They embraced him and fixed him a plate and shared love and laughter. My youngest son asked him with a wry smile, "Do you need me to make you a drink?" My brothers began to ask him about himself and his work.

Later we all biked the BeltLine in Atlanta (even though it was cold), and that night, we went bowling. More love and laughter.

In the abstract, my family may have disapproved of this supposed lifestyle, but when confronted with the truth of my life and a flesh-and-blood

person I loved, they responded with love because they loved me.

I should have been elated by all of this, but I was enveloped by an enormous sense of regret. I had waited and worried all this time. There were years, decades, of sadness and pain that could have been avoided. I have talked and written about the importance of visibility, but I have had to learn that lesson over and over. I have learned that coming out is not for me a one-time event but a series of events.

I was hesitant to write this column. I said to myself: Who cares about the coming-out journey of a middle-aged man in an era when children come out before their teens? But I was reminded of what I learned when I wrote my book: I am not alone. There are others out there with similar stories,

thinking that they are alone.

To them, the late-in-lifers, I give the gift of being seen and reflected. I give this story and hope that it helps. I give the gift of permission that I gave to myself and that my deceased brother gave to me. Merry Christmas.

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“The Crown” Leaves Out Most Of Princess Diana’s AIDS Work

By Rebecca Hutchinson



If you happen to be a Royals watcher, a Princess Diana obsessive, or just a fan of lavish prestige TV soap operas, by now you’ve likely binged the first four episodes of season six of Netflix’s *The Crown*. The streamer is releasing the show’s final season in two parts, and this first batch of episodes, which dropped November 16, narrows its focus to the weeks in the summer of 1997 leading up to and immediately following the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

That’s something of a departure for the series, which in seasons past has tended to devote only a single episode to specific flashpoints during the reign of Elizabeth II (played in Season 6 by Imelda Staunton). And yet, of all the crises that rocked the monarchy over the six decades covered by the series up to this point, none was quite as seismic, as culturally omnipresent, or as compulsively watchable as Diana. It makes sense then that *The Crown* would give her a proper send-off.

But as the series says goodbye

to the late Princess of Wales with its most recent four-episode arc, I can’t stop thinking about what *The Crown* got wrong — or, more accurately, left out — about her work on the AIDS epidemic in the late 1980s.

The show’s version of Diana was introduced in the first episode of Season 4, played winningly by Emma Corrin, before her marriage to Prince Charles (played in Season 4 by Josh O’Connor) in 1981. By the fourth season’s finale, set nine years later, the Wales’s marriage has disintegrated, and Diana embarks on her first solo trip overseas as a member of the Royal Family, visiting New York City in 1990.

While there, the Princess visits the pediatric AIDS unit of a Harlem hospital. After a doctor explains that many of the children there have been abandoned and that people are afraid to foster them due to the stigma around HIV/AIDS, Diana is shown spontaneously hugging a young boy with the disease.

All of which really did happen, though the show fudges the dates a bit, setting Diana’s trip

in 1990 to better coincide with the events leading up to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s resignation. In fact, the Princess’s trip to New York happened in early 1989, and contrary to *The Crown*’s depiction, it was far from Diana’s only encounter with the AIDS epidemic. Nor was her outreach limited to children suffering from the disease.

“No cause, perhaps, was more ready for the Diana effect in the 1980s than AIDS,” Tina Brown writes in *The Diana Chronicles*, possibly the definitive biography of the Princess of Wales.

Nearly two years prior to the New York trip, Diana made headlines in April 1987 when she attended the opening of the U.K.’s first AIDS ward at Middlesex Hospital in London. She reportedly refused to wear gloves during her visit and shook hands with 12 adult male patients suffering from the disease. Brown describes the decision as “the shake felt round the world.”

Last year, Professor Rob Miller, who was a doctor on the hospital’s AIDS ward at the time of Diana’s visit, wrote that stigma around the disease was

so intense that many hospital staffers would not even tell their families that they worked with AIDS patients, and none of the patients themselves wanted to be photographed.

But as the Daily Mirror reported at the time, Diana insisted on being photographed shaking hands with one of them without gloves, knowing the power the image would have. One man finally agreed to have his picture taken from behind so that he could not be identified.

Miller wrote that Diana “showed the world that HIV cannot be acquired by everyday contact. It marked the start of her outstanding efforts to help change public and media attitudes towards people with HIV.”

Brown writes that Professor Michael Adler, who also worked with AIDS patients at Middlesex Hospital at the time, credited the Princess with helping to destigmatize the disease. “It was seen to be mainly occurring amongst gay men and it involved sex, all things we are not good at handling,” Adler said. “But she actually cut through that. She gave it respectability and profile.”

“If a royal was allowed to go in and shake a patient’s hands, somebody at the bus stop or the supermarket could do the same,” John O’Reilly, a nurse who was present for Diana’s visit, told the BBC in 2017. “That really educated people.”

Diana brought that same message to Harlem two years later. “HIV does not make people dangerous to know.

You can shake their hands and give them a hug,” she said in a speech. “Heaven knows they need it. What’s more, you can share their homes, their workplaces, and their playgrounds and toys.”

The Crown, famously, has taken liberties with its depictions of historical events and its interpretations of what may have gone on behind the scenes in the lives of the British royals. Netflix even went so far as to add a disclaimer to the trailer for Season 5 clarifying that the series is a work of fiction “inspired by real events.”

Naturally, series creator and head writer Peter Morgan has filled the show with imagined interactions, conversations, and scenarios that may or may not have happened behind closed doors to create a compelling drama. Focused as it is primarily on the Queen and her direct heirs, there’s also plenty of history that the series has glossed over or left out entirely — like the passage, under Thatcher, of Section 28, a 1988 law banning the “promotion of homosexuality.”

Indeed, over the course of its six seasons, The Crown has featured few depictions of LGBTQ+ people and nothing of the movement for LGBTQ+ rights in the U.K. It’s dismaying, then, that Morgan and co. failed to take advantage of

Diana’s support for and closeness with gay people to introduce and examine this essential part of late 20th-century history.

As Brown writes in *The Diana Chronicles*, “gay men formed much of the support network of Diana’s life,” and her friends in the fashion industry and gay members of palace staff “brought the specter of the [HIV/AIDS] home” to the princess every day. “As AIDS took its toll in the 1980s, she couldn’t bear to see her friends in such peril.”

While the Princess’s New York trip fits more neatly into Season 4’s narrative arc, it apparently comes at the expense of the Middlesex Hospital visit two years earlier. It also troublingly elides the role gay men played both in her life and activism in favor of the seemingly more palatable, more “sympathetic” pediatric AIDS patients.

The power of the Middlesex Hospital visit and the photo of Diana shaking hands with a gay man who would later die from the disease came from the fact that it showed her reaching out, embracing people that society would have preferred to ignore. As compelling as *The Crown* is, its creators’ decision to likewise ignore this aspect of Diana’s life and activism is a misstep we shouldn’t forget.





OUT & HEALTH

LGBTQ People Feel Especially Stressed At The Holidays

By Alexander Griffin



The holiday season can be especially triggering for many people, but LGBTQ people are more likely than their non-LGBTQ counterparts to experience stress, anxiety and depression during this time of the year. Research shows that LGBTQ people are more likely to experience these symptoms year round, but numerous mental health providers say that the holiday season, especially returning home for the holidays, can exacerbate these symptoms.

“During the holiday season, I notice that many of my LGBTQ clients have even more difficulty handling the challenges they face in their daily lives and the negative impacts of these challenges, such as stigma and rejection, are much more acute,” TJ Walsh, a psychotherapist and faculty member at Eastern University in the graduate school's Counseling Psychology department, explains.

Psychologist Dr. Logan Jones, head of NYC Therapy and Wellness, echoes those same conclusions. “While experiences vary by individual, most of my LGBTQ and non-binary identifying clients report

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similar feelings of tension and stress during the holiday season,” Jones says. “Common struggles range from anxiety and depression, to feelings of rejection for freely expressing their authentic selves. For these clients, going home for the holidays is not always a time of bliss, but a painful reminder of moments of their ‘otherness’ within their families.”

Kristina Furia, psychotherapist and owner of Emerge Wellness in Philadelphia, adds: “The tradition of joining together with family can be the cause of much apprehension and anxiety and, for many LGBTQ-identified individuals, it may also mean dealing with passive or even overt homophobic sentiments and rejection by family members.”

And while some LGBTQ people may choose not to return home for the holidays, the season can still be triggering for them as well. “Even for LGBTQ people who are not going home, the meaning of family is something that is brought up at the holidays,” Julian Sambrano, an art therapist based in Los Angeles, told NBC News BETTER in an email. “This happens consciously or even on a subconscious level, and

can be difficult to avoid.”

Research suggests that when compared to people that identify as heterosexual or cisgender, LGBTQ individuals are three times more likely to experience a mental health condition. They are two and a half times more likely to experience depression, anxiety and substance misuse.

In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Survey On Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) found that 15 percent of LGBTQ adults had an alcohol or drug use disorder in the past year, compared to eight percent of heterosexual adults. That is nearly double.

A 2016 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. Dr. Arnold Grossman of New York University and Dr. Anthony D’Augelli of Pennsylvania State University noted in a 2007 study in “The Official Journal of the American Association of Suicidology” that nearly 50 percent of young transgender people have “seriously” considered suicide. In a 2016 national study, 40 percent of

transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt.

And while none of this data specifically deals with the holiday season, the American Psychological Association conducted a survey on holiday stress on the general population in 2006. They found that more people are inclined to feel that their stress increases (38 percent), rather than decreases (8 percent), around the holidays.

“Any rejection can cause distress, and sadly, statistics show that overtly aggressive statements and behaviors, as well as microaggressions negatively impact the emotional health of the LGBTQ community on a daily basis,” Jones explains.

“When one’s psyche is contaminated by the shadow of prejudice and internalized homophobia, it can result in depression, anxiety, psychological distress and other problems with self-esteem. Oftentimes, these issues manifest at a young age and are carried into adulthood. These distressing feelings and the ‘flashbulb’ memories that are formed in childhood are often unconsciously triggered when returning home for the holidays.”

Here are 7 practical tips to help you protect your mental health this holiday season.

1. ASK YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS

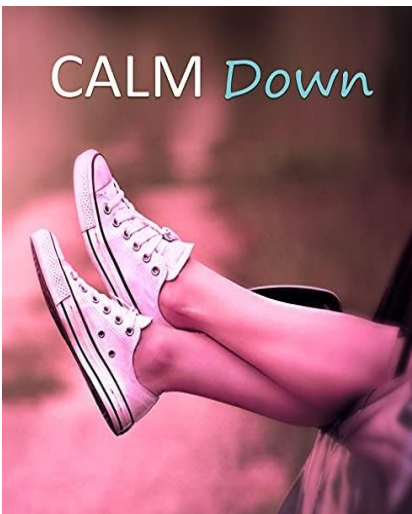
Self-reflecting on what you actually want to get out of the holidays or a visit home helps frame your own expectations for

your upcoming trip. Furia suggests to ask yourself: “What do you need to do, or perhaps more importantly, not do to feel good about yourself when the holidays are behind you?”

2. CREATE A MANTRA OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Going home for the holidays shouldn’t mean that LGBTQ people have to revert back to the older versions of themselves they once were. To prevent this from happening, Sambrano recommends creating a simple mantra. “This can help reframe your mind from going backwards in time,” he says. “Tell yourself something like, ‘I am exactly who I am supposed to be and do not need to change for anyone.’ Repeat this, silently or out loud as much as needed.”

Jones, who refers to this as “The Bill of Rights as an LGBTQ Person,” suggests: “I have the right to be me, I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, I have the right to distance myself from people and places that feel toxic.”



3. TAKE CALM-DOWN BREAKS

When things become too much, it’s OK to remove yourself from what’s triggering you, especially to prevent a break down to happen later. “In a stressful moment, it’s great to take quick relaxation breaks of one to five minutes to calm yourself down,” Walsh suggests. “When you begin to feel as though things are becoming too much, close your eyes, take several deep breaths, meditate or just relax. Imagine yourself in your favorite place, think of a happy memory or visualize yourself succeeding at a goal.”

4. BE MINDFUL OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Jones says that much of the discrimination LGBTQ people face at the holidays aren’t necessarily with insults and slurs, but microaggressions. Psychology Today defines microaggressions as “verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”

Jones lists, “‘It’s fine, I just don’t want to hear about it,’ ‘that’s your issue,’ ‘why aren’t you married yet?’, ‘this is my gay cousin,’ all as examples of microaggressions that call a person’s “gender or sexual identity into question in a subtle, but harmful manner.”

“Do not allow family to get a

pass on discrimination just because it is not threatening or violent in nature," he advises. "Microaggressions are still an affront on your right to feel comfortable, seen and respected for your full, authentic self."

5. GET MOVING

It can be hard to work out over the holidays, but doing so may reduce tensions later, helping you deal with toxic behavior from family members without melting down. "One of the best ways to overcome stress during the holidays or any other time is to exercise regularly," Walsh suggests. "Research shows that physical

activity not only boosts your fitness and energy levels but can also elevate your moods and increases production of endorphins, your body's feel-good neurotransmitters."

6. PRACTICE ASSERTIVENESS

While there are many things to do prevent confrontation, Jones recommends speaking up and setting boundaries. "When insensitive statements or actions cross the line, speak up for yourself," he says. "'Please don't make comments like that - they're painful and make me feel unwelcome here.' A simple statement like this demands respect,

establishes gentle, yet firm boundaries, without spreading further toxicity."

7. STAY CONNECTED WITH ALLIES

"If you choose to go home for the holidays, inform your friends and allies that you'll be needing some extra emotional support during this time of the year," Jones concludes. "Text or call your support system if at any point you feel overwhelmed by your family, and upon your return, surround yourself with people who make you feel loved and remind you that you're perfect just the way you are."

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Life and Style

6 Holiday Decor Mistakes To Avoid This Season

By Drew Williams

With the holiday season upon us, it's hard to avoid the constant barrage of seasonal decor ideas. Social media pages are constantly promoting the latest trends, while store aisles are covered in ornaments, wreaths, and other products. But how much decor do you really need?

We called on design experts to share their thoughts on the mistakes to avoid when getting ready for the year's festivities. The biggest takeaway? Don't feel pressured to embrace every new trend or buy all the new decor products available. Stick with timeless pieces and build on those, opting for a "less is more" approach—except for when it comes to twinkle lights.

So, before you dust off your boxes of decorations, here's what the experts have to say about the most common holiday decor mistakes—and how to avoid them. Deck the halls in style with these designer-approved tips.

1. Don't Go Over the Top

"Burying the holiday spirit in too many things can be counterproductive at the end of the day," says Vy Truong, co-founder of Very Handsome



in the sea of decor.

Instead of giving in to the temptation to go over the top with holiday decor in order to achieve a festive look, go for a "less is more" approach. There's a practical benefit to a more minimalist approach to holiday decorating too—you'll have fewer pieces to put away once the festivities are over.

2. Avoid a Dimly Lit Christmas Tree

When in doubt, always add more twinkle lights. Interior designer Bianca Ecklund stresses the importance of lights when it comes to holiday decor. "An under-lit tree can be dull," she says. To avoid this common mistake, make sure you have plenty of strands of both indoor and outdoor lights for a festive feel and to brighten the dark, dreary days of winter.



Studio. Too many focal points can overwhelm a space and even your favorite decorations will ultimately end up getting lost

"Light it up for all to see—you can never have too many lights," Ecklund says.

3. Skip the Pressure to Embrace Every New Trend

Adding new pieces to your Christmas collection every year is part of what makes holiday decorating fun, but don't feel pressured to embrace and incorporate every single new holiday trend. "New and beautiful things grace our feeds hourly once September starts rolling around, but don't fall for every trendy wreath that you see," Truong says. She suggests you start by picking a color palette and adds, "Try desperately to stick with the design parameters you've set out for yourself".

4. Don't Buy Holiday Decor That Doesn't Last

"Don't buy something just because every store you go in is screaming at you to do so," says Annie Oberman, principal designer at Forge & Bow. Instead, be intentional about your purchases and make thoughtful choices that make sense for your overall collection of Christmas decorations. "Make sure your purchases really enhance your overall home for the holidays," Oberman says. She points out

the importance of opting for timeless pieces instead of overly commercialized decor. "I think it is a gift to allow your house to evolve overtime, finding the classics that you love and building on that year over year," she says.

5. Don't Forget About the Environment

"Avoid purchasing chintzy decor that will end up in a landfill," suggests interior designer Amy Youngblood. She recommends choosing pieces that will last and are meaningful, and can be passed down as a special holiday

heirloom. "Not only will it elevate your space and look



nice, it is much better for the environment," she adds. Investing in timeless and high-quality holiday decor also saves

money in the long run, since you're not forced to add to or replace decorations every year.

6. Avoid Using All the Decorations You Own

While it can be tempting to put up all the holiday decorations you've ever purchased, this typically just makes a space look cluttered. "Keep it simple—just because you have it all doesn't mean it should all be out," Ecklund says. She recommends a more intentional approach to Christmas decorating. "Pick a theme or color scheme and stick with it, and keep everything else tucked away for next year," she says.



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL



The Evolution Of Wilton Manors Into A Queer Utopia

By Brandon Davis

As the story goes, the gays take a once-run-down neighborhood and transform it into an urban enclave of restaurants, shops, and gay bars. But Wilton Manors is more than a gayborhood in Florida; it's a vision of gay culture permeating beyond acceptance into societal norms.

If You Build It, The Gays Shall Come

Wilton Manors is far from your typical LGBTQ+ destination; it's a veritable island of queerness whose rainbow culture sprouted from a single bar. Dubbed the 'Island City,' its name reflects its geographical position, encircled by forks in the Middle River.

Although neighboring places like Miami Beach and Key West pride themselves on inclusivity, Wilton Manors is so gay that residents clarify it's "straight-friendly" as well.

This Greater Fort Lauderdale city takes the prize as the "Second Gayest City" in America, right after Palm Springs. It's a label bragged about by its official website. You'll find 140 gay couples per 1,000 residents, a statistic that's only growing.

26 www.JaxGayMag.com

There's plenty of nightlife, but Wilton Manors isn't a party destination. It's not a seasonal resort town or a bustling metropolis. The city has less than 12,000 residents, but you'll find the spirit of a small town with urban culture. You can say much of the queer community comes here to spend their golden years (median age is mid-50s), not unlike the Golden Girls, but most of them are just beginning to have kids and start families.

The Allure Is In The Community

What sets Wilton Manors apart is the fact there's nothing remarkable about it. Before locals get offended, hear us out!

Unlike Palm Springs, which began as a desert sanctuary for closeted celebrities, or Fire Island and Provincetown, which were historic summer retreats for the LGBTQ+ community, Wilton Manors doesn't boast any overt allure. Its appeal lies in being a genuinely welcoming place to live and visit.

Of course, the nearby beach and temperate year-round weather don't hurt.

Wilton Drive, the heart of

Wilton Manors, had its share of challenges in the past, but one gay man decided it was still preferable to build a gay bar replacing a boarded-up bank branch than have none at all.

Nowadays, you'll find more than 40 LGBTQ-friendly and LGBTQ-owned businesses, a common thread in gayborhoods. But the gays didn't just construct a suburb; they forged their own municipality, complete with an all-queer governing body.

The Human Rights Campaign has awarded Wilton Manors a rare perfect score on its Municipal Equality Index and in Florida of all states.

One Gay Bar In Wilton Drive Changed History

The gayness of Wilton Manors originated from Wilton Drive, specifically, the Shoppes of Wilton Manors. It was a derelict strip mall until George Kessinger opened Georgie's Alibi in 1997, the first of many gay bars.

The bar is one of the longest-running gay businesses in South Florida and a current nominee for Best of GayCities 2023 Travel Awards. Queer visitors can rest assured it has not gone out of style.

The cost of living reliably drives the gays to gentrification. The gradual influx of a gay scene encouraged many LGBTQ+ SoFlo residents to move here as the rents were much more affordable than in nearby liberal cities.

“When we came here, this was a ghost town,” George Kessinger told the Herald-Tribune, “We created something, we put a demand on something.”

The bar has undergone new ownership four times by locals eager to keep history alive and tipsy, leading it to be renamed Georgie’s Alibi Monkey Bar.



The evolution of the city’s demographic influenced politics, but it had inclusive roots.

- In 1988, the City of Wilton Manors elected Broward County’s first openly gay official.

- In 2000, history was made when the city elected the

second gay-majority governing body in the United States. This included a gay mayor, vice mayor, and councilman.

- History was again made in November 2018 when Wilton Manors became the first city in Florida with an all-LGBTQ+ City Commission – second only to Palm Springs, California.

We’d make a “Make Politics Gay Again” joke, but Wilton Manors has been doing it for quite some time.

Wilton Manor Gays Have More Fun

Say what you want about small-town life, but don’t underestimate one built by queers. There are more gay bars within the two-mile vicinity of Wilton Manors than the rest of Florida combined. The presence of family values doesn’t mean there’s an absence of adult entertainment.

- The OG **Georgie’s Alibi Monkey Bar** doesn’t have plans to slow down

- **The Manor** is where you’ll find a massive circuit party every weekend

- Find a better strip club than **Johnsons Fort Lauderdale**; we’ll wait

- **The Eagle Bar** In Wilton-Drive honors the brand’s legacy in full sultry grunge

- **Hunter’s** keeps it more low-key, which means it’s easier to

flirt

Wilton Manors Is A Sunny Hideaway For Gays



The LGBTQ+ community is like the fairy godmother of neglected real estate, but don’t limit our magic to major cities.

As the years pass on, queer people come to appreciate the beauty of slowing down and surrounding themselves with community. Wilton Manors has evolved into a hideaway and civilization for gays to break away from the hustle and relax into their golden years. For some, that means retirement; for others, that means being a few miles from the beach, and an increasing number is finding their happiness in helping raise the next generation of humans.

You’ll find Zaddies, Daddies, dads, and baddies socializing within the same block.

So, regardless of whatever brings you to Wilton Manors, get ready to experience queerness as the status quo.



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Jax Gay's WOW GIFTS Guide

By Melinda Jefferies



What's better than donning gay apparel during the holiday season? It's giving fabulous gifts! Our gift guide isn't just for gay men, but for the consummate traveler, who enjoys trendy travel gear, and who understands the need for impeccable fashion sense and comfort, while traveling.

So here's a few suggestions to make your significant other's holiday merry and bright. Sustainable wood sunglasses, high-tech suitcases, and stainless steel ice cubes to keep his or her spirits chilled, are just a few items on our list.



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Halsa Wellness Mat

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relieve tension headaches, lower blood pressure and improve circulation -- if used 10 -30 minutes each day.



Stainless Steel Ice Cubes

Is Jack Frost nipping at your nose? Get a nip of your own with a drink filled with these stainless steel ice cubes to keep your spirits chilled. The re-freezable cubes have smooth edges to protect your glass, while you merrily celebrate the holidays or relax after a long business trip.



Extreme Portfolio Sleeve

The Extreme Portfolio Sleeve, by G-Form, is a lightweight,

water-resistant case that can be opened and folded into multiple configurations to use your tablet. The case protects your prized possession from clumsy drops, and it has interior pockets to store important documents.



Organic Male Skincare

Keep all the right spots looking good with this line of skincare products from Organic Male OM4. All skincare collections -- the Dry/Mature Collection, Normal/Combination Collection, Sensitive Collection and Oily Collection -- contain a face wash, mineral splash, repair serum and calming moisturizer.



Packing Cubes

Stay organized during a non-stop business trip. Great Useful Stuff's Packing Cubes are lightweight, color-coded pouches labeled for your shirts, underwear/socks, workout clothes and the clothes you've

already worn. When it's time to pack up again, just pop them into your bag and go!



Sustainable Wood Shades

Make a fashion statement with these sustainable sunglasses by Proof. These classic shades, made of zebrawood, bamboo and ebony range, have UVA/UVB protective lenses. A portion of the proceeds go to international charities like the Indian Eye Clinic and Replanting Haiti.



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2023 Northeast Florida World AIDS Week Calendar of Events

Friday, December 1

Event Name: Quilt Ceremony
Location: Jacksonville City Hall
Time: 11:30a -1:00p
Contact: Justin Bell (904) 556-2312
Additional Info: Quilts on display Nov 20 - Dec 7

Event Name: Service of Remembrance and Hope
Location: Avondale United Methodist Church
1651 Talbot Ave. Jacksonville, FL 32205
Time: 6:30p - 7:30p
Contact: Justin Bell (904) 556-2312
Additional Info: Hors d'oeuvres after service

Saturday, December 2

Event Name: The Hidden Truth Presented by: Sharonda Lynn
Location: COLORS Community Center
2650 Park St. Jacksonville , FL 32204
Time: 6:30p -7:00p
Contact: Sharonda Lynn
Additional Info: havingincrediblevictory@yahoo.com

Monday, December 4

Event Name: Northside Community Resource Fair
Location: Overflow Health Alliance
5045 Soutel Dr. Jacksonville, FL 32209
Time: 12:00p -4:00p
Contact: Damon Gross (904) 440-3894
Additional Info: Tabling and Education Event

Tuesday, December 5

Event Name: City Condom Blast
Location: Various
Time: 10:00a -5:00p
Contact: Damon Gross (904) 440-3894
Additional Info:

Event Name: Paint and Dip
Location: COLORS Community Center
2650 Park St. Jacksonville , FL 32204
Time: 11:30a -1:00p
Contact: Katrina (904) 554-2923
Additional Info:

Wednesday, December 6

Event Name: Virtual Discussion Panel
Location: TEAMS
Time: 6:00p - 7:30p
Contact: Damon Gross (904) 440-3894
Additional Info: SCAN TO JOIN



Thursday, December 7

Event Name: Riverside Community Resource Fair
Location: COLORS Community Center
2650 Park St. Jacksonville , FL 32204
Time: 5:00p -8:00p
Contact: Damon Gross (904) 440-3894
Additional Info: Tabling and Education Event

Friday, December 8

Event Name: Community Awards Luncheon
Location: Deerwood Castle
7601 Centurion Pkwy. Jacksonville, FL 32256
Time: 11:30a -1:00p
Contact: Katrina (904) 554-2923
Additional Info: Visit the NEFL WAD Website



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Hallmark Doubles Down On Gay Characters In 2023 Xmas Movies

By Laura Clawson



Good news, everyone! The year after she left the Hallmark Channel for Great American Family in part because the latter would “keep traditional marriage at the core,” Candace Cameron Bure is starring in a new Great American Family Christmas movie, “**My Christmas Hero.**” And if there’s one thing we have been promised will not be in that movie, it’s LGBTQ+ characters.

night, Hallmark will also be premiering “Catch Me If You Claus,” a straight romance featuring gay actor Luke Macfarlane. Macfarlane’s continuing casting in straight romantic lead roles since he started also playing prominent LGBTQ+ roles is another solid move from Hallmark.

including LGBTQ+-themed holiday movies in its by-now iconic annual roster is significant. Hallmark is making a business decision, and the company has decided that diversity is good business. The bigots are losing the culture wars, and they know it. That’s why they’re fighting so fiercely to keep from losing more ground, to make the process painful for groups of people they don’t like while they still have the power to do so, to reframe their retreat to places like Great American Family as a win.



By contrast, Hallmark continues to come out with new holiday movies with LGBTQ+ main characters: two this season. “**Christmas on Cherry Lane**” (preview at the top of this post) will premiere on Dec. 9, and “Friends & Family Christmas” will premiere on Dec. 17. Expect an undiluted Hallmark holiday movie experience. On Thanksgiving

As “**My Christmas Hero**” neared release, Bure told The Messenger regarding her work with Great American Family, “I think we want to create an oasis in a cultural desert.” While her overt bigotry in last year’s announcement that she was leaving Hallmark got enough of a backlash that Bure tried to walk back her comments, the intent remains clear: “an oasis in a cultural desert” means a safe space for bigots.

Meanwhile, Hallmark isn’t the only TV channel or streamer with LGBTQ+-themed holiday movies. Have fun out there in the cultural desert this season, and be sure to avoid that one oasis.

Hallmark’s decision to continue

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Life and Style

#1 Most Underrated Vegetable
By Michael Bryson



Reviewed by Dietitian Victoria Seaver, M.S., RD

We are a veggie-loving house. My husband puts kale in his morning bowl of oatmeal, our daughter loves to make Japanese-style cucumber salads for an after school snack, and our dinners are always packed with lots of vegetables. And while there are really no vegetables that my family doesn't love, if I had to name the most underrated one, it would undoubtedly be cabbage.

The humble head of cabbage has so many great qualities. For starters, a whole head of cabbage comes in at a couple of pounds, which means I can make multiple dishes out of a single head. Plus, it can last a really long time in the fridge. Once I cut a head in half, I pop what I don't use in a sealable bag with a paper towel to wick away excess moisture. Sure, the cut sides brown eventually, but I just trim away a thin slice then cut it as desired for that

meal.

Raw cabbage adds crunch to so many meals. I sometimes prep veggies over the weekend so we can quickly make salads at lunchtime. I always thinly slice cabbage, as it adds a nice crunch and color (if I buy red) to our salad bowl. Since cabbage lasts way longer than salad greens, I can quickly mix up a slaw—either creamy or vinegary—to serve with dinner. Cabbage has also replaced lettuce on most of our taco nights.

While raw cabbage is delicious, I may like it even more cooked, especially roasted. One of our go-to weeknight meals is a sheet pan dinner with roasted chicken sausages, potatoes and cabbage wedges drizzled with chive-mustard dressing. (It's one of our tween daughter's favorite dinners.) And let's not forget the main event, since we feature plant-based meals most nights of the week, cabbage steaks

have become the star of our dinner plates—Cabbage Steaks with Sun-Dried Tomato Cream Sauce is a favorite. Cabbage is also great in stir-fries and fried rice.

It's pretty great to have a love affair with cabbage. Not only is it an budget-friendly vegetable, coming in at less than \$1 a pound at the grocery store I typically shop at, the health benefits of cabbage are wide ranging. This cruciferous veg is packed with vitamin C and K, plus red cabbage contains anthocyanins, a potent anti-inflammatory phytochemical. Plus it's a good source of another family of phytochemicals, isothiocyanates, which may help reduce your risk of certain types of cancer.

So do you have a head of cabbage in your fridge? If not, I hope I inspired you to pick one up next time you go grocery shopping.

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Stacy Layne Matthews Quits Drag In Emotional Post

By David Vandygriff



Stacy Layne Matthews stomped the runways on Season 3 of RuPaul's Drag Race, and this backwoods country queen from Backswamp, North Carolina was a force to be reckoned with.

Unfortunately, if you haven't had the chance to see her perform, you've officially missed your chance.

In an emotional Instagram post, Matthews announced that her last show was her last after feeling like she's disappointed too many people.

"I let my mind and body get the best of me," she wrote. "I let fear and anxiety take over my life. I have given myself a reputation that I never had planned. I thought I was stronger than I am. I put on a smile for a long time. I took

care of everyone else over the years and lost myself in the process. And in the end I felt the bitter side of generosity."

She continued to discuss how her mental and physical health and gotten out of hand and how she takes full responsibility for any way she may have disappointed anyone.

"I'm a nice person who has been broken," she said. "I don't know how to change people's minds about what they think of me. I'm tired."

She then said she'll be stepping away from social media to focus on her health, and that this was her "only option."

She thanked everyone for allowing her to be part of our lives "when there was still joy

and passion in my life."

She concluded by saying she hated disappointing anyone, so "before I do anymore damage it's time I step away. If one day I decide to return... I hope there will be at least someone there to return to who still has some faith in me as an entertainer and as a human being. Until then. Stacy Layne Matthews out!!!!"

Though most of her comments were met with an outpouring of support, Matthews also commented, saying, "Thank you everyone... There are a few people trying to sneak some negative sh** into the comments... But I'm past giving 2 f**** at this point. Thank you to those who had something nice to say. Love to you all."

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News & Politics

Conservatives Crying For The Holidays Over Target Nutcrackers

By Ben Massengill



Conservatives are being some serious scrooges this holiday season over Target’s inclusive Christmas products.

The retail giant was already hit by a storm of right-wing whiners over its Pride Month products earlier this year. Now, Target is receiving more conservative backlash due to its merchandise, this time because of its “Pride Christmas Nutcracker” products and Santa Claus figurines in wheelchairs.

“Target outdid itself this year for Christmas,” wrote @EndWokeness on X, formerly Twitter.

“Go woke go broke. Why do people support these businesses that don’t support us?” grumbled one user.

Fox News’ Jesse Watters also spent a portion of his Thursday program making a fuss about Target’s “gay nutcracker.”

OutKick host Riley Gaines, who appeared on primetime television to discuss the Christmas decorations, told Watters she thinks a “majority of people” would acknowledge that the products have “gone

way too far.”

At least one of the inclusive products isn’t new, however, as a clip of the Pride Christmas Nutcracker went viral on TikTok — and got love from social media users — in 2021, The Miami Herald reported.

The latest wave of conservative backlash arrives months after Target saw a dip in second-quarter sales while stores in at least five states received bomb threats in June over its Pride merchandise.

The backlash led to the retail giant removing some of its LGBTQ-friendly items in May, a decision that Target CEO Brian Cornell recently defended in a CNBC interview with Becky Quick.

“I’ve seen natural disasters,” Cornell said. “We’ve seen the impact of COVID leading into the pandemic. Some of the violence that took place after George Floyd’s murder. But I will tell you, Becky, what I saw back in May is the first time since I’ve been in this job where I had store team members saying, ‘It’s not safe to come to work.’”

Cornell emphasized that they had to “prioritize the safety” of

its teams, adding that he knew the decision wouldn’t be “well received.”

A number of politicians and human rights organizations criticized Target’s decision to remove products, including Rep. Becca Balint (D-Vt.), the first openly LGBTQ+ person to represent Vermont in Congress.

Balint wrote in May, “If companies like @Target give in to the whims of a hateful few, they may need a lesson or two on the history of pride and what it means to the LGBTQ+ community.”

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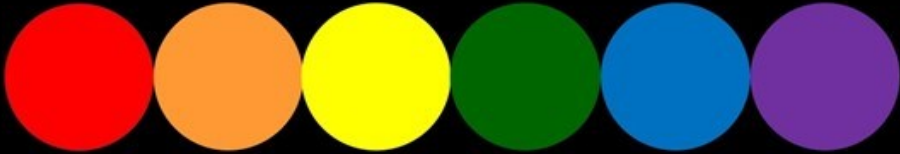
- Top Left: "No Longer Olivia: Reintroducing Liv Lux Miyako-MagJerMa" (Issue 136, March 2012)
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- Bottom Left: "Ultra Rich: 12 Richest LGBTQ People in the World" (Issue 142, September 2012)
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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Aspen Gay Ski Week Returns In January 2024

By Judy Engel

Aspen Gay Ski Week 2024, the nation's oldest and largest gay ski gathering, expects to welcome up to 3,000 visitors for its annual event on January 14-21, 2024, in Aspen, Colorado. This year's event features a special screening of Tom of Finland to benefit the Tom of Finland Foundation.

Now in its 47th year, Aspen Gay Ski Week also serves as the annual fundraising event for AspenOUT, which provides grants to local, regional, and national LGBTQ+ organizations.

"AGSW is much more than a party and unique among gay ski weeks around the world because it's a fundraiser," says Kevin McManamon, Executive Director of AspenOUT. "It's funded countless LGBTQ+ organizations and now, we've created a leadership program to make even a greater difference in the lives of area youth."

For 2024 organizers have added a new twist to the schedule of events, with educational programming and a panel discussion about the future of the LGBTQ+ community.

42 www.JaxGayMag.com



You can learn more about Aspen Gay Ski Week, including how to make travel reservations, at www.gayskiweek.com.

Here are some of the highlighted events from Aspen Gay Ski Week 2024.

Saturday, January 13

Après Ski Party. 3 to 7 p.m. daily at Limelight Hotel. The official daily après ski with DJ entertainment, free gifts from sponsors, a hospitality suite, a heated pool, and two hot tubs.

Film Night. 7 to 10 p.m. at the Isis Theater. Special film screening of Tom of Finland to benefit Aspen Film and Tom of Finland Foundation.

Sunday, January 14

Drag Queen Bingo Brunch. 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at The Little Nell Hotel. Hosted by San Diego's "crankiest drag queen," Mariam T.

Opening Cocktail Reception. 9 p.m. to 12 a.m. at the W Aspen. Hosted in the indoor/outdoor 39 Degrees restaurant and bar.

Monday, January 15

Monday Dinner & Late Night Party. 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. at Mi

Chola restaurant. Enjoy dinner then dance the night away at this progressive Mexican restaurant.

Tuesday, January 16

Drag Queen Bingo. 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. at W Aspen. Hosted by Mariam T.

Wednesday, January 17

Benefit Night. 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. at the Caribou Club. Aspen's premier private club hosts a night of dancing and fundraising.

Thursday, January 18

Talks Like These. 5 p.m. at Aspen Meadows. A conversation about the future of the LGBTQ+ community moderated by Dr. Bill Kapfer and featuring Kevin Jennings, CEO of Lambda Legal; Joe Nucci, Psychotherapist, Denver Minds; and Richie Villani, Creative Director, Tom of Finland Foundation.

Womxn's Cocktail Party. 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. location TBD. Complimentary cocktails and appetizers just for the ladies with DJ Autumn Leilani.

Comedy & Drag Night. 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. at the Wheeler Opera House. Bonding actor and comedian Brendan

Scannel, Mariam T, and others star in Frenemies: A Fierce, Fabulous and Funny Show.

Electric Cowboy. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Belly Up. An Electric Cowboy-themed party, "A Night at the Round Up Saloon," presented by Visit Dallas with Los Angeles-based DJ Jeremy Blacklow.

Friday, January 19

2024 Downhill Costume Contest. 12 to 3 p.m. at the foot of Aspen Mountain. Mariam T and other celebrities will judge participants with plenty of prizes on the line.

Top of the Mountain Party. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. at Sundeck Restaurant on Aspen Mountain. Take a gondola to this year's party from the Tom of Finland Foundation and themed "Tom on Top."

39 Degrees Dance Party. 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. at W Aspen 39 Degrees. An alternative to Top of the Mountain party and hosted by DJ Autumn Leilani.

Saturday, January 20

Friendship Dinner. 6 to 9:30 p.m. at Element 47 in the Little Nell Hotel. Locally sourced food and seasonally inspired dishes.

Saturday Pool Party. 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Aspen Recreation Center. The infamous pool party features DJs, dancing, hot tubs, water slides, a lazy river, and open bars for 1,000 guests.

This is just a partial list of events. To learn more about Aspen Gay Ski Week, visit www.gayskiweek.com.

2023 Quilt Ceremony

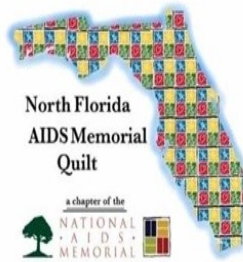
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