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MAGAZINE

BE BOLD BE PROUD BE GAY



INSIDE



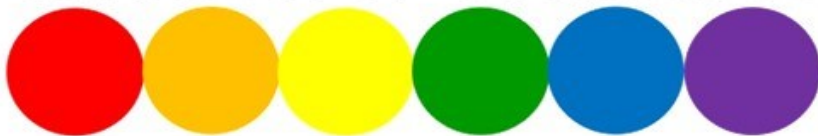
Gay Couple
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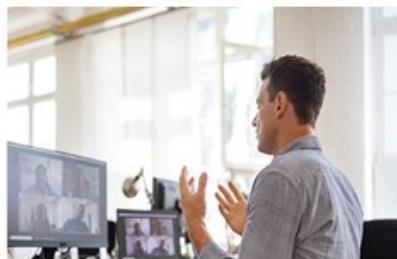
'Chucky' Canceled
After Third Season

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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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**How Halloween Became A
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By Oliver Haug



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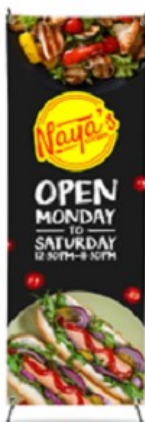
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News & Politics

Families Ask Appellate Court To Overturn Florida's Youth Trans Care Ban

By David Vandygriff



Families challenging Florida's ban on transgender health care for minors want an appellate court striking the law down. A new brief argues the law, signed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, was based on bigotry and misinformed research.

"I love my child and want to get her the healthcare she needs," said one parent identified in court documents as Jane Doe. "As a parent, it is heartbreaking to see my right to make healthcare decisions for my child taken away by political bullies, and the hurt and harm that has caused my child."

In June, U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle ruled Florida's ban was unconstitutional, and initially said the state could not enforce its law on appeal. But the 11th Circuit in a 2-1 decision stayed that ruling while it considers an appeal by the state of Florida.

Hinkle in his ruling said Florida's law passed despite an "overwhelming weight of medical authority" that says transgender people should have access to gender-affirming care. The latest brief says appellate judges should

uphold that decision.

"The District Court scrupulously followed this Court's directive to examine the record to determine whether the challenged statute and rules were 'a pretext for invidious discrimination' against transgender Floridians," the brief reads.

"In so doing, the District Court considered each of the relevant factors and determined that the evidence strongly supported a finding that an improper discriminatory purpose was "a motivating factor" in the adoption of the statute and rules, requiring application of heightened scrutiny."

In addition to the law signed by DeSantis, Florida's Board of Medicine and Board of Osteopathic Medicine banned specific care for minors, and in some cases for trans adults. Hinkle had also criticized those regulatory decisions.

"The Boards departed from their usual procedures, orchestrated public hearings, and single-mindedly pursued the predetermined outcome sought by the Governor and Surgeon General," he ruled, referencing DeSantis and Florida Surgeon General

Joseph Ladapo, a defendant in the case.

A three-judge panel has already signaled a belief the state will likely prevail in its appeal.

"The district court likely misapplied the presumption that the legislature acted in good faith when it concluded that the prohibition and regulation provisions, and the implementing rules, were based on invidious discrimination against transgender minors and adults," a majority opinion staying Hinkle's ruling stated.

The majority included Judges Britt C. Grant and Robert J. Luck, the latter of whom previously served on the Florida Supreme Court as a DeSantis nominee. But Judge Charles R. Wilson dissented with that opinion, saying Hinkle "identified sufficient record evidence to support concluding that the act's passage was based on invidious discrimination against transgender adults and minors."

The latest brief argued anti-transgender bias tainted the legislative and regulatory process in Florida from the

start.

"The Board even invited several known opponents of transgender healthcare to participate on the hearing panel to respond to any commenters

who opposed the rule," the brief reads.

The LBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, National Center for Lesbian

Rights, Southern Legal Counsel and law firm Lowenstein Sandler and representing families and individuals impacted by the Florida laws and restrictions.

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OUT & HEALTH

Jax Joins Global Partnership As Fast-Track City In Fight Against HIV/AIDS

By Michael Brayson



In Jacksonville, roughly 6,935 people are currently living with HIV, which ranks as the 10th highest in Florida and is 20% higher than the state average.

Statistically, for every 100,000 Duval County residents, 28.3 will be diagnosed with HIV in a given year.

In 2022, Duval County diagnosed 294 people with HIV, which was the fourth highest in the state and 37% higher than the state average.

But, Jacksonville's numbers have been improving over the last five years, said Dr. Sunil Joshi, the city's Chief Health Officer. However, we have a long way to go," he said.

A major step in the right direction was taken Wednesday, when Mayor Donna Deegan signed the Paris Declaration, making Jacksonville an official Fast-Track City, Joshi said.

The ceremony in City Hall took place on National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day with an AIDS quilt hanging in the background.

"It's all happening at the right time. Jacksonville's moving in the right direction. It's a special day for us," Joshi said.

Deegan's signature means Jacksonville has joined a global partnership of more than 500 cities that aims to end urban HIV epidemics by getting to zero new HIV infections, zero

AIDS-related deaths, and zero HIV-related stigma.

Launched on World AIDS Day 2014, the partnership also advances efforts to end tuberculosis (TB) epidemics and eliminate viral hepatitis (HBV and HCV) in urban settings by 2030.

The global partnership also includes the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the City of Paris.

For more information about the Fast-Track Cities initiative, visit: <https://www.fast-trackcities.org>.

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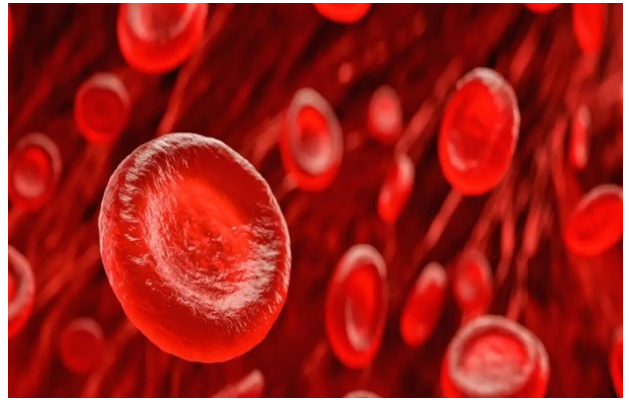
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Science & Technology

EndoMac: Newly-Discovered Cell Type Repairs Blood Vessels

By Jack Sappington



A research team from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) has identified a previously unknown type of cell that could revolutionize tissue repair and regeneration in mammals.

These newly discovered cells, named EndoMac progenitors, have the remarkable capability to differentiate into two distinct types: endothelial cells, which create blood vessels, and macrophages, which are immune cells that play a crucial role in tissue repair and defense.

“These cells have an important job, to help grow blood vessels when the body calls for it,” Dr. Sanuri Liyange, a part of the research team, said.

“They are activated by injury or poor blood flow, at which point they rapidly expand to aid in healing.”

Proof Of A Century-Old Theory

For over a century, scientists have speculated about the existence of cells with functions similar to those of the newly

discovered EndoMac progenitors, but they had never been identified—until now.

They were found in the outer layer of adult mice’s aortas and could potentially revolutionize treatments for conditions like diabetes, where the body’s natural healing processes are compromised.

Notably, EndoMac progenitors lack typical “self” markers, making them promising candidates for stem cell transplantation, as they are less likely to trigger an immune response.

Dr. Liyange and her team successfully isolated these cells from mice, cultivated them, and observed them forming colonies. Testing in diabetic mouse models showed dramatic improvements in wound healing, particularly in cases where healing would normally be impaired.

Understanding Macrophages

To it’s essential to first examine macrophages. Macrophages are among the earliest immune cells produced during embryonic development and are crucial for tissue repair and defense.

In adults, most tissues retain macrophages made during early development, with these populations occasionally renewing to maintain immune defenses.

A century ago, scientists hypothesized that circulating stem cells in the blood could generate new macrophages throughout adulthood. For a long time, researchers believed these cells, which had been identified in mouse embryos, continued to exist into adulthood, originating from bone marrow.

However, recent studies suggest that bone marrow-derived stem cells are limited to a few tissues, such as the gut, skin, and heart.

Now, researchers propose that macrophages in adults are derived from previously undiscovered stem cells established early in life. This idea is still debated, but the new findings from Australia support this emerging theory.

The study suggests that embryonic progenitor cells responsible for producing macrophages are seeded in the heart’s aorta during early

development, and as the mice mature, these progenitor cells introduce new macrophages into various tissues.

Further Research

The research team is now

extending their studies to explore EndoMac progenitor cells in skin and muscle tissue, with results anticipated within the next 12 months.

Additionally, they are

investigating the presence of these cells in human tissue, and early indications are promising, potentially paving the way for breakthroughs in human tissue repair and regenerative medicine.



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Religion & Faith

Religion Corner

By Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza



Yesterday's service in Jacksonville used the Broadway show "Les Misérables" as the modern lesson. It is my favorite musical and one of the few for which I know almost all the words to all the songs.

In July of 1987, I was the pastor of a church in Jacksonville—St. Luke's Metropolitan Community Church—that had been fire-bombed three times but kept coming back. At the denomination's general conference that year, our church was recognized for its courage and resilience. Despite hate, St. Luke's MCC persisted in serving God and a community with, back then, almost no other dedicated organizations. We were the AIDS services, the helpline, and the community center.

The conference convened in a hotel on Miami Beach that summer. Our church had been terrorized, but, because Jacksonville is not much of a tourist destination, our city's gay male community mostly had been spared the devastation of AIDS, which was decimating other urban gay male communities. Many, if not most, of the men attending that conference ultimately died of AIDS. Many of them were already showing the symptoms.

That was the context in which I first heard a soloist sing, "Bring Him Home" from "Les Misérables." The singer was a tenor from the Dallas church where I would become pastor before the year was out. Like everyone else in the room, I wept as the song was offered


to a new generation of "miserable ones." I later had the same reaction when I heard the Turtle Creek Chorale, a mostly gay male chorus, sing "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables." The singer laments the fact he is still here while his friends are gone.

Revisiting those songs yesterday stirred many memories and feelings for me. I first saw "Les Misérables" with Bill, and now he is gone. It is still hard for me to understand why people of faith are often the miserable ones. It makes me angry that our faith doesn't provide an exemption. It is terrible theology to assume God will give us favorable treatment; still, a part of me clings to bad theology, even though it continues to disappoint.

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'Chucky' Canceled After Third Season

By Jennifer Davis



Our favorite possessed doll has possibly been murdered for the very last time.

The horror comedy series Chucky has just been canceled and will no longer return for a fourth season. The first three seasons aired on Syfy and USA Network, but now a planned abbreviated final season has been axed.

Chucky is a continuation of the Child's Play series created by out gay director, Don Mancini, and follows the bloody exploits of a doll possessed by a serial killer. The show follows a group of teens as they try to keep Chucky from killing everyone they love.

The third season, which finished airing in May, chronicled Chucky's journey all the way to the White House as Jake (Zackary Arthur), Devon (Björgvin Arnarson), and Levy

(Alyvia Alyn Lind) try to bring him down.

Mancini, who had already planned out a fourth season, doesn't seem to be deterred by the cancellation. "I'm heartbroken over the news that Chucky won't be coming back for a fourth season, but am so grateful for the killer three years we did have," he said in a statement, Deadline reports. "I'd like to thank UCP/Syfy/Peacock/Eat the Cat, our awesome cast and Toronto-based crew (the best in the business), and finally, to our amazing fans, a big bloody hug. Your incredible #RenewChucky campaign really warmed Chucky's cold heart. Chucky will return! He ALWAYS come back."

Mancini also took to X (formerly Twitter) right after the news broke to assure fans that

Chucky was down but not out. "HE'LL BE BACK," he wrote.

The series is wild, bloody, campy, and more queer than we ever could have hoped for. From gay main characters who fall for each other to Chucky's nonbinary kids to Tiffany Valentine (Jennifer Tilly) exploring her Sapphic side, the queerness that was subtextual in the early movies is fully TEXTUAL here, which is why it's even more disappointing that this fun series has been canceled alongside so many amazing queer shows like A League of Their Own and Dead Boy Detectives, that have gotten the boot.

We rarely get queer representation like this on TV, so we're going to need another network or streaming service to pick it up ASAP! Netflix, are you listening?!

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OUT & HEALTH

Suicides Steady Near Highest Level Recorded: CDC

By Ruth Springer

Suicides in the U.S. remained at about the highest level in history last year, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show.

According to the provisional data, just over 49,300 suicide deaths were reported in 2023 but that number could increase if investigations are concluded.

The CDC said in 2021 and 2022, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death among all age groups in the U.S. It was a higher cause of death among people aged 10 to 34 years old.

In 2018, there was a peak in suicide rates, which declined through 2020 but new data shows it increased after the

pandemic into 2022.

From 2002 to 2022, the CDC found the suicide rate for males was three to four times the rate of females, though both increased over time.

Firearm-related suicide was the leading means of suicide for both men and women in the U.S. and rates increased over time.

Suicide rates for men 75 years old and older was significantly higher than all other male age groups.

Male suicide rates have been worrisome for years. Their mental health is often overlooked and they are not as encouraged to treat mental

health issues as women are, experts say. More women have been diagnosed with depression than men, likely because they tend to seek out care more often.

Katherine Keyes, a Columbia University public health professor, told The Associated Press that the decline in suicide rates around the start of the pandemic was “promising news.” The uptick since then, or return to what it was before, can be concerning.

New resources like a national crisis line, which allows anyone to dial 988 to reach someone, have been implemented nationally recently. The effects remain to be seen, Keyes said.



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Life and Style

Gay Couple Makes Halloween Dreams Come True

By Wade Rouse



I grew up learning to associate Halloween with disappointment. Little did I know, the glittering costumes I'd dreamed of were just a few decades away.

Pushing the Limits

Growing up in rural America, I often dreamed of being someone else. And since my mother always told me, "You can be anything you dream," I'd attempt to push the limits when Halloween came around.

"Wonder Woman!" I would beg — and end up dressed as the Six Million Dollar Man.

"Batgirl?" I would plead, but Batman it would be.

I was so drawn to colorful, feminine costumes. What can I say? I wanted to believe they could transform a husky little gay boy into something magical. But every year, I'd be overruled by my dad's drumbeat of: "You're a boy. What would people in town think?"

The closest I got to glory was going as Elton John. Unfortunately, this also led to my disastrous decision the following year to dress as pop sensation Shaun Cassidy. I mimicked one of his album

covers — feathering my hair just so and wearing an open white shirt and white pants. Several kids guessed I was dressed as the cafeteria lady. And when I sat in ketchup at lunch, an older teacher (who must have been confused about my gender) actually pulled me aside and asked if I knew I was spotting.

Going All Out for Halloween

After that embarrassment, I mostly stuck to vampires and ghosts. My husband Gary had experienced similarly disheartening costume experiences growing up in small-town Illinois. So, when we moved to Saugatuck-Douglas, MI, we were not prepared for the fervor with which they cherished the holiday. Each year the little town of Douglas tossed a huge adult costume party that drew thousands.

"No boxed costumes," a friend warned us the first year. "Go all out — or watch from the sidewalk."

Gary and I shared a look and nearly began to cry.

When he first proposed that we go as Toddlers and Tiaras, I was interested. When he clarified that he meant I should be the little pageant girl with

him as the insane stage mom, I was more hesitant. Despite the fact I was at that point in my life finally out, in love and happy, my excitement was clouded by the ghosts of Halloweens past. I'd been taught to be scared and ashamed. Sensing my unease, Gary reassured me: "It's our time to shine."

So I headed to Goodwill, where I found a sequined minidress that was perfect for my costume. (It was a size 8. I nearly broke a rib squeezing into it.) As I picked it up, a woman actually tried to rip it out of my hands. "My daughter needs this for a school dance!" she declared.

"It's my turn to shine!" I yelled.

She backed away.

Moving On Up the Halloween Parade

When the night of my very first adult Halloween parade arrived, I couldn't stop myself from shaking. This was partly due to the fact that it was 38 degrees, and a thin layer of sequins does little to protect a body from hypothermia. But it was also overwhelming to finally don the kind of sparkly costume I had always wanted to wear. Better still — the crowd loved it!

The next year, we were flattered to be asked by the organizing committee to walk near the front of the parade. We went as Rachel Zoe and Brad Goreski of reality television “fame.” As we strutted down the street wheeling racks of clothing, people cheered and called to us like celebs on a red carpet. “Rachel! Brad! Over here!” I’d toss them looks over my sunglasses and sip from my Starbucks cup full of vodka — just like Rachel (allegedly).

And then it happened: The following year we were asked to lead the parade. “Really?” we asked the parade chair. “Are you sure?”

“Why?” she asked, laughing. “Aren’t you?”

Gary and I spent what seemed like an eternity pondering potential costume ideas before we finally hit one that we hoped would be perfect. Then, we shopped for months. We asked our neighbor — a former makeup artist — to help us get ready. We invested in legitimate wigs and choreographed an entire routine. And when we high-kicked our way down the street as Vegas showgirls, our two-foot-tall feathered headdresses dancing in the breeze, I thought of my mother’s motto as I waved to the crowd: You can be anything you dream.

It had turned out that she was right, of course. It had just taken me a few decades to finally figure out how.



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How Halloween Became A Sacred Queer Holiday

By Oliver Haug



Halloween is a night when we can embrace our inner creatures, trying on identities that might feel off-limits to us the rest of the year, and take to the streets as whatever we want to be. That freedom has long been alluring for LGBTQ+ people of all ages, who use Halloween as a space to explore and play in the messiness of identity — so it's no wonder it has developed a reputation as the gay high holiday. But how exactly did Halloween become practically institutionalized as “gay Christmas”?

There's a long tradition linking queer communities to Halloween. Putting aside the obvious queer kinship with the monstrous, Halloween has historically provided a space when gender deviance wasn't just allowed but celebrated. In the United States, where cities in every region of the country had laws prohibiting crossdressing by the 1960s, the holiday provided a rare moment of freedom for queers. It wasn't until the mid-1980s that courts across the United States began

moving to end the criminalization of crossdressing.

Historian Marc Stein, a professor at San Francisco State University, points to the importance of “carnavalesque” holidays like Halloween for the LGBTQ+ community. These are times when the social order is disrupted, allowing queer people and other marginalized groups to safely express nonconformity in public, without being perceived as a threat to the dominant social order.

“Halloween has long been a holiday where we celebrate alternative forms of expression, the reversal of ordinary social roles and social hierarchies,” Stein tells Them. “So for any marginalized group, carnivalesque holidays, including Halloween, have long provided opportunities to at least temporarily assert the possibility of a different role in society.” Halloween, Carnival, and Mardi Gras are all prime examples of where this dynamic comes into play.

Indeed, queers have loved

Halloween for much longer than we can even trace. A lack of widespread queer press prior to the mid-20th century makes it hard to pinpoint the exact origins of queer Halloween celebrations, but as early as 1935, Alfred Finnie, a gay Black man in Chicago, was throwing glamorous Halloween balls on the city's South Side. These events attracted hundreds of attendees, according to the late journalist Monica Roberts, whose archival research into Finnie's Halloween drag balls uncovered extensive coverage of the events in magazines like *Ebony* and *Jet*.

The phrase “gay Christmas” itself goes back to the mid-20th century as well. According to Stein, it's thought to be an evolution of “bitches Christmas,” a costumed celebration that originated in Philadelphia in the 1950s and '60s. Queer partiers would follow drag performers from gay bar to gay bar, forming an unofficial Halloween parade. Stein notes that due to racial segregation in mid-20th-century Philadelphia, there were actually two “bitches

Christmas” events — one celebrated in the white part of town and another in a historically Black neighborhood.

“This was not legal segregation, à la the American South; this was more social-cultural segregation, that was very much alive and well in Philadelphia,” Stein says, noting that several Black interviewees he talked with in writing his book *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves* felt “cautious or anxious” about participating in the gay nightlife in white neighborhoods during this time.

The celebrations were eventually shut down in the early '60s by police commissioner Frank Rizzo in response to alleged rowdiness from the crowds, both gay and straight, who enjoyed the event — a case study in “greater visibility leading to greater repression,” as Stein phrases it. The crackdown on “bitches Christmas” came as Philadelphia’s LGBTQ+ communities saw more coverage in the press. “While it was a relatively underground activity, it could be quietly tolerated, but when it became much bigger and better known ... I think that that created the conditions for that repression,” the historian notes.

Stein also points out that these celebrations weren’t shut down because they violated crossdressing laws, but rather due to business regulations pertaining to drag contests that were held by bars. “The thing

about queer legal repression is it has often relied on laws and ordinances and statutes that are not directly relevant but are available for use,” Stein says. This line of logic hasn’t gone anywhere; notably, today’s anti-drag laws often rely on vaguely worded obscenity laws and language around “protecting minors” as a smokescreen for targeting trans people. Many, in fact, avoid even using the word “drag.”

“Bitches Christmas” may not have lived long, but in the '70s and '80s, queer-oriented Halloween celebrations began to crop up in other major cities. New York’s Greenwich Village Halloween parade kicked off in 1973, and Los Angeles’s West Hollywood Halloween parade began in 1987.

The Greenwich Village Halloween parade has its own rich queer history, and Jeanne Fleming has seen it all. As the parade’s artistic and producing director for 43 years, the longtime New York City resident has been with the event since its beginnings. Alongside her friend, the late puppeteer Ralph Lee, Fleming shepherded the parade through times of both sorrow and joy, overseeing its evolution from an informal neighborhood celebration into a massive event and staple of the local community.

“The gay community started jumping on the parade because it was the night when you could be anything you wanted to be — you could be out, and that



wasn't so easy back then,” Fleming tells Them. “That’s what I’ve always loved about the parade — the freedom to be who you are or who you want to be in your imagination.”

Fleming remembers speaking with one closeted gay mother who desperately wanted to come to the parade but was terrified of being photographed, which could potentially lead to her husband and community back home in Michigan finding out that she was queer.

“Negotiating that with her, trying to figure out how she could come and be who she authentically was, without fear of being outed... That’s the kind of detail I get into,” Fleming says. “It’s such an opportunity to help people be who they want to be.”

As Pride celebrations began to pick up steam in the '80s, the AIDS crisis was also reaching a fever pitch. Fleming notes that the parade became less and less of an explicitly queer celebration as activists and groups began to put their energy into June events. But the parade very much remains a queer space to this day. As it celebrates its 50th birthday this year, Fleming says the



— she remembers everyone from the "Jesus people" to the "Mayor of Christopher Street" making an appearance.

San Francisco's queer Halloween celebrations also began in the 1970s in a similarly impromptu fashion, as the San Francisco Chronicle documented. While originally celebrated on Polk Street in the city's downtown, the party shifted to the gay Castro District neighborhood in the 1980s, though it officially shut down in 2006 after years of escalating violence surrounding the event culminated in a shooting that left nine injured.

Mark Kliem helped organize the Castro Halloween celebration as a member of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a San Francisco-based

group of activist drag nuns, who took over organizing the celebration in the early '90s as a way to fundraise for charitable causes. "Once we figured out how to do it, we were able to close the streets at 6 p.m., put up barricades, bring the flatbed semi-trailer to the location, put up a backdrop, install lights, and a sound system and put on a show for two hours, and then take it all down, all in one night," Kliem, a.k.a. Sister Zsa Zsa Glamour, remembers. "And it was a fantastic show. It really was."

The celebrations drew crowds to the streets of the Castro for costume contests, drag performances, concerts, and at times even fireworks. But unfortunately, as with many queer celebrations, the specter of violence hung over the event. "It just got to the point that it was too dangerous to be out there," Kliem says, citing instances of costumed partiers bringing weapons as a part of their outfits. Other reports from the time also noted instances of anti-queer violence, sometimes directed at the Sisters themselves. "Some

Sisters themselves were getting attacked or threatened so we said, 'Well, if they're coming for us specifically, and we're the hosts, I'm not participating anymore.'"

But for every bacchanal that's been shut down over the years, more have emerged to replace it. These days, if you're looking for a queer Halloween party, you don't need to go any farther than your nearest gay bar, and cities like Chicago, San Diego, and Provincetown continue to host larger explicitly queer events.

Sitting at the center of this chaos, as she does, Fleming says it's the joy of everyone coming together — whether queer or straight or otherwise — that keeps her coming back year after year. "It's not homogenous, it's everybody," she says. "The idea is to create a sort of utopia for one night where everybody gets along and we can all walk down the same street together, and not just be who we are, but who we want to be, you know?"

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Science & Technology

U.S. Resumes Nuclear Warhead Production

By Kapil Kajal



The US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has recently confirmed the successful production of the First Production Unit (FPU) of a plutonium pit for the W87-1 Modification Program.

The W87-1 warhead will replace the older W78 warhead, ensuring that the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) leg of the nuclear triad remains safe, secure, and effective.

The plutonium pit is an essential part of the United States' nuclear warheads.

The recent pit production signifies the official commencement of US nuclear warhead production.

Plutonium pit

The NNSA is currently working on reestablishing the capability to produce plutonium pits at a minimum rate of 80 pits per year.

During the Cold War, the United States had the capability to produce hundreds of pits per year.

The production of pits was

stopped in 1989, and the NNSA is currently working on rebuilding the production capabilities that deteriorated after the Cold War within the Nuclear Security Enterprise.

It is a significant achievement for the United States' nuclear weapon stockpile modernization to reach the FPU of the W87-1 pit.

The W87-1 warhead is designed to support the Department of Defense's Sentinel ICBM, which is set to become a crucial component of the nation's land-based nuclear deterrent.

The Sentinel ICBM will replace the aging Minuteman III ICBMs.

Nuclear warhead

The initial fully certified plutonium core for the W87-1 nuclear warhead has been officially approved for deployment to the United States' nuclear stockpile at the highest quality level known as "war reserve."

The experts from various organizations within the Enterprise, such as Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Los Alamos National

Laboratory (LANL), the Kansas City National Security Campus (KCNSC), and the Nevada National Security Site, worked closely with NNSA for eight years.

They collaborated to develop and refine the qualification, certification, and product acceptance processes necessary for manufacturing this FPU pit.

The manufacturing of plutonium pits was finished at LANL, with Livermore Laboratory in charge of the pit design and KCNSC responsible for producing the non-nuclear components.

"This complex effort executed by our mission partners represents an important step on our path to restoring and modernizing NNSA's capability to produce plutonium pits at the quantities needed to support military requirements set by the Department of Defense," said Dr. Marvin Adams, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs.

To ensure the reliability of the nuclear stockpile, it is crucial to maintain consistent production of plutonium pits and have

strong experimental capabilities to study plutonium properties.

Activities are ongoing at LANL to achieve the target capacity of producing 30 pits per year. The installation of equipment and other facility improvements will enhance the production

capability, ensuring a more reliable output.

The Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility, located at the Savannah River Site, is projected to achieve the capability to produce a minimum of 50 pits annually by the mid-2030s.

The NNSA is actively working on restoring and modernizing all production manufacturing capabilities to create a more resilient enterprise that can effectively meet the evolving objectives of nuclear deterrence.



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ABOUT US

RezaRide.org is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for the LGBTQ+ community in Jacksonville, Florida. Through initiatives like Reza Ride, we aim to raise awareness, funds, and support for LGBTQ+ organizations and initiatives, fostering a more inclusive and accepting community for all.



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Tesla Discontinues Cheapest Model 3 From Lineup

By David Vandygriff



Tesla has officially discontinued its most affordable electric car, the Model 3 Standard Range Rear-Wheel-Drive. This version, priced below \$40,000, is no longer available in the company's lineup.

The Standard Range model, first introduced in 2023, offered a 272-mile range on a full charge and was a significant part of Tesla's effort to provide an accessible electric car option.

The company now offers the Model 3 RWD Long Range as the most affordable option, starting at \$42,490. While the price difference may not seem significant, the new base model provides a range of 363 miles, nearly 100 miles more than the discontinued version.

Rising prices and changing strategies

Tesla is known for changing prices pretty often, downgrading or upgrading with market fluctuations. For the last couple of years, Tesla has managed to maintain a strong handle on electric car sales.

However, with more and more consumers considering other

brands, there have been some fluctuations in their year-to-year sales that can be identified, including a major slump during some periods.

Despite these challenges, Tesla continues to make strategic moves to stay competitive. One of these strategies includes discontinuing certain vehicle trims without much notice. For example, earlier in 2024, Tesla quietly removed the \$60,990 RWD Cybertruck from its offerings.

These sudden shifts reflect Tesla's approach to responding quickly to market demands and production costs, which are influenced by various factors, including tariffs and supply chain disruptions.

As reported by Electrek, the discontinuation of the Model 3 Standard Range is likely connected to the rising costs of lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries, which the vehicle used. These batteries are produced in China, and with the Biden administration recently increasing tariffs on Chinese imports, including critical minerals and batteries, it is possible that they made the

cost of producing this model unsustainable.

While this move leaves Tesla without a sub-\$40,000 vehicle, it also positions the company to streamline its offerings and focus on models with longer ranges and higher price points.

Future models and affordability concerns

Although the Model 3 Standard Range Rear-Wheel Drive is no longer available, Tesla is already looking ahead. The company has hinted at a new, more affordable electric vehicle that is expected to launch in the second half of 2025. Whether this will be an entirely new model or a simplified version of the Model 3 remains to be determined.

However, the promise of a cheaper electric vehicle suggests that Tesla is still committed to making EVs accessible to a broader audience, even as production costs and pricing pressures increase.

One of the challenges Tesla faces in making a more affordable car is how much more they can simplify their vehicles. Recent models, for instance, have already

removed traditional drive and turn signal stalks, relying instead on touchscreen controls.

Despite these innovations, a stripped-down version of the Model 3 produced in Mexico was more expensive than its

U.S. counterpart, highlighting the complexity of balancing affordability with production costs.

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ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

**Racquel Chevremont Is
The LGBTQ+ Representation That 'The Real Housewives' Needs**
By Drew Washington



The Big Apple is showing more of its rainbow.

The Real Housewives of New York City is back for its monumental 15th season and queer representation is right at the forefront.

Last year, the popular Bravo reality show made headlines when it was announced that Jenna Lyons would be leading the new cast of ladies as part of a formal reboot.

For this season, Lyons is bringing on one of her lesbian besties as Racquel Chevremont is joining the group of women and showing audiences her beautifully queer family.

"Like Jenna, we came out later in life and we've just thrived. Especially with everything on going currently, it's important. We're not just the first queer family, but [my partner and I are] also women of color, so that's a new thing for [RHONY]," Chevremont tells Jax Gay Magazine.

Fans who watched all of shenanigans last season will remember that Brynn Whitfield loved flirting with Jenna Lyons on camera and the two even hit up a gay bar in one of the episodes.

Chevremont also peaked Whitfield's interest this season, so audiences can expect these two to flirt a bit.

"When I first arrived, [Brynn] was like, 'Jenna... I think I have someone new now!' It's fun. Who doesn't like to be flirted with? All of it is exciting. I love all of these women. They're amazing."

Although she's made new friends with her costars, it wouldn't be a typical Bravo show without plenty of drama.

"I might have participated in a little bit of it. It wouldn't be real life if there wasn't tension and drama, so that is a part of every relationship. It has to be, because otherwise you're not growing."

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SCAN ME

Life and Style

Industry Sour Drink Was Specially Crafted To Appeal To Bartenders

By Adam Franklin

Bartenders are often made of sterner stuff than the average Joe, and this is definitely evident in their preferred alcoholic beverages.

Accordingly, any cocktail designed by bartenders for bartenders is going to feature more complex flavors than crowd-pleasing selections like the classic margarita cocktail or the potent -yet-tasty Long Island iced tea. The industry sour cocktail is one such creation developed on the fly by bartender Ted Kilgore while serving a fellow industry professional (hence the name).

As Kilgore described to Esquire in 2012, "I basically thought to myself, 'What if I put all of my favorite things into a glass and just give it to him?' And that just happened in an equal-parts sort of scenario." The drink consists of equal parts Fernet Branca and green Chartreuse, as well as equal servings of simple syrup and lime juice.

For the uninitiated, Fernet is a liqueur hailing from Italy that's best known for its intensely bitter, herbal, and somewhat medicinal flavor. Its popularity among industry professionals has even earned the liqueur the nickname "bartender's

handshake." As for green Chartreuse, this herbal liqueur features strong mint flavors, along with a bit of the black licorice flavor also found in Fernet. Intense tastes like these need a bit of tempering, which explains the inclusion of the simple syrup and lime juice. Simple syrup helps soften bitter flavors, while the acidity of lime juice can cut through the bracing intensity of the industry sour.

Tips On Making Your Own Industry Sour

You don't need to be a bartending professional to create and enjoy an industry sour. It does help, however, to understand the process of making the drink. In the original recipe, the ingredients are combined in a shaker with ice, then strained into a glass. The shaker, which is an essential piece of equipment everyone needs to make a cocktail, serves an important purpose beyond simply incorporating different ingredients into one cohesive concoction. These bar tools also quickly bring down the temperature of your ingredients when you include ice.



Adaptations of the industry sour may also call for the inclusion of egg whites. A component of the somewhat-related whiskey sour, egg whites boost a cocktail's viscosity for a smoother, richer texture. You can also substitute aquafaba for egg whites if you're looking for an animal-free alternative. Aquafaba is the water left over after cooking chickpeas, and its texture is similar to that of egg whites.

Reddit also recommends another swap for the industry sour, which entails replacing the simple syrup with orgeat syrup. This almond-based sweetener creates a deeper flavor thanks to the almonds' nuttiness, while extracts of citrus fruits and flowers add to the sweetener's complexity. If intense flavors are your thing, the industry sour will make a fine addition to your cocktail rotation.

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“Drag Race” Icon Detox Comes Out As Trans

By Brett Rutherford



The Florida native cut her teeth in the LA drag scene before sashaying into the workroom on RuPaul’s Drag Race S5, becoming one of the most iconic queens to ever compete on the series.

In 2016 she Ru-turned for the legendary second season of Drag Race All Stars, and in the years since, she has stayed booked and busy, performing in clubs around the world... including a brief stint with Madonna earlier this year!

Coming out: This past August she made headlines at the DNC— no, not the Democratic National Convention, but Drag Night Chicago, which was a “voter registration kiki” thrown by the DRAG PAC. Detox co-hosted the event with her DWV girl group sister, Willam.

During the live show, the two performed the DWV favorite, “Chow Down (at Chick-fil-A),” a parody of the hit Wilson Phillips’ song, “Hold On.”

In the original “Chow Down” track, Detox can be heard in the background proclaiming she’s “a top” before the chorus kicks in. But when she performed at the DNC, she changed the line to... “I’m trans

now!”

She confirmed the news in a viral video clip, writing: “Cat’s outta the bag!”

Detox joins the ever growing list of Drag Race queens who have come out as trans, which this year alone includes S15’s Amethyst and S16’s Amanda Tori Meating.

She later reposted an Instagram story by Chicago drag queen & DJ, Miss Toto, who captured the moment Detox made her announcement.

Miss Toto wrote: “Looking over and seeing my dawtah and all of my friends in the audience burst into tears at this moment that has been brewing for the past few years was so magical. I’ll never forget it. ☐☐”

A Drag Race Ru-turn?: Earlier this year, Detox teased she would consider a return to the Drag Race main stage. At an All Stars S9 viewing party at Roscoe’s Tavern in Chicago, Drag Race S8 and All Stars S8 queen Naysha Lopez asked Detox her thoughts about competing again.

She didn’t close the door..

“Honestly, even if there were, I have an itch. I do, and I haven’t

had it in so long. I do have a little bit of an itch, but also... it’s the first time we’ve seen Roxxy without Rolaskatox on the show, and that excites me,” Detox said, referring to her Drag Race sister competing on All Stars S9.

Detox continued, saying seeing Sasha Colby and so many of her friends on the series had her considering a return.

“I miss that camaraderie in the werkroom, I miss the fun of it, when it’s new and exciting,” she said. “For years I was like, ‘No, no, f*ck them.’ But now I’m like, ‘Wait a minute now.’”

But sadly, it seems like Detox’s itch was short-lived. After Roxxy Andrews came in second to winner Angeria Paris VanMicheals on the most recent season of All Stars, Detox posted on X: “The itch is gone. Playin’ in my girl’s face.”

10s across the board: Aside from coming out as trans, another highlight of Detox’s year was sharing the stage with her ultimate icon: Madonna.

It’s been over a decade since the world was introduced to the drag legend, but she is still D to the E to the T to the O to the excellent!

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News & Politics

Conservatives Push Harmful Lie That Pete Buttigieg Is HIV-Positive

By James Bennett

In the latest example of disinformation circulating before the 2024 election, a false claim about U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg's health has gone viral on social media. A parody account on X, formerly Twitter, falsely claimed on Tuesday that Buttigieg revealed he is HIV-positive, a post that has been amplified by MAGA pundits and seen by hundreds of thousands.

"BREAKING: Pete Buttigieg reveals that he is HIV-positive," the post read.

Far-right conspiracy theorist Stew Peters shared the tweet with the comment, "You don't say," a post that has since garnered 849,000 views. Peters, notorious for spreading disinformation and hate-filled rhetoric, has amassed a large online following. According to the Anti-Defamation League, Peters is a Christian nationalist who frequently promotes anti-semitic, white supremacist, and anti-LGBTQ+ views through his digital media network, the Stew Peters Network.

Some made conspiratorial allegations in reaction to the falsehood.

"He released this while the Longshoremen are striking & WW3 in peoples mind's is lurking... but I'm glad that Pete is honest about him having HIV," wrote one.

Another reacted to the false information with sympathy. "I actually feel really sad for Pete Buttigieg and I want to pray for him because I make fun of him but it must be an absolutely horrible feeling to realize you have HIV heartbreaking. If he was my son I would be devastated," the person wrote on X.

The fake news about Buttigieg highlights the persistent issue of misinformation within the MAGA media sphere as political tensions rise in the lead-up to the election. Tim Miller, a gay contributor to The Bulwark, expressed concern about this disinformation in a post on X, sharing that a MAGA commentator had credulously spread the claim about Buttigieg, generating 500,000 views. Miller, who has regularly criticized the MAGA movement, noted, "Pretty concerning view into MAGA info space pre-election," underscoring how disinformation is being weaponized to shape public



opinion.

Miller also mentioned another striking example of how disinformation permeates the MAGA space: an AI-generated image of former President Donald Trump wading through floodwaters during Hurricane Helene relief efforts, shared as if it were a real photograph. Miller said that his husband's high school friend had shared the manipulated image, questioning why mainstream media was not covering Trump's supposed involvement in relief efforts.

Chasten Buttigieg, Pete Buttigieg's husband, responded to Miller's remarks with a pointed call for honesty and action. In a repost on X, Chasten urged people to resist the spread of lies and instead focus on grassroots efforts to connect with voters. "This is not how you win hearts and minds," he wrote. "Stay the course, folks. Keep telling your stories, having the hard conversations, and knocking doors. They've got lies, we've got momentum."

Disinformation has become a central concern in the 2024 election cycle, with social media platforms like X

significantly amplifying false information. Under Elon Musk's ownership, the platform has faced mounting criticism for its reduced moderation efforts, which have allowed fake accounts and fake news to flourish unchecked. The viral post on Pete Buttigieg, viewed nearly 1 million times at press time, did not receive a "Community Note," X's tool for crowd-sourced fact-checking, allowing the misinformation to spread freely.

GLAAD President and CEO Sarah Kate Ellis condemned the post, calling it harmful and irresponsible. "Using HIV to diminish any person is revolting, and dangerous to everyone's health and safety. Rhetoric like this drives the stigma that fuels HIV, full stop. This kind of rhetoric reveals the need for accurate information about HIV — it is preventable with a pill, treatable to the point of undetectable and untransmittable (U=U), and people living with HIV go on to

live long and healthy lives," Ellis said in a statement to The Jax Gay Magazine.

Ellis pointed out that GLAAD research shows Gen Z to be the least knowledgeable about HIV.

"We need everyone to use their voices, talents, and all available platforms to speak the truth about HIV, instead of using HIV as a political weapon. HIV can be defeated if we work together to elevate these truths, eliminate stigma, and treat people with respect and dignity," Ellis said.

This particular incident highlights the risks that high-profile LGBTQ+ figures like Buttigieg face in the digital age. False claims about HIV, especially when weaponized against a gay public official, reinforce harmful stigmas and invoke dangerous narratives about the LGBTQ+ community.


This disinformation comes amid a broader context of political and cultural battles

over access to accurate sexual health education. GLAAD's report on HIV stigma this year highlighted how politics is impacting HIV education for Gen Z, the generation that continues to be the least knowledgeable about the virus. Despite the generation's diversity and visibility as heavily LGBTQ, only 37 percent of Gen Z adults feel knowledgeable about HIV, a statistic that has remained steady over five years, according to GLAAD's research.

The report emphasized the critical need for media to tell accurate, stigma-reducing stories about people living with HIV.

Discussions around sexual health, including HIV and AIDS, are increasingly under threat in states like Iowa and Florida, where recent legislation has restricted access to this type of education in schools.

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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Pride Journey: Lansing, Michigan

By Joey Amato



Lansing, Michigan, the state's vibrant capital, is a city brimming with cultural diversity, historical richness, and a rapidly evolving urban landscape. From its renowned Lansing Pride festival to unique dining spots like Veg Head and the dynamic Lansing Shuffle, there is something for everyone in this bustling Midwestern city. Add to this a plethora of attractions such as the Broad Museum of Art, Potter Park Zoo, and the historically significant districts of Old Town Lansing and REO Town, and Lansing stands out as a must-visit destination.

One of Lansing's most cherished events is the annual Lansing Pride festival. This celebration of LGBTQ+ culture and community has grown significantly over the years, drawing thousands of attendees from across the state and beyond. Lansing Pride features live performances, local vendors, and family-friendly activities, all set against the backdrop of Lansing's welcoming atmosphere in Old Town. The festival not only fosters a sense of community but also emphasizes Lansing's commitment to inclusivity and equality.

While in Old Town, visit one of the area's many locally owned boutiques, cafes, and art galleries. This walkable neighborhood is full of charm and the perfect way to begin your Lansing adventure. The district also hosts a variety of events throughout the year, including festivals, art walks, and live performances, which contribute to its lively and welcoming atmosphere.

For those seeking a unique culinary experience, Veg Head in Lansing is a standout choice. This LGBTQ-owned vegetarian and vegan-friendly eatery offers a diverse menu that caters to a variety of dietary preferences without compromising on flavor. Veg Head's innovative dishes, made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients, have earned it a loyal following. Whether you're a committed vegan or simply exploring plant-based options, Veg Head promises a delightful dining experience that showcases the best of Lansing's culinary creativity. We ordered the Roasted Brussels for the table which came topped with Harissa sauce, crumbled Cheese, and Pepitas. For our entrees, we tried the Signature Sweet Potato Burger as well as

the Cauliflower Street Tacos which were prepared with roasted cauliflower, salsa verde, avocado puree, crumbled cheese, pickled onions, cilantro, and corn tortillas. All the items were delicious and made me forget I was at a vegetarian restaurant. For those meat-eaters out there, a trip to Veg Head will make you change your mind about vegetarian cuisine.

Visitors seeking stylish and comfortable accommodation during their stay should check out AC Hotel Lansing. Situated within close proximity to downtown Lansing, this modern hotel combines contemporary design with top-notch amenities. The AC Hotel Lansing is also conveniently located near many of the city's major attractions, making it an ideal base for exploring all that Lansing has to offer. Their king suite offers an additional seating area and of course an extra-large room fit for any king...or queen.

After some rest, check out Lansing Shuffle, another jewel in the city's crown, offering a dynamic space for entertainment and community engagement. This multi-purpose venue hosts a variety

of events, from live music and drag performances to food festivals and markets. Lansing Shuffle is designed to be a flexible space that adapts to the diverse interests of Lansing's residents and visitors. With its vibrant atmosphere and ever-changing lineup of events, Lansing Shuffle is a testament to the city's lively and inclusive spirit.



Swing by Soup Spoon for breakfast and be sure to order any one of their delicious omelets or scrambles before heading to REO Town, another historic district that has seen significant revitalization. Named after the REO Motor Car Company, which was once headquartered here, REO Town has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. Today, it is a thriving neighborhood known for its eclectic mix of businesses, including coffee shops, breweries, and vintage stores. The area also features murals and public art installations that reflect its unique character and history. REO Town's vibrant community spirit and creative energy make it an exciting place to explore and experience.

Art enthusiasts will find much to

admire at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University. This contemporary art museum is renowned for its striking architecture, designed by the internationally acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid. The Broad Museum's collection features an impressive array of modern and contemporary art, including works by both established and emerging artists. With its innovative exhibitions and educational programs, the museum is a cornerstone of Lansing's cultural landscape, offering visitors a chance to engage with thought-provoking art from around the world.



Speaking of art, the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center recently held the LGBTQ+ Artist in Michigan exhibition, a group exhibition of artists who identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This exhibition was in partnership with Suits and the City, whose mission is to promote the interests of LGBTQ+ persons in the Mid-Michigan area through education and advocacy and increase the visibility and integration of LGBTQ+ persons in the broader community through networking events. Artists participating in the

exhibition included: Erin Brott, Gustavo Ayala, and Jesse Amburgey.

If you visit in the fall, there is no better way to celebrate the spirit of Lansing than with an MSU football game. Michigan State University's team, known as the Spartans, has a storied tradition dating back to its inception in 1896. Competing in the Big Ten Conference, the team has a rich history of success, including multiple national championships and conference titles. The Spartans play their home games at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, not too far from the AC Hotel and Broad Museum.



Lansing's unique combination of cultural richness, historical significance, and modern amenities makes it a standout destination in the Midwest. The city's commitment to inclusivity all contributes to Lansing's distinctive and welcoming character. Whether you're exploring its historic neighborhoods, enjoying its vibrant festivals, or simply taking in the local culture, Lansing offers a truly memorable experience.

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