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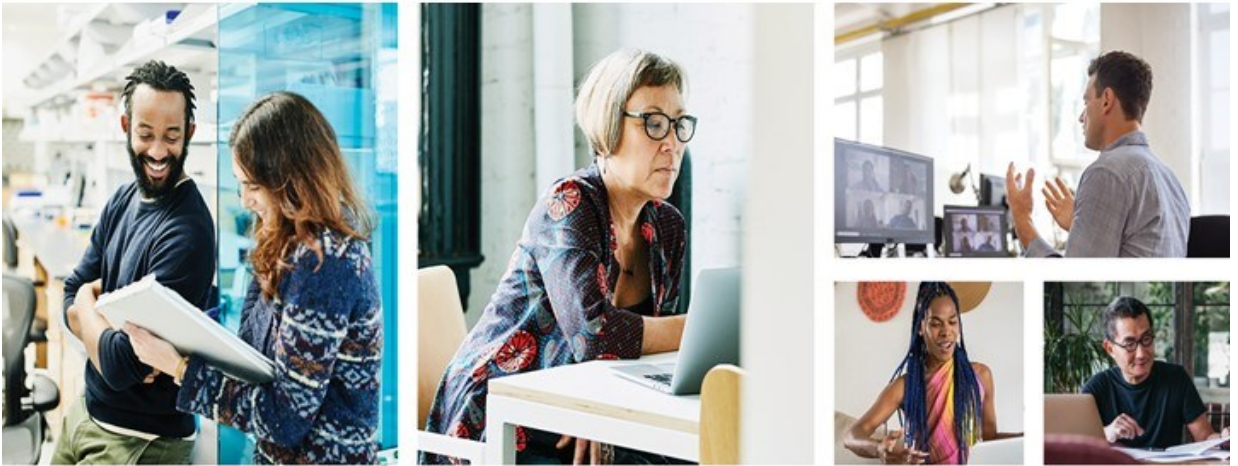




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Jax Gay Inc. is a Community Marketing and Events organization incorporating Jax Gay Magazine, Rainbow Events, and Drag Queen Aholic.

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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**Phoenix Arts & Innovation District
Announces \$7M Start Of First Phase**

By David Vandygriff



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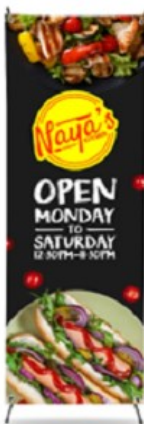
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News & Politics

Florida GOP Chair Ziegler's Investigation Expands To Video Voyeurism

By Jeff Bennett

The ongoing investigation into Christian Ziegler, the embattled chairman of the FloridaGOP, has recently expanded to encompass allegations of video voyeurism, according to the Florida Center for Government Accountability. This development adds a new dimension to the already serious rape accusations Ziegler faces.

Sarasota police, following a December 8 police affidavit, have sought a search warrant for Ziegler's Instagram account. A judge agreed, indicating probable cause for a third-degree felony under state law, which prohibits video voyeurism. Ziegler may have unlawfully videotaped the sexual encounter that is central to the rape allegation against him, according to police. The woman involved in the case has denied any knowledge of being recorded.

Previously, as reported by JaxGayMag, the leadership of the Florida Republican Party voted to censure Chairman Christian Ziegler and remove his authority in the wake of these sexual assault allegations. In an emergency closed-door meeting in Orlando, Ziegler's salary was reduced to \$1 annually, and he was barred from hiring or firing staff, speaking on behalf of the Florida GOP, or raising funds for the party. He retains his title as chairman.

Ziegler, who has not been charged with a crime, has faced calls to resign from notable Florida Republicans, including Gov. Ron DeSantis, Sen. Rick Scott, and Rep. Matt Gaetz. The chairman's efforts to convince his colleagues to allow him to remain chair were unsuccessful.

The investigation began in October after an affidavit

revealed that Ziegler and his wife, Bridget, had planned a sexual encounter with the alleged victim. Surveillance video showed Ziegler arriving at the alleged victim's residence on the day of the alleged assault. The alleged victim has accused Christian Ziegler of raping her, a claim he denies, insisting the encounter was consensual.

This case has gained widespread attention due to the Ziegler's prominent roles in Florida politics and their advocacy of conservative values. The Sarasota County School Board has already voted to ask Bridget Ziegler, a co-founder of Moms for Liberty, to resign, a request she has so far refused. The full committee of the Florida GOP is expected to officially remove Christian Ziegler from his position in a meeting in Tallahassee in December 2024.



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OUT & HEALTH

States With The Most LGBTQ Residents

By Bruce Joshlin



California has the largest number of LGBTQ Americans, according to new research, while Washington, D.C., has the greatest percentage of LGBTQ residents and the South claims a larger share of LGBTQ adults than any other region.

A report published by the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles found an estimated 5.5 percent of U.S. adults, or about 13.9 million people, identify as LGBTQ, based on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 2021-22.

About 14.3 percent of D.C.'s population identifies as LGBTQ, while Oregon and Delaware, coming in at second and third, have LGBTQ

populations of 7.8 and 7.5 percent, respectively,

Vermont and New Hampshire are close behind — 7.4 and 7.2 percent, respectively, followed by Washington state at 6.9 percent and Colorado and Maine, where LGBTQ residents accounted for 6.8 percent of each state's population.

California, the largest state by population, has the most LGBTQ residents — 1,549,600 — followed by Texas's 1,071,300 and Florida's 898,000. New York is close behind with 853,600 residents before the number drops to 586,500 in Pennsylvania, followed by 557,600 in Ohio. The top 10 is rounded out by Michigan, Illinois, Georgia and Washington.

Nearly 36 percent of LGBTQ Americans live in the South, which researchers defined as stretching from Texas and Oklahoma to Florida and north through Delaware. Kentucky, West Virginia, and D.C. are also included, per USA Today.

The Midwest holds 21.1 percent of LGBTQ Americans, while the Northeast has 18.5 percent.

The report separately found young adults — ages 18 to 24 — take up the largest share of LGBTQ Americans, at 15.2 percent. That's equal to nearly 1 in 6 young adults in the U.S., or about 4,659,600 people.

The share of those identifying as LGBTQ decreases by age, with those 65 and older only taking up about 1.8 percent, or 924,300 people.

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'American Idol's' First Gay Finalist's Life Now

By Michael Bryson



Trigger warning for anyone who would rather not acknowledge the passing of time, but last year marked the 20th anniversary of American Idol.

Yes, that means that, in 2023, the popular ABC singing competition series will be old enough to buy a drink! L'chaim!

Over the years, American Idol has introduced us to some of this generation's greatest vocalists, including a number of talented LGBTQ+ performers. We'll never forget the pipes on bi icon Frenchie Davis, or Clay Aiken's near win opposite Ruben Studdard. Of course, Adam Lambert continues to rock our worlds, and we were thrilled to welcome David Archuleta into the family in 2021.

After that emotional audition in Chicago, the judges selected a then 19-year old Verraros to move on to Hollywood. From there, the performer received some pretty harsh criticism (Simon Cowell memorably quipped that, if Verraros wound up winning the competition, the show's mission "would have failed"), but made it to the Top

10 off of fan vote support. In the first week of finals, he was eliminated. But Verraros' career certainly didn't stop with the show.

In 2003, he joined the official American Idol tour and made headlines we he came out in January of that year. He shared that he had been open about his sexuality with fellow contestants during the show's run, but felt he was encouraged not to be open on the show lest it give him an unfair advantage.

"I just thought it was time to come out," Verraros said at the time. "I really hate the segregation and only being able to hold hands in gay bars. We have to start breaking down the barriers. I want to be a gay advocate and let teens know that being gay is just a small part of who you are. And if people don't like it, it's their problem, not yours."

With the notoriety from the show, Verraros would go on to release three albums, and was able to pursue his original passion, acting, appearing in one of the lead roles in the low-budget gay comedy *Eating Out* and its sequel *Sloppy Seconds*.

Despite those films being in heavy rotation for gays of a certain age, it'd been quite some time since we'd heard from Verraros. As it turns out, he's since moved out of the entertainment spotlight, but the folks at *Instinct Magazine* have alerted us to the fact that he's thriving in his late thirties, and looking hunkier than ever.

We were also pleased to learn that Verraros is now happily married, having tied the knot with husband Sean Michael Buck back in November 2021.

And, frankly, the two are adorable together. Especially when they're both rocking sunglasses and scruff, some might even call them husband twins—but we'll let you be the judge of that.

According to his Twitter profile, Verraros is now a recruiter for a cybersecurity firm called Akamai Technologies, but it sounds like he's not quite left his music career behind. In a tweet last fall, he shared the (very thirsty) cover for his last album—2011's *Do Not Disturb*—and revealed he'd be getting back into the studio.

We're definitely down for that!

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OUT & HEALTH

'Survivor' Winner Parvati Shallow Comes Out As Queer

By Jennifer Davis



Just in time to ring in 2024! Survivor winner Parvati Shallow has come out as queer in an Instagram post shared on Saturday, December 30. The reality TV legend shared pictures of herself kissing comedian Mae Martin, thus hard-launching their relationship to the public.

Shallow wrote in the caption: "We're here. We're queer. Happy new year."

Besides winning Survivor Micronesia – Fans vs.

Favorites, Shallow also competed on Survivor: Cook Islands, Survivor: Heroes vs. Villains, Survivor: Cagayan, and Survivor: Winners at War. She is currently set to star in the second season of The Traitors on Peacock.

Between 2017 and 2021, Shallow was married to fellow Survivor alum John Fincher, with whom she has a daughter.

Nonbinary writer, actor, and comedian Martin is best known for the Netflix series Feel Good, for which they won a

BAFTA in 2021. Martin is currently one of the cohosts of the Handsome podcast alongside Tig Notaro and Fortune Feimster.

Congratulations to the new couple!



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Life and Style

A Key Source Of Support For LGBTQ+ Youth Are Aunts

By Drew Wilson



Aunts, whether they're blood relatives or people who have chosen this role, provide significant support to LGBTQ+ youth, says a new research paper.

That support is often both emotional and practical, including housing for young people, according to the paper, "Aunties, Aunts, and Tías: The Forgotten Othermother Supporting and Housing LGBTQ Youth," published in *Socius*, an open-access journal of the American Sociological Association.

The paper looked at the role of these people and "othermothers" — a term common in the Black community for those who assist a birth or adoptive mother — in families in Southern California's Inland Empire and in south Texas, which have not been the subject of extensive LGBTQ-related study. The authors interviewed 83 young people in the summer of 2022.

"Aunts and othermothers play a critical role in the lives of LGBTQ youth," the authors wrote. "For the LGBTQ youth in this study, aunts provided gender-affirming and queer and trans support, along with

anticipatory support for housing and actual housing support for their niblings [a gender-neutral term for the child of a sibling]. Like Black othermothers, aunts of all racial backgrounds brought an ethic of care and social responsibility toward the well-being of their LGBTQ niblings. Aunts acted as a buffer between the youth and other family members, especially parents, and provided consistent loving and affirming support."

Aunts and othermothers are often less invested than parents in the idea that young people must conform to traditional heterosexual and cisgender roles, the authors noted. "Parents, especially fathers, are often consciously aware of trying to make their sons live up to hegemonic ideals of masculinity, and mothers often assume their children are heterosexual, discuss love and dating in terms of heterosexuality, and may erase LGBTQ people from their children's lives," they reported. Aunts and othermothers may therefore allow youth more freedom and acceptance, and that is one reason it's important to study these relationships, they commented.

The authors are Brandon Robinson, an associate professor at the University of California, Riverside, and chair of its Gender and Sexuality Studies Department; Jvania Michelle Webb, a postdoctoral student at UC Riverside; and Amy L. Stone, a sociology and anthropology professor at Trinity University in San Antonio.

"This study joins other scholars in not only decentering the nuclear family but also in interrogating what is missed in the lives of LGBTQ youth (and youth more generally) if scholars only focus on parent-child dynamics," the authors explained. "One thing missed is potentially how adult nonparental relatives can be a main source of social support, including housing support, for youth."

The paper is part of the research of the Family, Housing, and Me Project, a long-term study of LGBTQ+ youth, of which Robinson and Stone are leaders.

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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

World's Biggest Cruise Ship Readies For Maiden Voyage

By Louis Massengill

“Next few days lots of regulatory inspections, loading and off loading equipment, yard workers going home, more crew arriving along with a very special crew member.”

The enormous 20-deck vessel, which has capacity for up to 5,610 guests and 2,350 crew members, will arrive in Miami on January 9, according to Bayley, who added that preparations were “going well.”

Icon of the Seas was officially handed over to Royal Caribbean at the Meyer Turku shipyard in Turku, Finland, on November 27, 2023.

The ship, which took 900 days to build, is now preparing to welcome passengers for its maiden voyage, a seven-day trip around the Caribbean.

It will offer year-round Eastern or Western Caribbean adventures from Miami, with the likes of St. Maarten, Mexico, St. Thomas and Royal Caribbean’s private island, Perfect Day at CocoCay in the Bahamas, on the itinerary.

Those on board will be able to enjoy a host of exciting features, including the world’s largest waterpark at sea, eight

neighborhoods and 40 or so different bars and dining options.

The Hideaway will be home to the world’s first suspended infinity pool at sea, while Chill Island will hold four of the ship’s seven pools and an adults-only zone. Thrill Island will feature a ropes course/thrill ride that allows guests to swing 154 feet above the ocean, as well as a FlowRider wave simulator and a mini golf course.

“Today, we are celebrating more than a new ship; it’s also the celebration of the culmination of more than 50 years of innovation and dreaming at Royal Caribbean to create the ultimate vacation experience,” said Royal Caribbean Group President and CEO Jason Liberty during



a ceremony at the shipyard in November.

The latest sighting of the ship comes after Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi was named as its official icon.

According to a statement from the cruise company, Messi, who was named Time Magazine’s Athlete of the Year for 2023, will participate in the naming celebration for the vessel later this month.

Icon of the Seas has attracted a lot of attention since it was revealed in October 2022, and not all of it has been positive.

Last July, a colorful image of its stern section went viral, with some users branding it a “monstrosity,” and a “pile of decadence.”





However, experts later

suggested that this reaction wasn't particularly unusual.

"Images of Royal Caribbean's ships have often elicited strong responses," cruise expert Stewart Chiron stated when questioned about the reaction in August.

"The negative responses to Icon of the Sea are evidently from non-cruisers. The current image is quite colorful and depicts a ship with lots of options. The positive responses far outweigh the others."

When contacted at the time, a Royal Caribbean spokesperson did not comment on the feedback to the image, but stressed that Icon of the Seas had received an "incredible reaction," which had led to the highest volume booking week in the company's history.

Icon of the Seas takes the "world's largest cruise ship" title from Wonder of the Seas, another vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, which measures 1,188 feet in length and holds 18 decks.

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Phoenix Arts & Innovation District Announces \$7M Start Of First Phase

By David Vandygriff



The Future of Cities announced Dec. 11 its Phoenix Arts & Innovation District in Jacksonville is starting the first phase of construction on two properties at 2320 and 2336 N. Liberty St.

It said the work is funded through the Dec. 6 closure of a \$7 million loan from Local Initiatives Support Corp.

“The Phoenix Arts & Innovation District is an opportunity to co-create in partnership with the neighborhood of North Springfield a new vision for its future,” said Tony Cho, CEO and founder of Miami-based Future of Cities and founding managing partner of PHX JAX, in a news release.

“We’ve learned through experience on other projects in Miami, that the input of artists, residents and the city at large is essential to success.”

PHX JAX plans comprise 10 properties across 8.3 acres in the North Springfield neighborhood.

The district encompasses 120,000 square feet of “adaptively repurposed” warehouse spaces in a designated opportunity zone.

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The release said the first phase will begin with The Emerald Station, featuring creative offices, community gathering spaces and a warehouse event facility, and The Liberty Building, which will house 17,850 square feet of affordable artist studios, galleries, small-format retail and restaurants.

“For LISC Jacksonville, the PHX JAX project represents an opportunity for us to partner on what we believe is going to be a catalytic project for one of Jacksonville’s fastest growing and most diverse neighborhoods,” said Irvin PeDro Cohen, LISC Jacksonville executive director.

Preliminary site work began in spring 2023 and construction starts this month.

JAA Architecture and Hota Design Studio are the architectural and design firms and Prosser Inc. will serve as

civil engineer for the Emerald Station and Liberty Building.

Avant Construction Group is the general contractor for the Emerald Station.

Construction of the Emerald



Station property will begin immediately, while work on The Liberty Building will begin in the first quarter of 2024.

Both buildings are scheduled to be available for tenants in the third quarter of 2024.

District 7 Jacksonville City Council member Jimmy Peluso said in the release the PHX JAX transition and adaptive reuse will create positive economic impact on the Eastside and North Springfield neighborhoods.

Developers intend to open an outdoor market space at 2335 Market St. by spring 2024 to serve as a hub of community activity.



Naked Kitchen is the first food and beverage concept to enter a lease agreement in the project.

Naked Kitchen, a restaurant with plant-based and protein options and the motto “Cooking with Conscience,” will lease within the Liberty Building.

The restaurant ownership group comprises spouses Brian Nelson, a chef, and Alexandra Bowles, managing partner, and their business partner, chef Matt Johnson.

Nelson said Nov. 16 they hope to open for breakfast and lunch in August and add dinner service in October.

Nelson doesn’t want to label the cuisine because Naked Kitchen will serve diverse foods from vegan eggs and plant-based proteins to house-cured pastrami sandwiches and kimchi grilled cheeses.

“We want to have that balance in our restaurant,” Nelson said.

Naked Kitchen’s broker was Cantrell & Morgan sales associate Kayla Deguzman.

Future of Cities works with Colliers Urban Division Senior Vice President Matthew Clark and associates Sam Middlekauff and Olivia Steinemann to manage the pre

-leasing of the remaining retail, gallery and food and beverage spaces.

The release said PHX JAX will continue to host community events during redevelopment.

The events allow attendees to learn more about site plans, share feedback with the project team and contribute ideas.

The release asks those wanting information about coworking, artist studios or event opportunities to email info@phxjax.com.



The nonprofit arm of the project, Friends of Phoenix, is aligned with the broader mission of the Phoenix Arts & Innovation District. Friends of Phoenix operates through four pillars: arts and culture; sustainability; technology; and financial stability.

Since 2020, Future of Cities has been buying the property to regenerate the neighborhood into affordable housing, innovation, markets, food trucks, events, green space and more.

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Cities in Miami have been investing in about two dozen parcels east of Main Street to Liberty Street, south of East 15th Street and generally north of the rail line.

The city enacted legislation in August 2023 to rezone the 8.09-acre site for commercial, multifamily residential, light industrial and indoor/outdoor recreation uses as The Phoenix Arts + Innovation District PUD.



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Mr. Gay World Wants To Make Sure You're OK

By Tracie Jackson



Beauty pageants get a bad rap, Troy Michael Smith believes. As the most recent winner of the Mr. Gay World competition — produced by a 15-year-old nonprofit that aims to “identify the best spokesperson for the LGBTQI community” — Smith is excited about the platform his victory provides. The Alaska-based realtor and pageant consultant hopes to spread the word on mental health and fighting suicide; he points out his state’s queer community is disproportionately prone to self-harm. While Smith’s victory at the October competition in South Africa included old-school categories like swimwear and formal wear, he was also **required to ace an LGBTQ+ history test and a 10-minute presentation on social responsibility.** The public speaking may have been the easiest aspect of the competition for Smith, who has ran for public office and worked for Senator Lisa Murkowski. Smith shared with JaxGayMag his plans as Mr. Gay World, as well as details on his fitness regimen, a possible return to politics, and his suggestions for

defeating HIV in the Black community.

The overall experience is life changing. You get to create lifelong relationships with incredible guys from all around the world. The competition is brutal because there are so many areas of competition and you have very little room for error if you want to make the top 5. In a competition like this, you need to understand the scoring system and how much each category is worth. For example, the social responsibility campaign challenge was 25 percent of the overall score. If you don’t do well in that challenge, you have no chance of winning and very little hope of making the top 5.

The general rule should be to prepare yourself to do well in every single category. That’s what I did. I studied gay history and current events because I knew that the written exam was one of the major categories. That’s another very important area. If you don’t know about our gay history, you won’t stand a chance on the written exam. If you don’t do well on the written exam, you can’t win

either. It’s a heavily weighted category.

In order to win Mr. Gay World, you need to score in the top 3 in every single category, especially in the categories that are the highest scoring — written exam, public vote, and social responsibility campaign. If you win one or more of these categories, there is a little wiggle room to place out of the top 3 in a category that’s only worth 5 percent of score.

For me, I won the three major categories that weighted most in score: the written exam, social responsibility campaign, and the public vote. That’s most likely what won me the title. Most importantly, this isn’t a beauty pageant about who is the hottest gay guy in the world. It’s a competition searching for LGBTQ leaders who are established and have active plans to take their advocacy to another level. Everyone in the top 5 had incredible platforms and were very deserving of the title. I couldn’t have asked for a better top 5 to be holding hands with. I will cherish this moment forever.

What Will Being Mr. Gay World Entail For You Over The Next Year?

My goal is to continue advocating and spreading awareness for suicide prevention. The gay community is 4 to 5 times more than likely to attempt suicide than any other demographic. These statistics are continuously rising within our community and that's a problem. As a member of the Board of Directors of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) in Alaska, I plan to hit the ground running to recruit volunteers, advocate for public policy, and fundraise for this incredible nonprofit organization. Moreover, I was recently invited to attend the AFSP National Leadership Conference this January in Orlando.

You're The First Black Man Crowned Mr. Gay World. Tell Us How That Feels.

I grew up in an area that was challenging being a person of color. I was often called racial slurs in school from late elementary through high school. It was saddening because if you ever had the courage to stand up for yourself, you were the one who was considered a "trouble-maker." The system has been fundamentally flawed from the very beginning, and I've witnessed white privilege and racism firsthand. However, I took that hurt and pain and turned it into a life of activism. To this day, as a Black man, I won't let any racially motivated

bigotry affect anything that I do. My favorite quote of all time is by Michelle Obama — "When they go low, we go high." This has been my credo ever since she first spoke those words at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. Of all things I've accomplished in my life thus far, becoming the first Black man to win Mr. Gay World in its 15 year history sits at the very top.

Black Gay And Bisexual Men Are Still Disproportionately Affected By HIV. How Can We Change The Paradigm On This?

First of all, this all comes down to systemic inequalities. Gay Black people are still experiencing racial disparities in health and are more prone to broader social and economic barriers than any other demographic. We need to do better as a country to ensure that health care is more equitable for the Black community. The best way that we can make change is through public policy. This means we need to continue electing officials who understand the extreme importance of addressing racial disparities and how that affects the overall health of Black communities.

Why Is The Issue Of Mental Health Especially Important To You?

I'm a suicide survivor and I've lost friends to suicide. A few years ago my best friend from back home lost her father to suicide. This really hit me hard. Her and her brother are dear

friends of mine and it was heartbreaking watching them go through this.

I've also lost a very close family friend to the opioid crisis. Addiction isn't a choice. It's never a choice. The misconception around this puzzles me. Stigmas often portray a negative image of our loved ones. Our focus needs to be on ending that stigma.

Aside from that, I was diagnosed with clinical depression in 2019. I don't have any shame in that. Through therapy, medication, and self-care I am able to live a normal life. Often times it's harder than most to smile, but I make sure to take care of myself and surround myself with positive people.

You've also been candid about your weight loss and fitness journey. Can you offer any recommendations?

It is very hard to get started, but once you do it, it's well worth it.... I don't work out for my physical appearance. I stay active and workout because it gives me a clear mind. Anytime that I work out, I feel a significant increase in my mood after. Pairing that with a healthy meal is golden.



Life and Style

Florida Broward County's \$800K Pro-LGBT+ Rose Bowl Parade Float

By Michael Henderson



In a striking display of one Florida community's commitment to diversity and inclusivity, Broward County invested \$800,000 to craft an elaborate parade float for the prestigious Tournament of Roses in Pasadena, Calif. The float, which made its grand appearance on New Year's Day, was a spectacle of beauty and a bold statement against the backdrop of Florida's state government and its anti-LGBTQ+ laws and policies.

Themed "Everyone Under the Sun," the float featured a dazzling replica of the Seminole Guitar Hotel, intricately designed alligators, manatees, a yacht, and the iconic Fort Lauderdale sea wall — all artistically crafted from an array of flowers and organic materials, South Florida's public radio station WLRN reports.

The float's design was more than just an aesthetic choice; it reflected the county's rich natural heritage and a nod to its vibrant cultural landscape.

With its lifeguard stand adorned with the LGBTQ+ Pride flag and organic representations of local flora and fauna, the float served as a visual manifesto of the county's 34 www.JaxGayMag.com

commitment to inclusivity. This was not just a fun display but a strategic effort by Broward County to promote itself as something more than Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis's anti-LGBTQ+ platform.

The float showcased local talents and icons as well. The Florida Panther's mascot, Stanley, Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, and Broward County artist Alexander Star, who performed an original song, were part of this moving exhibit.

The initiative, led by Visit Lauderdale, the county's tourism marketing organization, was a response to the increasing challenges faced by the region in attracting tourists and conventions, according to WLRN. In the previous year, Broward County experienced significant setbacks, with 18 conferences withdrawing their bookings, primarily due to the state's controversial policies, including the "don't say gay" law and restrictions on reproductive rights.

Stacy Ritter, president and CEO of Visit Lauderdale, emphasized the float's significance.

"It was everything that we wanted it to be, showing

Broward County as a welcoming and inclusive destination, a stark contrast to what you might read about Florida," she told the radio station.

The campaign also aimed to counteract the travel advisory issued by Equality Florida, which warned of potential risks to the LGBTQ+ community and others due to the state's hostile legislative environment. Gina Duncan, strategic partnerships manager with Equality Florida, praised the float as "beautiful, powerful, timely, and inclusive," underscoring that it represented the "real Florida" and the organizer's dedication to inclusivity and diversity.

The parade also featured notable local figures, including Broward County Public Schools principal of the year Marie Hautigan and Stuart Milk, executive chair and co-founder of the Harvey Milk Foundation and nephew of Harvey Milk, one of the nation's first openly gay elected officials and an icon of LGBTQ+ history.



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Canada's Drag Race's Denim Comparisons To Gottmik

By Miles Dawson

Many RuPaul's Drag Race queens have spoken out about how hurtful it feels when they're compared to each other, and things get even worse when fans compare two drag entertainers simply because of their gender identities.

In 2021, Gottmik became the first-ever trans man to compete on Drag Race. Gottmik was cast in season 13 of the flagship series and went on to the grand finale. Two years later, Denim was cast on Canada's Drag Race season 4 and became the second trans man to compete in the Drag Race franchise.

It's quite annoying to see fans regularly comparing Denim and Gottmik on social media when the only main similarity between them is that they're both trans men who were cast on Drag Race. As a result, Denim has now taken the time to address these frustrating comparisons. The Canada's Drag Race star shared a picture via Instagram story and wrote:

"I get this comment every single day and I always have to laugh because it's like... if you

see all trans men as the same, just say that! Our aesthetics are wildly different and our only common denominator is that we're trans men (and our trans characteristics). God forbid a second trans man gets on Drag Race amongst the 93848484 cis gay men (excluding other trans women/nb people obvi)."

"Saying I'm a 'cheap Gottmik' is funny because I've never even had close to a fraction of that level of wealth and resources and never claimed to," she added. "I made an extremely memorable and iconic package with the support of my drag family and friends, I spent all the money I had to my name on Drag Race (and it wasn't a lot) and I still DID THAT. So eat it."

Denim concluded, "So many trans men do drag, there's just not a lot of mainstream representation, and comments like this just show that you're an entitled gay that knows nothing about queer culture and it's embarrassing honestly!"

It is indeed quite annoying and unnecessary for fans to be drawing these

conclusions between Denim and Gottmik, and it doesn't help the franchise to push for more inclusion and diversity if this is how viewers will keep reacting to these artists who aren't cis gay men.

Overall, the Drag Race franchise is a fabulous platform to celebrate LGBTQ+ artists and turn these up-and-coming entertainers into global superstars. While it's understandable that fans want to have points of reference (former contestants) when getting to know new Drag Race queens, it is important to keep in mind that these are all different people who deserve to stand on their own.

We're proud of Denim for speaking up, and can't wait to see how the rest of this season plays out!

Canada's Drag Race season 4 airs every Thursday on WOW Presents Plus.

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News & Politics

Trans Arienne Childrey Running For Ohio House

By Julia Frost

Arienne Childrey is running to be the first transgender member of the Ohio legislature — and she's running against a state representative who sponsored a drag ban and supported bills restricting gender-affirming care and trans participation in school sports.

"If you're going to attack our communities, then you're gonna have to compete against someone from our community," Childrey told the Ohio Capital Journal.

Childrey has declared her candidacy in the Democratic primary in Ohio House District 84, located in the northwestern part of the state. No other Democrat has entered the race so far. The incumbent is Republican Angela King.

King and Rep. Josh Williams are the lead sponsors of House Bill 245, which would ban drag performances outside of adult entertainment venues.

Penalties for violation would include criminal charges. It's awaiting action in a House committee. In testifying for the bill in November, King voiced objections to a drag show held during a Pride event in her district last summer. Childrey

organized a protest against the bill.

King also supported a bill that would ban gender-affirming care for minors and one that would bar trans girls and women from participating in female sports in public schools. The legislature has passed these bills, but Gov. Mike DeWine vetoed them last week. An override is possible.

Childrey, a Virginia native, has lived in Ohio since 2014. She is the founder of Northwest Ohio Trans Advocacy. This is her first run for elected office.

"It's well past time that we've got somebody who goes to the statehouse who's actually interested in dealing with those issues — issues that actually impact people that can help our lives — rather than somebody who's more focused on who they can hurt rather than who they can help," Childrey told the Capital Journal.

Her priority issues, in addition to LGBTQ+ rights, include support for public education and job creation, expanding broadband access, and strengthening unions. "I'm committed to being accessible to our constituents, so that together we can make a real

difference in our district, and state," her campaign website says.

"You should have representation that actually cares about your day-to-day life and people that are actually working to make things better," she said in the Capital Journal interview. "Together, we can actually make some real change one step at a time."

Childrey, who is 40, transitioned at age 34. "I know what gender-affirming care is for me," she told the publication. "I know that it was lifesaving. I know the years that I wasted ... before I transitioned. ... I've never regretted my transition."

"The only thing that could possibly make me more happy than being the first trans woman elected in the state of Ohio is to not be the only trans person elected in the state of Ohio," she added.

The primary election is March 19.



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- Top Left:** Cover 135, "No Longer Olivia: Reintroducing Liv Lux Miyako-MagJerMa".
- Top Middle:** Cover 144, "BE BOLD BE PROUD BE GAY".
- Top Right:** Cover 143, "Femphobia In Gay Community".
- Bottom Left:** Cover 142, "Ultra Rich: 12 Richest LGBTQ People in the World".
- Bottom Middle:** Cover 145, "BE LOUD BE PROUD" and "PRIDE SEPT 30 - OCT 2".
- Bottom Right:** Cover 146, "What is 'queerbaiting' and is it really such a bad thing?".

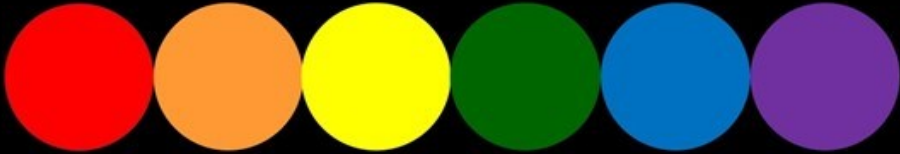
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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

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New Oyster Bar Restaurant Is Coming To Springfield

By David Vandygriff

A brand-new oyster bar restaurant called Othello is preparing to make its debut early 2024 in Springfield, located at 1555 N. Pearl St.

The new restaurant will sit at the corner of West 6th and North Pearl Streets, in the former home of Ralph's Tavern. Father-daughter duo Jeriees and Vanesa Ewais are the brains behind Othello, hoping to connect the community with fresh seafood from local fishermen. Focusing on the oyster bar, the restaurant will be open for lunch and dinner from Tuesday

Saturday, with hopes of eventually expanding to brunch on Saturdays and Sundays. Jeriees tells What Now Jacksonville he expects to open Othello by the end of the year.

While the new restaurant will be heavily oyster bar-influenced, there will still be other seafood options. On top of the fresh seafood that is delivered and prepped in-house daily, the owners plan to work with local farmers to incorporate the freshest ingredients with every dish. The restaurant will also likely

serve some kind of alcohol, along with other drinks and offerings.

This will be a great spot for Othello, sitting in its own corner only a few blocks away from North Main Street. The new restaurant will join several other businesses in the area that have taken space on the corner of a residential area, including The Superette grocery store and Luna Food Store. Like these businesses, Othello will rely on the nearby residents for their survival.

For more information visit www.OthelloSpringfield.com

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