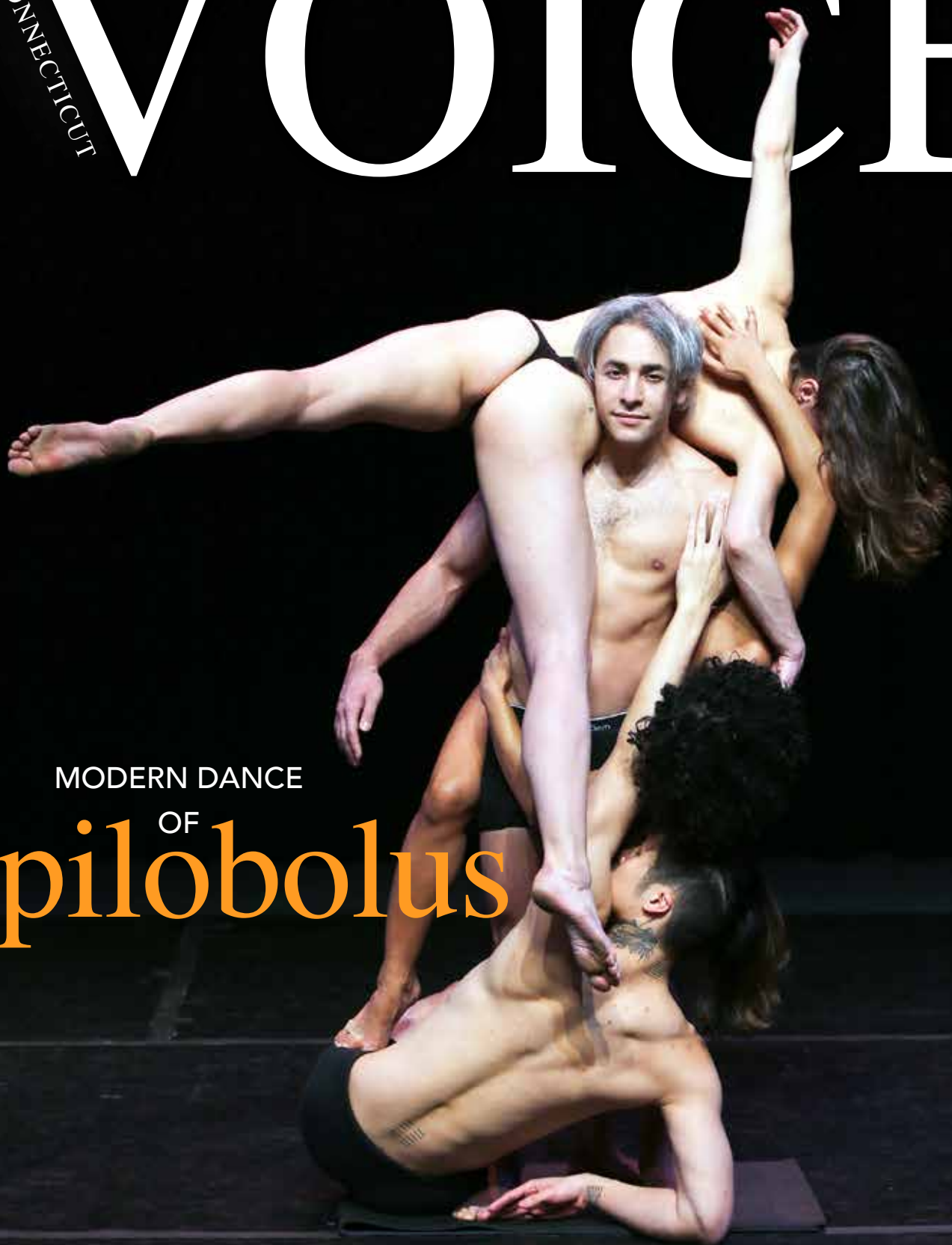


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MODERN DANCE
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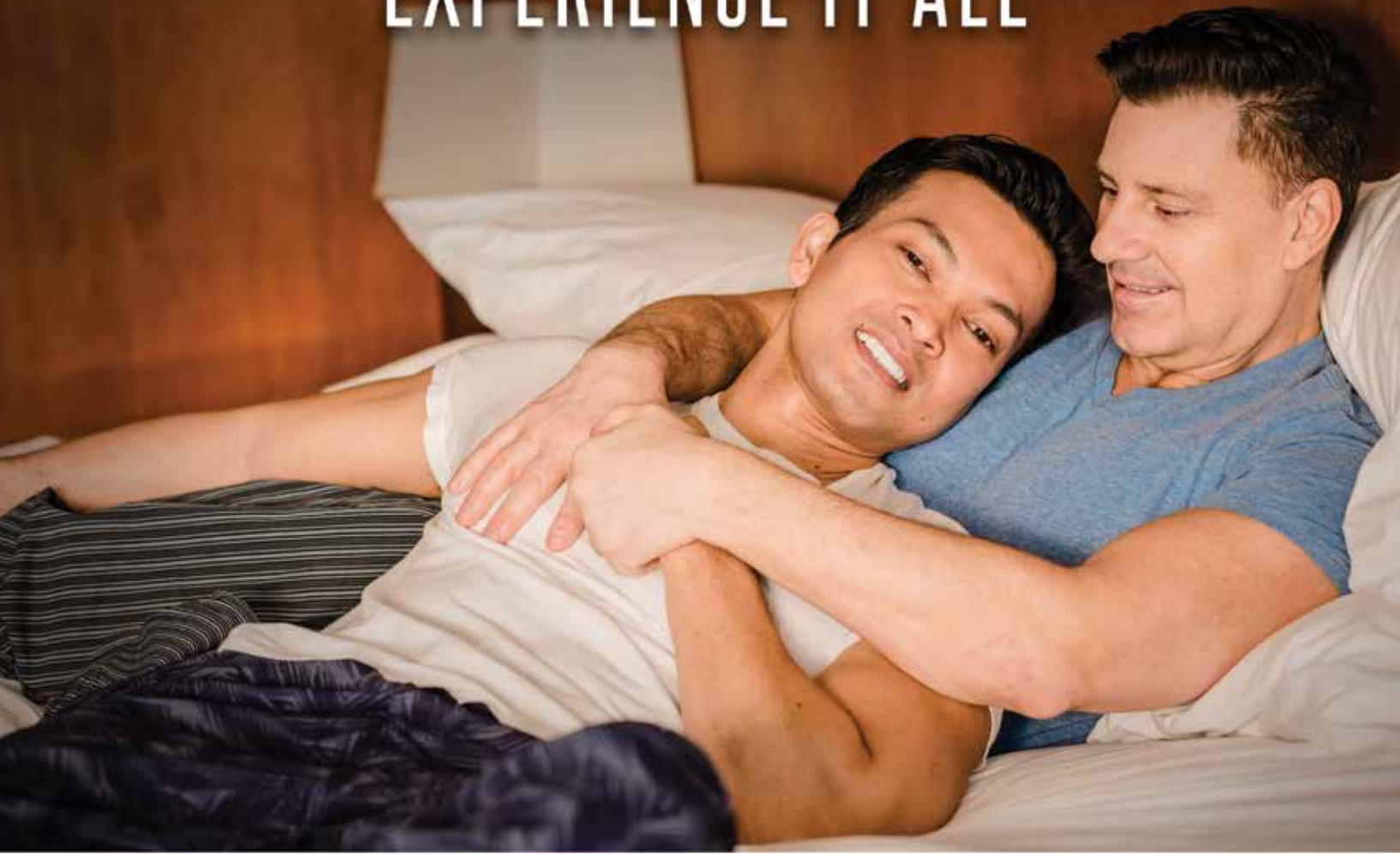
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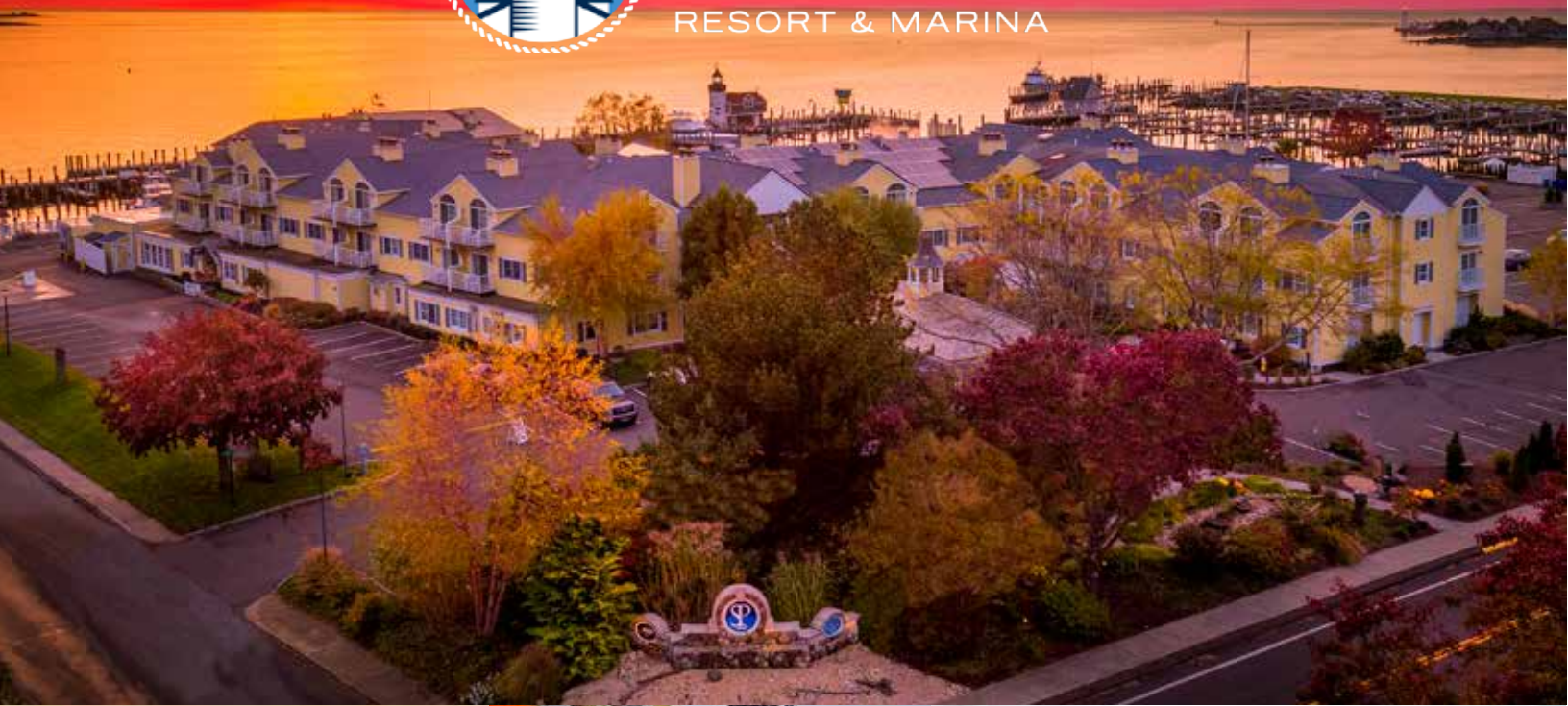
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EDITOR'S NOTE //



Happy Fall, y'all!

I am so proud and excited to join the *Connecticut Voice* family and to celebrate our community—and my own deep Connecticut roots. I spent every summer of my childhood and youth in West Hartford, learned to love roses at Elizabeth Park, restored a Colonial house in Clinton and much more. My family in Connecticut goes back to the 1700s, so the state for me is, as the poet Auden said, bred in the bone.

This is an exciting time for Connecticut. We remain leader in LGBTQ+ acceptance and diversity, as our important piece on colleges in the state demonstrates. Our leadership in the arts is outstanding as Frank Rizzo's great piece on the Pilobolus dance company points out. We also catch up with our first cover guy James Whiteside, who has a terrific new book out. We delve into current fashion with a trend piece on classic timepieces, which are back in a big way.

We're on a more important mission, too. We have a vision to be an even bigger member of Connecticut's LGBTQ+ community, a showcase for the incredible contributions our members make to all aspects of life in the state. In the coming months, we'll be expanding our offerings with a redesigned web site, expanded TV show, and a new podcast. Plus, check out the center spread of this issue for the announcement of **The Connecticut Voice Honors** slated for next May, a first-ever event designed to celebrate the people of our community who make Connecticut one of the best places in the nation for LGBTQ+ people.

As editor, I want *Connecticut Voice* and our various media offerings to be an active, ongoing conversation. We want to hear from you about what's important, what's working, what could be better, and celebrate the full range and diversity of our vital community.

I invite you to reach out to me directly and to connect with us on social media through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. I can't wait to get to know more of you!

Enjoy this issue!

Chris

Christopher Byrne, Editor
chris@ctvoice.com

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GREAT MAKE YOU FEEL
THAT YOU, TOO, CAN
BECOME GREAT.”

-Mark Twain





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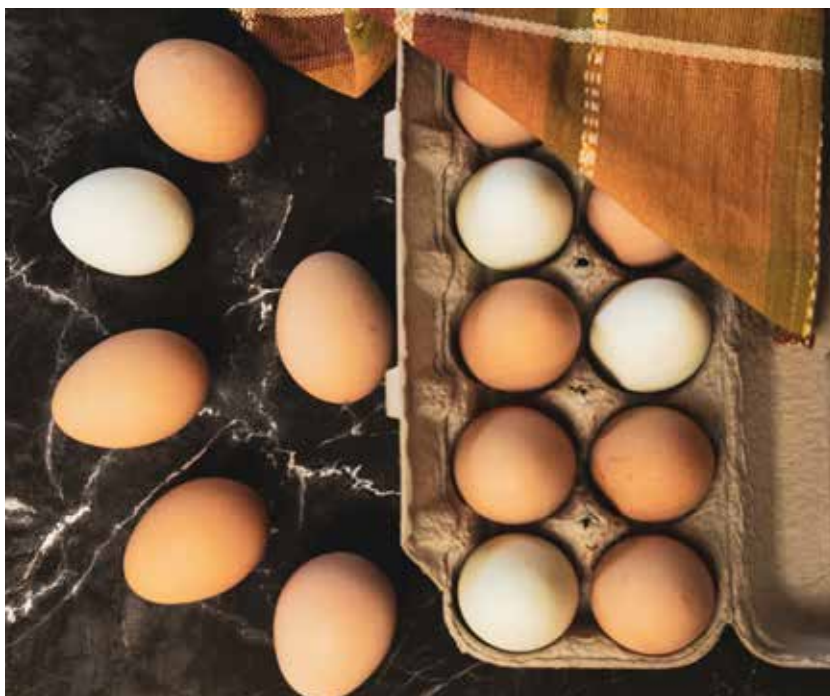
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FRANK RIZZO

Frank Rizzo caught up with ABT star James Whiteside (Page 10) and stepped out with dance company Pilobolus (Page 48). He has written about the arts in Connecticut and nationally for more than 40 years; for the *The New York Times*, *American Theatre Magazine* and dozens of other outlets. He is also a theater critic for *Variety*. Follow Frank's work at ShowRiz.com and on Twitter @ShowRiz.



JANE LATUS

Jane Latus covers health and politics. She followed up on two breaking political stories in CT (Pages 19 & 22) and explored Middlesex Health's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community (Page 32). She is a writer and personal trainer living in Canton. She and her husband Ken have an escalating number of cats and two grown sons, one transgender and one gay.



BRIAN SCOTT LIPTON

Brian Scott Lipton researched and wrote the piece on the wristwatch trend. (Page 24). He has been a nationally renowned journalist for over 30 years. Among his many accomplishments, he has been Editor in Chief of TheaterMania.com and Resident Publications, Managing Editor of men's fashion magazines DNR and MR, and his byline has appeared in such publications as Forbes, The Wall Street Journal and Where. He is a proud member of the LGBTQ community.



AMY S. WHITE

Amy S. White lives, teaches, cooks, eats, and writes in eastern Connecticut. She cracked the story on eggs and some great recipes in this issue. (Page 67) You can find out more about her at her website amyswhite.com.



DAWN ENNIS

Dawn Ennis did her college visits for our piece on their LGBTQ+ programs. (Page 37) She is an award-winning journalist, a professor at University of Hartford and writes for several news outlets. Ennis was America's first transgender journalist in a TV network newsroom when she came out nine years ago. Follow her @lifeafterdawn on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Ennis and her family reside in West Hartford, Connecticut.



RENEE DININO

Renee DiNino is our resident pet maven and wrote the piece on Instagram star Piglet. (Page 74). She is the director of community affairs for iHeartMedia in Connecticut, the midday host on The River 105.9 and host of an hour-long syndicated talk show on all Connecticut iHeartRadio stations. She also appears weekly on WFSB Channel 3's "Better Connecticut." An avid animal lover and advocate, she and her husband Sal have a German Shepherd, Luke, they rescued in Hartford. Instagram @reneedinino.



MARY QUINN

Mary Quinn photography style is soft, colorful and adventurous. While she mostly enjoys photographing people, you can also see her published work in the Delicious column (Page 66). The Delicious column is a fun place for her to share her favorite recipes with you! Having over a decade of experience in restaurants prior to becoming a business owner, the ideas keep flowing! You can find more of her work on all social media platforms at abearwiththumbs or abearwiththumbs.com for all creative gifts and photography galleries.



STAN GODLEWSKI

Stan Godlewski is a photojournalist who photographed our Pilobolus cover story (Page 48) and countless other images throughout the autumn issue. He has worked for magazines and newspapers for 30 years covering news, sports, features and celebrities. His favorite thing to photograph is his next thing to photograph.

More Than A Toy

When Matthew Ashton, LEGO Group's vice president of design, was a child, he and his brother were very different. He knew he identified LGBTQ+ from an early age, and his brother was, well, more traditionally a boy and fairly aggressive. "I would be outside twirling in the garden, and my brother would be taking all the heads off the daffodils with his light saber," Ashton says of his childhood. The one thing they both did together, though, and which gave them many hours of pleasure was play with LEGO.

At the time, Ashton knew that he loved how LEGO let him use his imagination to create, but he had no idea he would end up working for the company. In fact, his first ambition took him to the world of fashion. Yet, as so often happens in the world of toys, it was only by happenstance that he ended up in the business. As part of a show and a job fair at the end of his training, he had to figure out how to show all his designs in a tiny space. In a moment of inspiration, he made miniature versions of his collection, which he put on Barbie dolls. As luck would have it, his booth near the exit. "Everyone who left had to go by my display," he said, and his work caught the eye of the LEGO recruiter on their way out the door.



Matthew shows off the set inspired by a vision of empowerment and inclusion! Photo courtesy of The LEGO Group.

That was the moment that started him on his current path.


At LEGO Group, Ashton has overseen design on many of the company's toys and entertainment properties and oversees hundreds of designers in Billund, Denmark and around the world. His most recent creation, however, is the Everyone is Awesome set introduced in June of this year, that celebrates inclusion, positivity, acceptance, and diversity. The name comes from the earworm song from *The LEGO Movie*, and Ashton says that the set was originally developed when he was looking around to decorate a new office space and was just fooling around. After attending an executive meeting where attendees

were challenged to come up with their personal missions, the set as an expression of his values and vision began to take shape. Noting the positive response from co-workers, he suggested it as a product to management, and it was a go. The set includes stripes for all colors of the traditional rainbow flag, as well as black and brown, and the blue, white and pink stripes of the transgender community aka the Progress flag. There's a LEGO Minifig for each color, and the effect is like a miniature monument and celebration. The set is available for \$34.99 at LEGO.com, and to date sales have been strong

Ashton's set also reflects LEGO's culture and ethic. The company site says, "We believe that LEGO

play is for everyone, no matter your race, your gender, how you identify or who you love." The company has many Global and Local Employee Advocacy groups, which ensure that diversity and inclusion are part of all aspects of the company. Moreover, Ashton's set is just one of many sets that have been created—some by fans—to celebrate LGBTQ+ people.

When the Everyone is Awesome set was introduced, it created huge publicity, some of it not so supportive. Ashton took all of that in stride, noting that in the current climate that was just the next thing people hooked into...yet only for a day or two. He notes that in a couple of days the people carping were on to something else—and the set is still here.

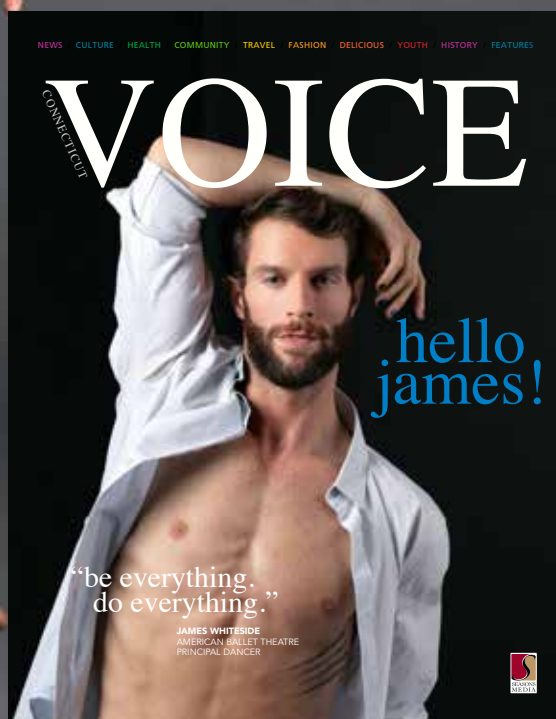
What is enduring—and inspiring—about this set, LEGO and Ashton himself—is the message this sends. He adds that when he was a boy or a young man struggling to come out and live authentically, he would have loved a set like this. "It would have been such a relief to know that someone had my back," he says. The validation, belief and support would have been incredible for him. That's why he sees this as so much more than just a toy or a LEGO set. It's a gift to everyone that comes from the heart. 

—Christopher Byrne

JAMES WHITESIDE

back in 2019 at the
CT VOICE premier cover
photoshoot in NYC

Story by **Frank Rizzo**
Photo by **Amber Jones**



Ballet's Bad Boy Tells All

Hello, James ... again.

Frank Rizzo caught up with James Whiteside, principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre — and VOICE's first cover boy — has always been an outspoken guy.

Whether it's as a star of both classical and modern dance, as electro-pop music creator under the moniker JbDubs or in his drag persona of Uhu Betch, the Fairfield native speaks with frankness—and snap.

Now, the talented multi-tasker shares the tea in "Center Center: A Funny, Sexy, Sad Almost-Memoir of a Boy in Ballet," chronicling his dance challenges, bad Grindr dates, family trauma and his own ego, pride and search for intimacy.

"It doesn't feel like a memoir to me," he says during a Zoom interview from his Brooklyn apartment. "I'm 37 for fuck's sake," he says laughing. "Why should I be writing a memoir?"

Among essays about his pets, sketches and a mini-play, Whiteside tells playful, sad, joyous, painful tales. Think of it as confession with the lights turned all the way up and with a dance beat playing in the background.

"I wrote the book carrying a lot of baggage around with me and I felt that as I wrote I would drop little bits of it off. By the time I finished, I just felt lighter."

I told him it seemed more like a biography of another, younger much wilder, and self-centered self.

"Yeah. It's like a very long apology."

"To whom?"

"Everyone and anyone really."

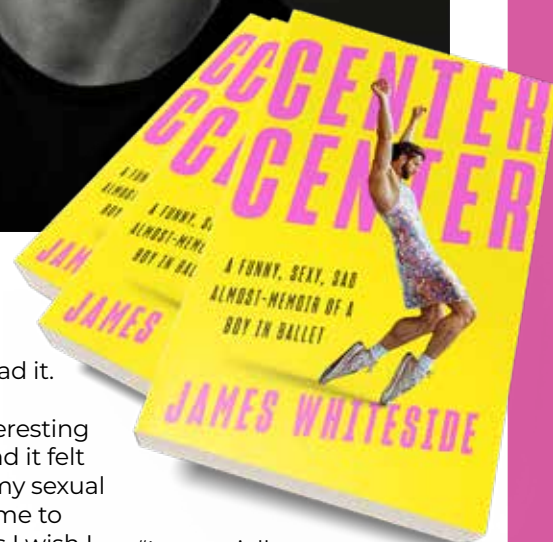
But there's also much humor in the book, too, as he writes about his love of ballet—and butts, which he says is one of the draws for gay men who become fans of the art form.

"I'm always flattered to be objectified frankly," he says. "I think more men should be objectified,"

Frankness is Whiteside's M.O. as he details his relationships, including his sexual ones.

"Honestly, sex is big part of the gay experience. I'm a gay man. I like sex period. I am happy to be viewed as promiscuous because that just means I'm having more fun than you."

And no, he did not give his lovers fair warning. "I changed a lot of names but unfortunately there will be some sore folks, which was not my




intention. I wrote it not thinking people would actually read it.

"Sex is always interesting to write about, and it felt good to explore my sexual history and to come to terms with things I wish I had done differently."

There was a lot of shame, he says that came up in the writing. "Shame for the way I treated people: Friends. Family. Animals. Lovers. Myself."

However, Whiteside was circumspect about the end of his 12-year relationship with boyfriend Daniel Donigan, aka drag artist Milk.

"I essentially made the decision not to air that laundry as of yet. It's too soon. I probably will write about it at some point, but I'll have to find the best way to do that and be respectful. We're still great friends and he's wonderful person."

And relationships now? "No comment," he says — discreetly. 

—Frank Rizzo

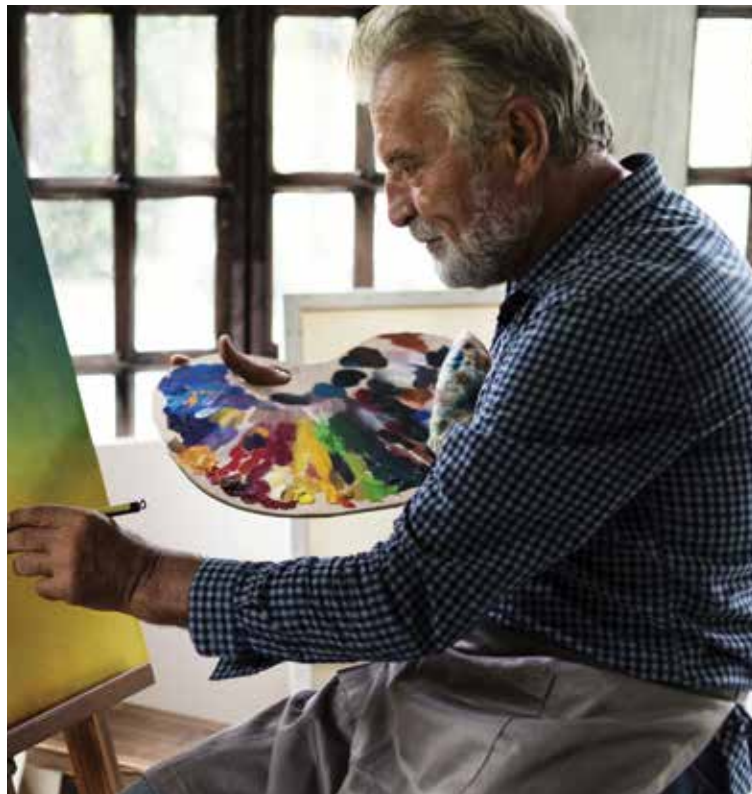
FLASH Qs >>

Favorite drag artist, not counting Milk: "[P-Town regular] Dina Martina."

Who would he love to be seated next to at a dinner party: "Cher. Just Cher."

Growing up, did he have a male fantasy figure? "Prince Eric from 'The Little Mermaid'."

How about now? "I would like to have a date with Chris Pine ... and Henry Cavill."



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Finding Authenticity in Gender

As a child, Dayne Bachmann always felt different. “I was a tomboy. People said, ‘She’s going to grow out of it.’ Feeling different brought so many things. I thought something was wrong with me.”

High school years were even more challenging. Perhaps Dayne was a lesbian? From age 18 to 40, Dayne lived as a lesbian, but still unhappy and still confused. It was only four years ago that the transition process began. “When I met my partner, I was able to look at my partner and see why I did what I did. I had the freedom and unconditional love, just to explore who I was.”

Today as a male, Dayne is a gender therapist and author. His practice, Twin Peaks Consulting is in Derby. “My main population I work with is the LGBTQ+ community, and 95 percent of my clientele are transgendered. Listening to my clients talk about how they are misunderstood got me thinking about how important it would be to get my story out there.” Dayne cites Chaz Bono’s book, *Transition: Becoming Who I Was Always Meant to Be* as influential in his process, and in reading it says it was the first time he didn’t feel alone or crazy because

of all he was going through.

Dayne’s book, *-SHe Me*, is out this fall and chronicles his personal journey, and it includes important do’s and don’ts for loved ones who are coming to terms with a family member, friend, or partner’s transition.

That can be a thorny issue, as Dayne explains. “We can’t expect everyone to just jump on board.”

Dayne says that among the do’s for loved ones are to respect people’s pronouns and names. That’s critical, as is trying not to judge. “Try and remember that for the transgender person this is not just a phase. They’ve been dealing with this through their whole lives.” It’s also common for loved ones to think that the process is going too fast, but they forget that that this is something the person in transition has been dealing with in silence for many years. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to take the lead from the person with whom one is interacting.

Among the do’s for those transitioning, Dayne stresses, “do allow your loved one to grieve.” He says that it will take time for them to come to terms with the change. As for his own experience, Dayne says that there was a time

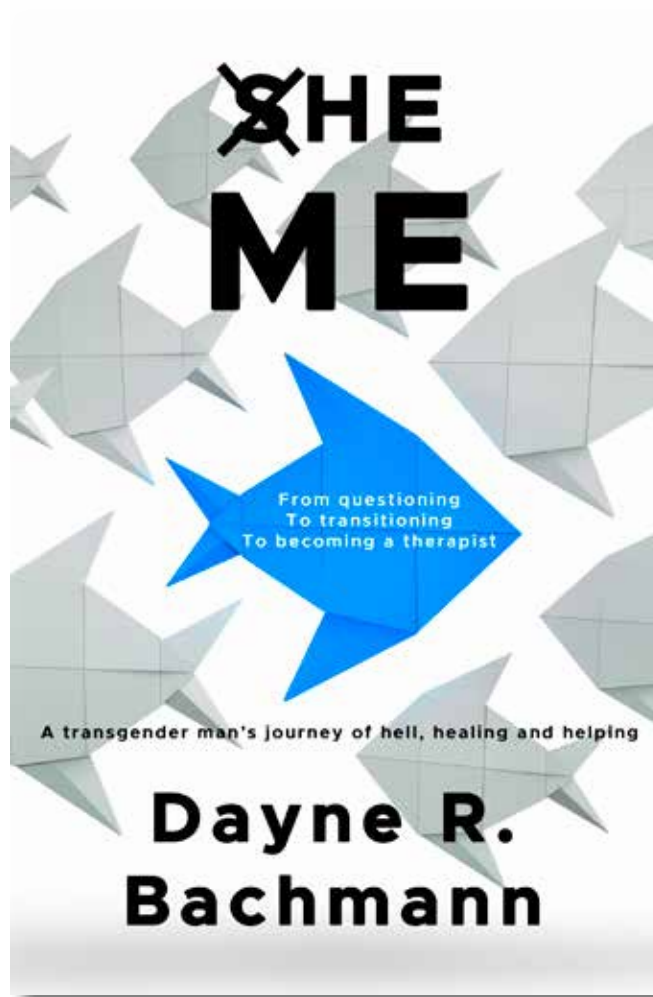
when he would respond harshly to perceived slights but adds that the more he came to terms with himself, the more possible it was to develop compassion both for himself and the people around him.

Dayne also draws hope from the more widespread knowledge and acceptance of transgender people, though of course there is a way to go. “Nowadays it’s so open.

It wasn’t like that for us growing up.” Younger people who are exploring their genders have a community, and they use language that Dayne freely admits he doesn’t know. As always, there is more to be discovered.

For information on *SHe Me* and information on ordering copies, go to Dayne’s website: www.daynebachmann.com.

—Christopher Byrne



Funny Lady



Photo courtesy of Julia Scotti. Photo courtesy of 1091 Pictures

Transgender comic Julia Scotti is the star and subject of a fantastic new documentary.

Comedy is often, and simply, telling the truth in surprising ways, especially stand-up comedy. That's not to say that it's easy. When it works, an audience connects with a comedian's authenticity, and it opens the door to a deeply shared laugh at the human condition.

For comedian Julia Scotti, the path to authenticity was transformational—and a path not often taken. She began her career as Rick Scotti and in her late forties realized that she was a woman. That realization began the process of becoming Julia, returning to comedy, and beginning the most productive creative period of her life. Her journey is chronicled

in a new documentary, *Julia Scotti: Funny That Way*, available on streaming platforms. It's an honest, poignant look at the process of discovery, transition, and emergence into a revitalized career.

Like so many people who came from broken or dysfunctional homes, Scotti spent a lot of her early adult years looking for "normal." "I wasn't feeling normal," she says. "I didn't know the issue was my gender identity." In her search, Scotti says, she married several times. "Having multiple marriages was not unusual for trans people of my age because you are looking for that white picket fence. You want the feeling of being like everybody else. And I wasn't."

At first, Scotti thought she was a gay male.

"Back then, there was no information about being trans. There was no Internet. There was nothing really." So, she tried to enter that world, only to find that each encounter ended "disastrously."

It was after one awful date when Rick was complaining to a psychologist friend about a lack of romance, that she said, "You're a woman."

That came as a shock to then-Rick. "I was, like, I can't be, but the light went on, and it fit. It was truly a 'road to Damascus' moment." From that realization began the process of discovering,


revealing and becoming Julia. It was not an easy process, but "the day came when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk to blossom, and I had reached the point where I couldn't stay in the bud, and I suddenly just blossomed."

That is not to say it was easy. Julia gave up her career, became estranged from her children, and struggled with the process of living as a woman, prior to transitioning in 2002. It was not an easy journey, but she was willing to bear the costs to become and live as who she truly was.

All of this is told in the documentary with a level of deeply felt humanity that Julia says would not

have been possible without her director and producer Susan Sandler. As Julia tells it, Sandler came to Nantucket and was going to help her refine her one-woman show. As they worked, Sandler realized that there was a documentary to be made.

“Who thinks about having a documentary made about their life aside from Donald Trump?” Julia mused at the time. Yet as the project developed Julia and Sandler thought it might help others.

Julia Scotti: Funny That Way is in its own way a tiny epic. It has a quest, tests of foundational beliefs, demons to be fought, transformations, and a hero to root for. Like any classic epic, it's virtually impossible not to be drawn in, moved, and come to care deeply for the hero. And, at times, you'll laugh yourself silly. 

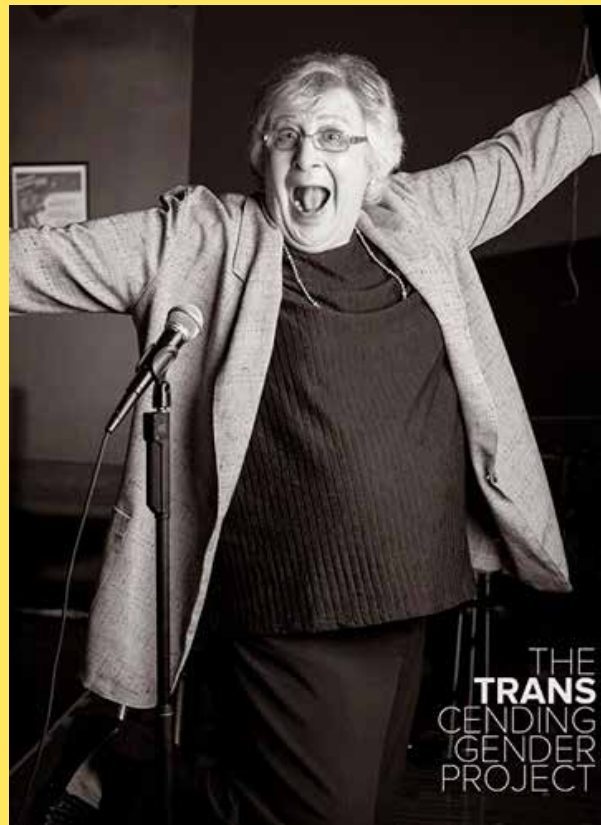
—Christopher Byrne



Julia Scotti: Funny That Way

73 minutes

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Finding My Voice Onstage

By Julia Scotti


The longest ‘walk’ I’ve ever taken was in 1980, and it was from the back of banquet room in a Chinese restaurant in Paramus, NJ to a comedy stage for the first time. It began my search for my comedy ‘voice’ and even though I’m closer to finding it now than I was back then, the search continues to this day.

Whether you’re talking about Jack Benny’s signature line, “Now cut that out!” or Carlin’s scathing social commentary, the greatest comedians all had a distinct style of delivery that is instantly identifiable. We comedians search our entire careers for ours and usually it begins to appear somewhere around year ten of our comedic lives.

As Rick Scotti would tell you if he were still around, that voice just never seemed to make itself known. It never evolved, because

his personality wasn’t genuine. I can still recall the frustration I’d feel when that development wasn’t happening and couldn’t figure out the reason for it.

Conversely, I felt alive and honest on stage from the very moment I arrived as Julia. And that feeling of comedic growth has continued these past ten years. When I write material now, I do so hearing Julia’s voice, and it is loud and clear in my head.

I’ve been asked if it was more difficult to find my voice as a woman in comedy and the answer is that it was incredibly difficult to find it as a human being. I have lived parts of my life on both sides of the gender fence, and each has its own mother lode of comedic material. What’s different now is that as Julia, I feel the truth in my act. Truth is where the comedic voice comes from, not gender. 



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Signs Point to Progress

Julia Gordon wanted to make a statement. While still in middle school, the Avon native watched the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and shared with her friends their upset over the murder of George Floyd. What they saw was the coming together of people around an issue of unity and the overwhelming support of the community. She wanted to do something like that in Avon. Julia's original idea was to promote a message of unity across all aspects of race, religion, gender, and orientation. So, she did what any determined student would do, she started to do some research about what had been done in the town previously. Originally, she had wanted to create a Pride mural at the Avon library and send a message to the town and students that Avon was a place of equity and acceptance. She had also wanted to create a Pride crosswalk, and the proposed location was at the library. Julia had measured it all out and put together plans.

Still, she had a big hurdle to clear: the Avon town council. Julia was confident that it would be a "no-brainer," and made a presentation to the council. To her surprise, they turned her down. As Julia says, "the five council members said they were impressed that I was coming to talk to them,

and then they voted it down three-to-two while they said they were supporting me."

The reasoning was that the town charter doesn't allow for political statements on town buildings, though Julia feels that's not completely accurate. "It was a little discouraging because no matter how prepared I was, they weren't going to support me. I want to see more representation." Julia also points out that what she wanted to do was "a human

statement that we should all embrace. I don't think it's political. I made a very clear statement between love and acceptance and hate."

If the council turned her down, her presentation caught the ear and heart of councilman Dan Polhamus. He says it's an understandable position that we've never allowed messaging on town property. However, he notes, "It's hard to swallow when two towns around us were making more progressive steps." Both

Simsbury and Middletown had created Pride crosswalks.

"It doesn't take too much to put themselves in the shoes of LGBTQ+ youth," he says, adding that given the challenges these individuals face, this is more than politics; it's a public safety issue. So, Polhamus started making some noise and pushing the idea, even against pushback from the council chair. He thought, "let me prove how much support there is in the community for



Avon native Julia Gordon. Photo by Valerie Gordon



this. We need a symbol of a voice that is struggling to be heard in Avon, and an amplification of Julia's voice."

Polhamus hit on the idea of creating yard signs, and he asked Julia to design them. With a bold "Avon Cares" set against a map of the town and the progress flag, they went to work. Polhamus paid for the first 100 signs himself, and suddenly found they couldn't print enough. By the end of June, he says, they had well over 500 signs out there. The sign program had spread to a total of eight towns in the area, including Simsbury, Farmington, Canton, Burlington, Granby, Harwinton, and New Hartford. In the end, the project raised more than \$7,000 for school clubs including Avon Voices for Equity, with which Julia

is involved, and the Gay Straight Alliance.

Polhamus says that the program is "a story of inspiration by our youth. It's about unspoiled idealism, and it's the story of a community coming together, based on the endless stream of people coming to my front door for signs."


He concludes, "I didn't realize getting into this how powerful it was going to be. It's one of the most meaningful things I've ever been a part of." Polhamus was so inspired that at a second town meeting, the council voted to recognize Pride month.

That came as a surprise to Julia, and she was invited to raise the flag at the library in a joyful event punctuated with happy tears. Julia says it was a huge leap forward

as two members of the council had listened and made some progressive strides themselves.

And it's only just beginning. Thanks to her efforts, Avon is more aware of diversity, and Julia never intended for this to be a divisive issue. As the school year is starting, she would like to do a mural, perhaps on school property, and she imagines it as a project that all people can do together.

Both Julia and Polhamus talk about how much members of the community said the effort meant to them. Julia is happy to see that people are responding to the message of love and acceptance—and solving inequity everywhere. "It's people doing the right thing," she says.

And she still wants that crosswalk. 

—Christopher Byrne

New Law Says All Parents are Parents

The very title of the form given to parents of newborns tells you what's wrong with it: "Acknowledgement of Paternity." It's also revealing to see which parents it's offered to: opposite-sex, unmarried couples only.

Thankfully, that form is now history, and the Connecticut legislature has made history by passing this spring what advocates call the most progressive parentage—not "paternity"—law in the country.

As of July 1, 2022, hospitals will offer an "Acknowledgement of Parentage" form to all new parents, however they got there, including via assisted reproduction and surrogacy, including assisted reproduction and surrogacy. The latter provisions also benefit opposite-sex couples using those measures.

The law's chief drafter, Yale Law School Professor Doug NeJaime, says "Connecticut now has perhaps the most comprehensive, most inclusive, and most child-centered parentage law in the country. Our state has taken the important step of protecting children's relationships with their parents—the most important relationship for a child's development—regardless of their parents' gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital

status. And our state now recognizes the important principle that the bond between a parent and child does not depend on a genetic connection but instead on the day-to-day work of parenting."

The law will spare Connecticut's LGBTQ+ parents the expense and

who can be a legal parent. No child should have to live with the burden of knowing that one of their parents could be seen as less than the other in the eyes of the law."

Once the law takes effect, parents can retroactively fill out the form through the Department of Health

the same time go through this legal stuff about who's going to be the parent. To say this means piece of mind is so lacking."

When the law was passed, she says, "I felt such weight off my shoulders, I felt like I could float." The couple also has a 14-year-old son to whom Gonzalez has been mother since the boy was three. In that case, because she was not the "intended" parent, she will have to establish parentage through a court adoption.

At least two million children nationwide are being raised by LGBTQ+ parents, and 29% of LGBTQ+ adults are raising children, according to the Family Equality Council.

The bill was approved almost unanimously: Mark W. Anderson (R-Granby) cast the sole no vote.

Rep. Jeff Currey (D-East Hartford, Manchester and South Windsor) was the bill's principal sponsor. He says, "With the signing of the Connecticut Parentage Act into law, our state has significantly strengthened the legal right to parentage for all parents and children in Connecticut. After putting this bill on hold last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is a tremendous victory for our state." 

—Jane Latus



Stephanie Ocasio-Gonzalez left, Denise Gonzalez right, son Jayvin and baby Bessanie

indignity of having to adopt their own children. It will provide children the security of allowing their parents to be... parents with full recognition.

The child of two moms, Annastasia Martineau, told legislators at a March public hearing, "So many queer Connecticut families like mine struggle with health insurance, making medical decisions, and access to other basic benefits because of the lack of protections around

and Human Services at no cost. Ansonia resident Stephanie Ocasio-Gonzalez can't wait for that day, when she and wife Denise Gonzalez will secure Denise's parental status for their two-year-old daughter. "I will probably be a blubbing mess!" says Ocasio-Gonzalez. "I always worried about what would happen if something happened to me. Especially when the pandemic hit. I wouldn't want my family to go through grieving and at

Once upon a time in West Hartford...

A group of ordinary LGBTQ folk told some very extraordinary stories.



Maybe you were one of the lucky ones who witnessed, *Tell Me Another—the LGBTQ+ Experience*. Sponsored by West Hartford Pride 2021, it was a captivating evening of mesmerizing storytelling with true tales told live.

During this June Pride event, an audience of approximately 75 were treated to eight storytellers from the Connecticut LGBTQ+ community. The program was the brainchild of organizers Carl Delmolino and Aaron Scott. They are both big fans of storytelling events and wanted to incorporate one as part of the group's Pride month celebration.

Says Delmolino, "Every culture has its own stories or narratives which are shared as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation or instilling moral values. They can be moving and mystical. The LGBTQ+ community is no different. We have our own stories to tell."

They enlisted the support of Terry Wolfisch-Cole, a master at the art and craft of storytelling. Resident of West Simsbury and founder of *Tell Me Another*, she teaches others to share their stories effectively for personal and professional success. In addition, Terry

is a *Moth GrandSLAM* champion whose story of running away from home was featured on the *Moth Radio Hour* and in *Readers Digest*.


"Everyone has a story to tell", says Wolfisch-Cole, "and, while our experiences are unique, the emotions that our stories convey are universal. Sharing our stories builds bridges. It teaches us that we aren't as different from one another as we've been taught to think we are." Scott adds, "I love The Moth-style because its very origin is deeply rooted in our desire to connect with each other through shared experiences in stories."

All participants were schooled by Wolfisch-Cole in an online workshop to develop their storytelling skills and prepare their narratives. With careful oversight, Terry gently directed the performers in the development of their own stories as well as their deliveries until they were ready for prime time performance.

There were ridiculously romantic fairy tales told that came true. Stories about coming to terms with intractable homophobic family members were shared, too. The audience also heard a shocking tale

of a near baseball bat attack that happily went awry. Special guest, Chion Wolf, from NPR's *Audacious* and an avid storyteller herself, capped off the evening. She shared the moment of her unplanned and rushed coming out to her parents—literally the day before she was to become front-page news.

During intermission, Patrice Fitzgerald serenaded the audience with several Great American Songbook hits including *Blues In The Night*, *Over The Rainbow* and *Orange Colored Sky*. She was backed up by Richard Leslie on trumpet and Gabriel Löfval on piano.

If you're curious to see what you missed, a video has been posted on the West Hartford Pride 2021 Facebook page. Interested in participating in the future? They plan to repeat the event during Pride in 2022. Follow them on Facebook. Questions? Contact Carl Delmolino at cdelmoli@yahoo.com. Do you want to learn to tell your story or attend a live storytelling show in the near future? Learn more at www.tellmeanotherstories.com 

—Paul Whitman

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ACLU Seeks Executive Order on ID Gender Changes; Biden Starts with Passports

Change may only come about from a grassroots uprising, but it's always good to have some help straight from the top. That's the strategy the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is pursuing on behalf of transgender, intersex and non-binary people seeking accurate identity documents. In March, the ACLU asked President Joe Biden to issue an executive order updating how federal agencies change ID gender markers. The ACLU's "They the People" Campaign asks for an X gender option, and for an end to requiring medical documentation, instead allowing people to self-attest to their gender.

The Biden administration already came through in large part with the June 30

State Department announcement that it will add a third gender option and "remove burdensome medical documentation requirements for transgender Americans who wish to update their gender markers on their passports and other citizenship or identity documents."

The ACLU continues to urge this change for all federal-issued IDs including social security cards and federal employee IDs.

"Documents open or shut all the doors," says Arli Christian, campaign strategist for ACLU's National Political Advocacy Department.

"We want this directive to come right from the president. We want the

community to know the federal government recognizes all trans people as exactly who we are."

Christian is hopeful for complete success, saying the Biden administration is "very receptive to talking about solutions for the trans community." They add, "It will make a huge difference in the lives and lived experiences of trans people."


That's no exaggeration. An ID that corresponds to one's gender makes it easier to navigate everyday life and prevents discrimination and violence. It can mean the difference between moving through the world with ease, or being repeatedly outed, questioned or worse. Statistically, young people whose pronouns are respected attempt suicide at half the rate of those whose pronouns are not, according to the Trevor Project.

Diana Lombardi, executive director of the Connecticut TransAdvocacy Coalition, says "It really means a lot. Even though we have laws

in Connecticut, it doesn't cover everything." Her own passport (obtained under past rules requiring medical documentation) is both "very affirming" and a safety factor when traveling outside of New England, she says.

The ACLU has filed six suits against states for refusing to allow accurate driver's licenses, birth certificates and other documents.

As of July, the ACLU reports that 20 states and the District of Columbia offer an X gender designation and/or self-attestation. "That's really progress that's happened in the last five years," says Christian. DC and Oregon were first, in 2017.

In Connecticut, a non-binary gender designation is available on birth certificates and drivers' licenses. A medical professional's attestation of treatment (although not surgery, as required by some states) is still required to change the gender marker on a birth certificate. A legislative attempt to remove medical requirements made it out of committee two sessions ago, but not to the floor. 

—Jane Latus





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WATCH WHAT HAPPENS

BY BRIAN SCOTT LIPTON

To paraphrase the great Stephen Sondheim, does anyone *still* wear a watch? True, that question seemed unthinkable even a decade ago – before cell phones seemingly became the primary device most Americans use to let them know what time it is. To some people, the query feels like the kind of quippy retort that deserves nothing more than an “OK Boomer” response. But the fact is American men of all ages, especially those in their 20s, are beginning to re-embrace the idea of putting on a traditional timepiece every day. This is a growing trend that’s been observed around the state by retailers and consumers alike. Women are buying watches, too, but when it comes to function *and* fashion, the movement is in the traditionally men’s category. Anecdotally, the thinking is that since women traditionally wear more and different types of jewelry, for men, the watch is the statement piece. At the same time, watches have no inherent gender identity, and consumers are ponying up for the watches that suit their needs—and their personal styles.

“Over the last year and a half, we’ve seen and heard from our customers that wearing a watch helped them maintain a sense of normalcy – even when it felt like time was at a standstill,” notes Giorgio Galli, creative director at Middlebury-based Timex.

While digital-display smart watches, most notably the “Apple Watch,” can be found on many a Metro-North commuter, if you look more closely, you’ll see plenty of other kinds of timepieces adorning men’s wrists. Indeed, the multiple of options on the market -- from simple “dress watches” to fancy tourbillons boasting incredibly complex mechanisms (often on the face of the dial) to GMT chronographs that

can show you the time in New York, London and Tokyo simultaneously – satisfy today’s savvy and often fashion-conscious consumer

Secondly, there are a wide variety of watches available in terms of price points (from under \$100 to over \$10,000) to appeal to all level of consumers, making the watch an accessory that is affordable to all ages and professions. Moreover, great design isn’t limited to just the high-end timepieces.

And lastly, but hardly least important, there are so many ways in 2021 to purchase watches—ranging from high-end jewelry stores and department stores to consignment

dealers, eBay auctions and online websites—that owning one is as easy as 12-3-6-9.

“The men’s watch market is not just picking up, it’s on fire, notes Joseph Ladin, the CEO of SFLMaven.com, which holds weekly online eBay watch auctions. “As someone who has followed watch collecting for the past 18 years, it has been really exciting seeing the timepiece industry evolve to what it is today.”

SURVIVAL STRATEGY

While it would seem to be a logical conclusion that the COVID-19 pandemic made owning a watch seem less necessary, never mind less economical, that simply didn’t turn out to be the case for all consumers, according to both brands and retailers. “Sales for watches have been strong since June of 2020 and continue to grow at a healthy pace as people return to leisure activities and normal life,” says Gustavo Calzadilla, managing director of the Americas for Parmigiana Fleurier.

“Even during the worst days of the pandemic, we found men with money wanted what they wanted. So even if they couldn’t come into the store, they found other ways, such as email and texts, to order the brands of watches they desired,” says Al Armstrong,

While it would seem to be a logical conclusion that the COVID-19 pandemic made owning a watch seem less necessary, never mind less economical, that simply didn't turn out to be the case for all consumers ...



Mondaine, which combines classic styling, Swiss craftsmanship and three-figure price tags, appeals to younger consumers who want a high-quality and great-looking watch without having to break the bank.



Armstrong Jewelers found that post-pandemic, men had a pent-up desire to spend money on watches.

longtime owner of Hartford-based Armstrong Jewelers, which carries such top-line brands as Omega, Karl F. Bucherer, Blancpain, Arnold & Sons and Jaquet Droz. “And then as the pandemic simmered down, we found a lot of men had this pent-up demand for spending money and many of them wanted to use it to buy high-end watches.”

In some cases, watches were purchased both to wear and as a long-term investment, though not all retailers support the notion of watches as investment. Matthew Clarke, watch merchandising manager at The RealReal, an upscale resale chain with a location in Greenwich, notes, “For example, last year, we saw that sales growth for high-value investment watches was six times stronger than sales for low-value watches. Based on the demand and sales, we’re currently seeing for watches, we expect this trend to only continue, especially for timepieces from classic luxury brands. Men seem especially drawn to pieces such as the Rolex Submariner Date and

Cartier Ballon Bleu that add both utility and elegance to their wrists.”

HELLO, YOUNG BUYERS

The youth market is playing a huge role in this growth as men in their 20s and 30s have started to become first-time watch buyers. As one young man recently told me: “I realize now that I am going back to work, it’s not cool to pull out my phone every time I need to check the time. It’s much more professional to just discreetly glance at my wrist.”

“Right now, the most enthusiastic watch buyers are in their 20s, and they are approaching this category with curiosity and discovery,” says Jeannette Purdy, general manager at New Milford, CT-based AMEICO (whose brands includes Braun. Lorenz and Sekford.) “Most of these guys have done research on the Internet, but some need to be coached as to how a watch works or the difference between a quartz and a mechanical watch. I’ve also heard anecdotally that some have

trouble reading an analog clock face. There’s a lot of opportunity to do customer education here.”

Adds Clarke of The RealReal: “Gen-Z and Millennials represented the largest volume of our new consignors in 2020, and we’re continuing to see this strong engagement from younger demographics as they become more eco-conscious and gravitate towards companies that share these same values.”

“We’re definitely seeing many more men in their 20s and 30s come into the store, because they are seeing the importance of owning a nice watch, especially when they get their first big job or return to the office,” notes Roberto Manfredi, owner of Greenwich-based Manfredi Jewelers, which specializes in high-end brands.





Manfredi Jewelers has seen a surge of young men coming in to buy watches.



Consignment dealer The Real Real has found success in re-selling high-value, investment-worthy watch brands, including Cartier and Patek Philippe.



Jaquet Droz is favored by collectors.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Something both retailers and brand executives also agree upon is that the watches that were popular in 2010 are often different than what was popular in 2020 and 2021, for a variety of reasons that go way beyond the concept of “fashion.”

“Today’s customer is more educated and more demanding than ever before. They are looking for authenticity, validity and experience in order to invest in a timepiece and make it their own and part of their self-expression,” says Zenith’s Thierry Colot, brand director for the Americas. “They’re not that interested in buying the same brand everyone else has or owning the same watch that their parents or



Renowned jewelry store Lux, Bond & Green encourages creative conversations between consumers and salespeople about the right watch to buy.



Reasonably priced yet fashionable watch brands such as (L-R) Nixon, Braun and Timex have convinced many people that it's better to look at their wrist, rather than at their cell phone, when they need to know the time.

grandparents wore. They want the watch that corresponds to their lifestyle.”

Moreover, the types of watches that many are choosing are influenced by new routines and lifestyles, says Galli. “For example, we saw Timex customers were interested in our more casual watches, like our T80 digital watch and our smartwatches like the Timex Metropolitan and Ironman R300, as they worked out at home or spent time outdoors. Now, as more individuals go back to the office and regain a sense of normalcy by seeing friends and family again, we anticipate that customers of all ages, especially younger ones, will not only need watches, but they will gravitate towards more fashion-forward watches and dress watches for work.”

Furthermore, as Nixon’s Babcock notes, few men are all work and no play: “Many guys will change their watch to suit the occasion or activity. For instance, they may wear a waterproof digital watch one day and then a bold chronograph that can also hold up to a weekend of adventure. Not to mention, we’ve been focusing on adding more sustainability to our line, including our watches made from ocean plastics. and the response to these watches has been incredible.”

FUN OR FUNCTION

For today’s consumers, expressing oneself through the choice of watch elevates the choice beyond just telling the time.

“Both fashion and function are part of the purchase equation these days,” states John Green, owner of Lux Bond & Green, which has stores throughout Connecticut. “The cool factor, the movement type, the rarity, the look, the gadgets, the power reserve, the materials, and the statement it makes are all important today for the purchaser. Certainly, chronographs and other specialty watches are attracting a lot of new and younger customers. Also, the idea of men’s or ladies’ watches has been replaced by the millimeter size.

We’ve also found that automatic watches (those that need winding rather than ones that run by battery) continue to grow in our market. Our conversations have become more creative.”

Manfredi agrees. “In large part because of the Internet, men now know the difference between mechanical, automatic and quartz watches, and that becomes a big factor in their decision-making. But the advantage of coming into the store, rather than buying online, is we can ask the customer the right questions, such as do you wear watch every day or do you want a watch that you wear less often so it’s okay if you wind it first? Ultimately, the answer to questions like that makes a difference in what someone buys.”

“There are those buyers who are captivated by the aesthetics and often find the functions less important,” says Calzadilla. “On the other hand, there are plenty of watch enthusiasts that prefer to focus on certain complications or other functions and find the look secondary. Fortunately, both categories are doing well for us.”

“What we find at SFL is that typically both form and function are considered with function coming first followed by fashion,” says Ladin. “On the function side, for example, many buyers really consider things like how the watch reacts to the climate or how water resistant the watch is.”

Moreover, as Armstrong also points out, function also turns out to be a fungible concept. “We sell a lot of timepieces with a stopwatch function. The difference is some guys are interested in that as a tool to tell time when they’re doing exercise, while others use it just so they know when to turn the fish on the grill.”

In the end, the reasons to buy and wear a watch are as diverse as the customers.

“We often hear things like how their watch was a conversation piece during their business dinner or are given examples of how their watch connected them with other like-minded people in their community,” notes Ladin. “The power of a great watch is pretty remarkable.”



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CT VOICE Out Loud will air every Saturday night in October beginning October 2nd. All shows air at 11:35 pm following the news exclusively on WTNH. Each show brings to life stories from an upcoming issue of CT VOICE.

Connecticut Voice Editor, Christopher Byrne catches up with James Whiteside, principal dancer with ABT. They chat about his journey from Fairfield to the global stage, his new "almost memoir," "Center Center," and how he found—and invented—himself as an artist and proud gay man.

We'll learn about the welcoming environment and inclusive culture at Middlesex Health. Pat Lore talks to two frontline workers to find out how they are fiercely advocating for patients, by delivering supportive, thorough, respectful care.

Ashley Kohl visits Foxwoods Resort Casino to show what's on tap this summer, including a colorful new retreat focused on LGBTQ arts and culture.

Find out more about the first CT VOICE HONORS gala at Foxwoods Resort Casino.

Check out these stories, celebrity interviews and much more on CT VOICE Out Loud!

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CLINICAL STAFF AT MIDDLESEX HEALTH PROVIDE MORE THAN MEDICINE

By JANE LATUS

Getting appropriate and compassionate healthcare can be a challenge for anyone in the current environment. For the LGBTQ+ community at large and especially for transgender people who have special and specific needs;

getting appropriate, sensitive healthcare that acknowledges and respects their unique situations is critical—and unfortunately sometimes both difficult and demeaning.

But there's another reality at Middlesex Health, and it's a good one. Middlesex focuses on providing a complete array of care for the LGBTQ+ community and has a dedicated Transgender Medicine Program. The Human Rights Campaign—the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization—has awarded Middlesex Health four consecutive "LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader" designations for their work with these communities.

In addition to medical expertise and specialists in these areas, providing outstanding care to the LGBTQ+ community is an inherent part of their approach. The hospital continually trains staff – from receptionists to administrators, nurses to doctors – in the importance of supportive, thorough, respectful care.

Central to these efforts are the people on the front lines. Meet Medical Assistant Brandi Andres and Licensed Practical Nurse Candiss Brooks. Their titles give you a good idea what they do, but their job descriptions could technically include "prizefighter." Medical care? Yes, they provide that. But they also spend much of their time fighting on behalf of their patients.

"If we walk away with anything, it's absolutely how important advocacy is for these patients, how important

acceptance is for these patients, and to make them feel like, when they walk through our door, with the sticker that says Middlesex Health is a safe zone, that we absolutely deliver on that," says Brooks.

"I'm also part of the community, so I have a lot of knowledge about it," says Andres.

Brooks and Andres both work in endocrinology, and work with Middlesex Health's full patient population, including those with diabetes, thyroid diseases and other endocrine issues. They also spend much of their time working with transgender patients on hormonal replacement therapy.

As an example of how the LGBTQ+ communities are under-addressed, Brooks says that before working at Middlesex, "I didn't know gender care was part of endocrinology. It was not taught at all in nursing school." She learned about hormone replacement therapy from Kathryn Tierney, medical director of the Transgender Medicine Program. Now Brooks teaches patients how to inject estrogen or testosterone.

FIERCE ADVOCATES

"There is no place that does what we do when it comes to patient advocacy," says Brooks.

Andres agrees. She says she battles with insurance companies to obtain medical insurance pre-approvals. She and Brooks frequently also spar with pharmacies. Often, pharmacists will supply only what they have on hand, rather than the specific injection supplies prescribed. The wrong equipment confuses patients, who have been taught to use different supplies, and, more dangerously, can lead to incorrect dosages.

Brooks says the northeast's two biggest pharmacy chains



Medical Assistant Brandi
Andres and Licensed Practical
Nurse Candiss Brooks. Photo by
Stan Godlewski

are the biggest offenders. “They send patients on their way [with the wrong materials] and it’s: ‘You’re on your own.’”

Situations like these make both of them angry. “It’s frustrating to see how insensitively patients can be treated. You wouldn’t do that to anybody else. Why would you do it to this patient? I think 85 percent of it is bias. The rest is ignorance,” says Brooks.

Andres shakes her head in agreement and disgust. “Pharmacists call and ask if we’re aware we’re giving testosterone to a woman. I say, all you have to do is look at the diagnosis – it says gender dysphoria. Sometimes I’m not so nice.”

Sometimes pharmacies try to substitute a generic drug when it is imperative that the name-brand be prescribed, and Andres won’t have that. “I have to stand on their chest and say ‘You’ve gotta’ give them the name brand!’ You have to suck their air out of their chest to get them to listen.”

Says Brooks of Andres: “She doesn’t back down.”

“You’d think at this point in the game, there’d be some sensitivity training on how you handle this demographic of patient” within pharmacies, says Brooks.

It’s not the time-consuming part of dealing with pharmacies that bothers her, Brooks clarifies. It’s the lack of ethical treatment toward queer patients—“treating them as less-than.”

NON-STOP “BEAST MODE”

There is no such thing as a typical day for them, the women say. “I have to flip the switch. I can talk to a gender patient, then a 9-year-old with diabetes, then I’m on the phone with an insurance company. I’m the go-to person for CGMs [continuous glucose monitors] and insulin pumps,” says Andres.

Days are similar for Brooks, who may be teaching a pregnant person how to use insulin, then responding to a call from the lab with a patient’s critical blood values, then teaching a trans patient how to inject hormones.

“You are in beast mode for every patient every day. It’s non-stop!” says Brooks. “As crazy as it gets, I still pretty much love every day.” Endocrinology was her favorite subject in nursing school, and she continues to learn something new every day.

One enjoyable part of her job is that it feels like a small, private-office, Brooks says, despite being a large facility. “There’s an individualized, hands-on approach.”

Chiefly, though, both say the impact they have on LGBTQ+ patients is what sustains them. The reaction from patients when you use their real name for what might be one of their first times is priceless to Andres. One patient in particular: “I called her name, and she was so excited she just ran to the door.”

One of Brooks’ most memorable patients was a visibly scared, young adult trans woman who lived with her overbearing and noticeably disapproving parents. Brooks reminded her she was an adult and able to make her own decisions and that Middlesex would advocate for her. “Next time we saw her, she had her own car and her own apartment.” She also had a new aura of calmness.


“I can identify with the gender patients, though I’m a native female and heterosexual,” says Brooks, who is biracial and has struggled with body image. She, too, has been asked by strangers to explain her identity. “If people don’t think you look like what you say you are, there’s a connotation that you’re lying.”

When Andres came out as gay, her then-young kids learned how to respond to taunts from other kids with “Yep, I’ve got two moms! What’ve you got?”

There are many issues that have made it difficult for LGBTQ+ people to find appropriate care. From practitioner biases, to misgendering of trans people, to individuals’ fears of disclosure, specifically among youth, finding the right care can be especially challenging for these people. The risk

is that their needs may go unmet and their physical and mental health would suffer.

For the LGBTQ+ community, Middlesex Health offers a comprehensive range of care including primary care, hormonal therapy, behavioral health services, continence and pelvic health, gender transition surgery, physical rehabilitation, infectious disease testing and treatment, and voice therapy.

And having people like Brandi Andres and Candiss Brooks always in their corner can make all the difference for our communities. 

There are many issues that have made it difficult for LGBTQ+ people to find appropriate care. From practitioner biases, to misgendering of trans people, to individuals’ fears of disclosure, specifically among youth, finding the right care can be especially challenging for these people.



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BACK TO SCHOOL **OUT** *and Proud!*



How colleges and universities across Connecticut are welcoming LGBTQ+ students

BY DAWN ENNIS

It's fall, and that means many high school students are making college choices, doing their homework, visiting campuses. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary and queer university students, they want to know that a campus is supportive and accepting—and that as students they'll be safe, free to live authentically and supported. Here in Connecticut, colleges and universities are committed to these students, as *CT Voice* discovered as we talked to more than a dozen institutions across the state about their systems and services to foster greater acceptance, inclusion and representation of LGBTQ+ individuals and what mental health resources are provided.

We also consulted Campus Pride, a leading LGBTQ+ non-profit organization for its annual benchmarking index of inclusive higher education institutions.

Even as there have been concerning reports about challenges in campus life for LGBTQ+ students around the country, the Connecticut schools stand out for their commitment—and their programs.

CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

"I won't be gay at work as long as you're not straight at work." That's what Joe Bertolino tells anyone who questions his suitability as an out and proud gay man and president of Southern Connecticut State University. His orientation was never his focus when he was applying for this kind of leadership role.

"You're not hiring me to be the gay president," he says he told one college's review committee. "You're hiring me to be president, who, by the way, just happens to be in a committed relationship with a man."

That said, Bertolino said he is open about being out. "I'm very student-centered," he said. "If there is a gay student at my institution, and they see that the leader of their institution or that an executive at their

institution is a member of the community, I think that sends a terrific message to that student."

SCSU offers multiple resources for LGBTQ+ students, from support groups and its Open Door Closet clothing exchange to a Lavender Graduation. Jenna Retort is the director of the university's Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE) Center, and a cisgender heterosexual ally. "My goal is to bring people into the fold," she said, "and help them see the lived experiences of people in the community."

The New Haven-based university has an enrollment of almost 7,700 students. While SCSU scored a 3.5 on the Campus Pride index, Central Connecticut State

University was awarded a 4. No other schools in the system were rated.

Each of the state's 12 community colleges and 4 state university campuses has its own LGBTQ+ Pride group, and students have been actively offering feedback, ideas and suggestions on ways to make Connecticut State Universities and College campuses more LGBTQ+-friendly. "There was a working group that developed a Use of Gender Identity and Pronouns



Southern Connecticut State University President Joe Bertolino. Photo by Isabel Chenoweth.



policy, that was driven by student leaders and students across the campuses,” said Angelo Simoni, executive director for student relations and compliance for the Connecticut Board of Regents. CSCU already has a preferred name policy that allows any of its 90,000 students to change their name on student I.D. and class rosters.

CSCU operates counseling and health centers at its universities during regular operating hours. Community colleges have partnerships with local organizations providing mental health support. All campuses provide online resources for after-hours needs.

QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

Although Quinnipiac didn’t earn any rating from Campus Pride, the university has committed to use that index to analyze its LGBTQ+ climate and “address areas of underperformance.”

That’s one of six affirming steps in



Vincent Contrucci

QU’s new plan of action on the Hamden campus; Another one is an LGBTQ+ student leadership retreat.

“It’s for those students that are interested in really



Don C. Sawyer III

taking a leadership role in the community and driving conversation around making a more inclusive and equitable campus environment,” said Vincent Contrucci, director of community service and inaugural staff fellow.

“We know that institutions of higher education are a microcosm of a larger society. We haven’t solved racism, sexism, homophobia in the world,”

said Don C. Sawyer III, Quinnipiac’s vice president for equity, inclusion, and leadership development. “But what I think is important is, as an institution of higher education, that we step in and halt that and respond to these behaviors and let people know where we stand as an institution.”

Quinnipiac has full-time mental health counselors on campus 12 months out of the year, and one on-call all-night, every night, Contrucci said.

TRINITY COLLEGE

Trinity has an active and vibrant LGBTQ+ community and a 4-star rating on the Campus Pride Index.



Laura Lockwood

“This is one of the best academic schools in the region, with an outstanding faculty,” said Laura Lockwood, the director of Trinity College’s Women and

Gender Resource Action Center. She is the lesbian queer woman pulling double duty as the contact person for the Queer Resource Center, a house on campus that at this writing is closed due to COVID-19.

Hartford, a city with a majority Black and brown population, stands in stark contrast to Trinity's student population of just over 2,000. "It is a PWI: a predominantly white institution," Lockwood said. "We work really hard in the division and in our individual departments or offices to educate, to raise awareness, to bring visibility to these issues and to dialog, to do activism and social justice work."

Trinity College has a counseling and wellness center staffed by licensed social workers and psychologists, but only during weekday business hours.

TUNXIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

This two-year community college with an enrollment of 3,900 students is part of the CSCU system. Tunxis in Farmington has a Gender and Sexuality Alliance group, the Got Pride Club. Dean of students Chuck Cleary has been the club's advisor for 15 years and is a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

"As a community college, we're sending people either out into the workforce, or on to a four-year school," said Cleary. "So, our job is to be their steppingstone."

Mental health counselors are available on campus during weekday business hours and CSCU offers crisis phone support 24/7.



U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London

U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY

In September, a group of cadets at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London will mark the tenth anniversary of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. That repeal was the spark for the creation of the Spectrum Council in 2011, which was the first group of its kind at any U.S. service academy. The council includes not only LGBTQ+ cadets but allies as well.

"Right now, we have about over 150 cadets who are part of our Spectrum Council and many of them are not lesbian

or gay or trans," said Dr. Aram deKoven, the academy's chief diversity officer.

Spectrum members also helped draft the new Coast Guard transgender service policy that enables anyone who wants to serve, to serve openly, he said. "Talk about being moved to tears," deKoven told *CT Voice*. "It's very important work. It's mission critical. And I don't use those words lightly. This work of being active and inclusive is absolutely essential for mission success."

The Coast Guard Academy offers cadets mental health counseling on campus and online resources.



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UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Campus Pride awarded UConn 4.5 stars on its index, the highest score in the state, tied with Connecticut College. LGBTQ+ students turn to the Rainbow Center for a wide variety of resources, events and programs. Founded in 1998, the center is one of five cultural centers on the Storrs campus and is part of the university's office for diversity and inclusion. Kelsey "K.O." O'Neil, who identifies as trans masculine and queer, is the director of the Rainbow Center. UConn has the largest student population in the state: 32,000.

Mental health services are provided exclusively via telehealth due to COVID-19.

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

The campus straddling the border between Hartford and West Hartford has a total enrollment of 6,600 students and its own Spectrum club, run by students.

"As the advisor of Spectrum, I see a warm, welcoming environment for students in our community," said Dr. Kristin Comeforo, the graduate program director and associate professor of communication. "Over the past eight years, I've seen it become easier for students to have their authentic living names listed on class rosters and used for their email addresses. I've seen All-Gender bathrooms added on campus." And on a personal note, Comeforo added: "As a queer faculty member just coming out as nonbinary, campus has always been a welcoming space for me and my non-conforming gender identity."

Mental health services are only available via phone or video due to COVID-19 and only during weekday business hours.

UNIVERSITY OF ST. JOSEPH

Founded in 1932 by the Roman Catholic order of nuns known as the Sisters of Mercy, the University of St. Joseph has an enrollment of fewer than 2,400 students. Its undergraduate population is just over 900. And St. Joe's—as it's known locally in West Hartford—welcomes LGBTQ+ students, it employs out and proud LGBTQ+ people.



University of New Haven Crosswalk

One is James "Jay" Henderson, the university's assistant director of student affairs. He's a Black, gay Baptist from Virginia who admitted, he didn't know what to expect when he arrived on campus three years ago.

"I envisioned walking around a corner and seeing a sister wearing one of the habits," Henderson told CT Voice. "The Sisters of Mercy are different than some of the other groups. They are very welcoming, and I think that that feeds into how this institution approaches diversity issues."

For example, he said the university supported the creation of an LGBTQ+ student group, Sexuality and Gender Acceptance, or SAGA, over faculty objections.

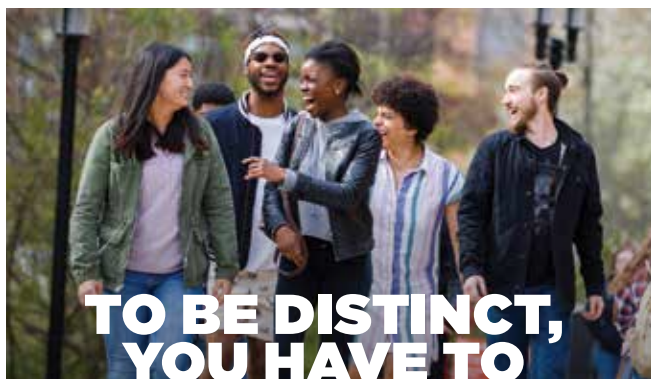
"One of our core values is development of the whole person," said

Rayna Dyton-White, SJU's director of diversity and Inclusion and Title IX Coordinator. "How do you make sure they feel included? I think you make them feel included by treating them like people."

Mental health services are provided weekdays during business hours in-person and via telehealth, and there is an after-hours emergency contact.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN

Campus Pride awarded the University of New Haven 3.5 stars. In addition to hosting two LGBTQ+ student organizations and celebrating community events, the university created a new position to serve its LGBTQ+ community, said Carrie Robinson, director of diversity and



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inclusion. It also has two new crosswalks painted in the colors of the LGBTQ+ flag. “So, the moment our students step onto campus they feel a sense of welcoming and belonging,” Robinson said.


Counseling and psychological services are available 24/7.

YALE UNIVERSITY

“Support for LGBTQ+ students at Yale is broad and multifaceted,” said Seth Wallace, LCSW, the assistant director of Yale’s office of LGBTQ+ resources. He is a queer, married trans man who came out and transitioned on the job at the university.

Yale offers students dedicated support groups, event programming, resources and more across the New Haven campus. “Each of our other cultural centers hosts a student-led LGBTQ+Q group and we often collaborate on activities and events which reflect the intersectional experiences of our community members,” Wallace told CT Voice.

Yale, with a total enrollment of 12,000 students, offers a broad array of mental health resources, from counselors and clinicians to 24-hour hotlines.

Look up other LGBTQ+-friendly colleges and universities in Connecticut and beyond at campuspride.org 

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CULTURE //

Quincy Ellis, one of the troupe's LGBTQ+ members.

Pilobolus' Changing Shape with LGBTQ Dancers

By **FRANK RIZZO** / *Photography by* **STAN GODLEWSKI**

Quincy Ellis sits cross-legged on the rehearsal hall floor of the Warner Theater in Torrington, his attention focused on the details of a dance piece performed by two members of the Pilobolus dance company. Ellis is learning the piece, which is part of the company's large repertoire. He's working especially on the more difficult cantilevered moves that strike just the right lyrical balance, and for which the company is famously known.

With long, silver hair, a compact frame and a personality that brightens a room, if not a stage, Ellis, like most performing artists around the globe, has been trying to keep a sense of balance in his own life for the past year as the Covid-19 pandemic halted live indoor performances and touring. But with vaccinations increasing and a confidence building for the fall, the dancers in this Connecticut-based company based in Litchfield

County are gathering again, and the troupe is preparing for its 50th anniversary season.

While Ellis is hardly the first gay male dancer in the company, he is part of another new generation of artists that is making the company even more fluid, as it further explores gender, sexuality and the many meanings of movement.

COLLEGIATE ATMOSPHERE

The company was created 50 years ago by an unlikely gang of ivy league, heterosexual jocks who had taken a dance class at Dartmouth University as a gut course. But enchanted by instructor Alison Becker Chase—whose approach emphasized muscular movement over conventional dance technique for this raw group of dance virgins—the men were enthusiastic, creative and free-spirited.

With encouraging words from established modern dance directors Alwin Nikolais and



Dramatic physicality is the hallmark of Pilobolus' choreographic style.



Paul Liu and Casey Howes rehearsing *Alraune* by Alison Chase and Moses Pendelton.

Murray Louis, the guys were inspired to continue after college to create their own band of merry movers, which happened to coincide with an explosion of dance as an artform during the 1970s. The name Pilobolus was derived from a type of phototropic fungus, and the group chose the name because it sounded interesting. Their style has always been a mash up of gymnastics, physics, leverage, balance, and a bit of dance., all choreographed as a collaboration among the troupe's members, rather than as the vision of one creator. As the company's style emerged, they became known for its strength, playfulness and hot-blooded sensuality: Pilobolust.

Joining the company and softening and finessing the alpha vibe were Chase and Martha Clarke, who came to teach at Dartmouth in 1972. The company thrived and became a phenomenon, creating more than 120 pieces and performing in 65 countries around the globe.

Peter Pucci, a choreographer and dancer who performed with Pilobolus throughout the '80s, describes the image of the company in its first decades:

"The aesthetic in the beginning was like guys, straight guys. That's what it was. We were all giddy and it was fun and zany and athletic and as far as the creativity — explosive. The reason I got into the company in 1980 had a lot to do

with its athleticism but I'm sure it also had to do because I was straight, and it had that kind of collegiate atmosphere."

In the late '80s, Jim Blanc became the first out male gay dancer in the company.

"Jim had an amazing physique," says Pucci, recalling his friend who died of complications of AIDS in 1996 at the age of 36. "He was taller than the rest of us and he was so strong and gorgeous," says Pucci, "there was never any resistance to anyone who was LGBTQ." The company created a dance piece in Blanc's memory following his death.

Many LGBTQ dancers followed over the decades including Vernon Scott, who was the first male gay black dancer in the company. The latest gay male to join the company is Ellis.

Today, artistic directors Matt Kent and Renee Jaworsk head the small company of diverse dancers and emphasize the collaborative development process that's true to Pilobolus' origins. They are reimagining some of the company's classic pieces and creating new ones to reflect their identities and sensibilities.

"I want to see a perspective that is different than mine," says Kent.

GROWING UP

Like the Pilobolus founders, Ellis did not expect to become a professional dancer.

Growing up in lower central Maine, his interests during elementary and middle schools were first in competitive gymnastics and then in figure skating. But in high school, he turned to the arts. He describes himself then as "a theater nerd."

As far as his sexuality, Ellis, now 35, didn't come out until he was 21. "I realized I was gay in middle school, but I didn't deal with it then or in high school. It wasn't until junior year in college when I started dating that I came out to everyone."

After graduating from Emerson College in Boston where he studied acting, he moved to New York City in 2008, with his boyfriend at the time.

Disliking the audition process for actors, Ellis found himself connecting more with college pal Leslie Guyton, a dancer who was creating movement pieces with her MoveShop company. It was an arts community in New York in which resonated with him, and he became more and more involved with them.

"I found myself in my mid-20s taking dance classes just to keep up with what she was interested in," he says.

In 2014 Ellis saw a posting for male dancer auditions for Pilobolus and a friend urged him to try out. "She said this company is right up my alley," says Ellis who had only a vague notion of what the company was.



Quincy Ellis and Marlon Feliz
rehearsing *Alraune* by Alison
Chase and Moses Pendelton



Quincy Ellis, Paul
Liu, Marlon Feliz and
Casey Howes.



Quincy Ellis, Paris Cullen and Victoria Derenzo performing "The Rugged Countryside" at Pilobolus's BLOOM: A Journey. Stuart Bogie is playing sax in the background. Photo by **Frank Rizzo**

After making it past the first cut in the audition, "the rest of the day it was just improvisation and fun. It reminded me of movement classes for actors in college, and improvising was something I was not scared of at all. I had a blast."

He didn't make the final cut, but the company kept him on its radar.

Two years later, Ellis saw Pilobolus perform live for the first time and thought, "Oh, crap. I really want to do that."

"That period was a weird time of my life. I turned 30. I was also going through a divorce. Everything seemed to be shifting in my life at once."

He auditioned again for Pilobolus in early 2017, and this time he got the gig. It changed everything for him.

"In many ways, Pilobolus saved my performance life. It really did. I was looking at other career paths, and I was on the verge of saying, 'I'm done.' Then something that I never thought was going to happen, happened. And it was like, OMG."

JOINING THE COMPANY

When Ellis first joined Pilobolus he was coming off having been involved for a few years in the drag community — not as a drag performer but as a dancer with his friend [and "RuPaul's Drag Race" contender] Miz Cracker as well as Juicy Liu in the drag nightclub scene.

After living in the professional drag world for so long, going into Pilobolus "felt like entering a more traditional 'masculine' realm," but one "that is definitely part of who I am as a person, too. I often giggle to myself because I remember there was this sort of 'boys' club' in college for the 'super-hetero' people that we used to joke about. When I got into Pilobolus I felt like I snuck into that boys' club."

Though Pilobolus had many LGBTQ dancers over the decades — and the ensemble just before Ellis joined had three gay men, he says — there were no gay men in the company upon Ellis'

arrival. "I was the only one. I thought, 'Oh, this is the other side of the coin.'

"But I didn't feel the need to put on a mask to be accepted. It just felt like I was exploring that masculine side of myself that I hadn't been exploring because I was working with the world of drag, exploring who I was in a different realm. A lot of early Pilobolus pieces that I was learning had to do with that part of masculinity.

"I think the Pilobolus pieces that have been created on LGBTQ performers definitely have a sense of subtlety and—dare I say the word?—femininity, which made it really beautiful to watch."

Could drag elements from Ellis' background be integrated into future pieces? Or would that be too far away from that early Pilobolus brand?

"Elements of drag could be used—and have been used in the past. But there are parts of the new drag culture that haven't been used before, and I could see maybe that coming into the company in the future.



Marlon Felix and Matt Kent and Emily Kent rehearsing *Alraune*, by Alison Chase and Moses Pendelton.



"We're always open to explore what interests us at the time. I know I have no reservations in expressing my perspective as a gay man about what is being created, and I know the artistic directors take that into account. It may not be like shooting a rainbow across the stage but those hints of myself are there and being respected in what is being created.

"But I am also an actor, so telling that story from a more heterosexual perspective isn't something that is inhibiting to me. I get to play a role, and that interests me, too, because it's not life. But because I am a gay man coming to that role, I also know that little bits of who I am are going to come out in that regardless."

COMING SEASON

As for his personal life, Ellis' partner is Australian who is currently living there. "We haven't seen each other in over

a year because of Covid-19 so that's been incredibly challenging [because of visitor restrictions].

"I'm not sure where is home for me now," he says. During the pandemic Ellis left his New York apartment when his lease was up and returned to his family home in Maine until this past spring. "I guess right at this moment home is a house the dancers share in Bantam as we work on dances," he says referring to Marlon Feliz, Casey Howes and Paul Liu.


Because of the pandemic and the fluctuating restrictions, the coming anniversary season is as constantly shape shifting as one of Pilobolus' pieces.

There was a second summer outdoor immersive "car safari," titled "Bloom: A Journey," which will be held July 21 to 25 at Sunny Meadow Farm in Bridgewater. It was quickly sold out, just as it as the previous year.

A new four-person show "Four@ Play" has also been created and designed for performance spaces across the country as they emerge from audience restrictions, especially outdoor venues. The 50th anniversary 2021-'22 tour is currently in flux but it will include returning to New Hampshire's Dartmouth University.

Pilobolus at 50—and with new artistic directors—is finding "the boundaries are being pushed but those things always feel like they take time especially with the older repertory," says Ellis. "It's interesting to be a member of the company as this shift has been happening. The passing of the torch to new artistic direction."

How the future of Pilobolus shapes up will be as interesting offstage as it has always been onstage.

For more information about the company and its performance events, go to Pilobolus.org. 



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What do you want to know?

An invitation to a dialogue with *CT Voice*.

Legal issues affect everyone regardless of orientation or identity. Yet there are unique issues for the LGBTQ+ families that should be addressed to secure the lives and lifestyles they have built. While groups like the ACLU and many others deal with rights and issues such as non-discrimination, and transgender rights on a societal level, taking care of things close to home is the responsibility of individuals and couples. From marriage to adoption to surrogacy to estate planning, all these issues require attention, planning and structuring.

Yes, there are those who avoid putting these agreements and structures in place, but they do so at their peril, at times. As to the argument that it's "unromantic" or even "depressing" to create things like pre-nuptial agreements, wills, or cohabitation agreements, once these things are done and in place, they make issues clearer

and easier to resolve if they're needed. Trust us: we've heard horror stories of seemingly endless litigation where nobody really wins, or of wishes not being respected, or health directives not being established. And nobody wants that.

Over the next issues—and online at ctvoice.com—we're going to attempt to answer your questions by calling on experts around the state to weigh in on issues. Of course, our responses can't be considered legal advice; you can only get that from a lawyer who is versed in your situation and representing your interests. However, these issues are important, and we want to support you in building the best legal foundation you can.

Send your questions to: editor@ctvoice.com, and put "Legal Question" in the subject line. We'll answer questions of general interest in the magazine and online.

We look forward to tackling these sometimes-challenging, always important issues. [MORE >>](#)

Legal questions abound. They can be complicated and upsetting. On the flip side of that, though, there is a certain amount of security and peace of mind that comes with setting things up so that there are clear understandings and, in the case of estate planning, you ensure that your wishes are met. Here are some of the questions our readers are asking:

Q. My girlfriend and I are planning on moving in together. We're talking about getting married, but to be honest, we're not there yet. I own the property we're going to share, but we're planning on splitting expenses and opening a joint checking account to handle those. A friend of ours suggested that we have a cohabitation agreement. Is that necessary?

—Susan B., *Fairfield*

A. In a situation like this, a cohabitation agreement can be very important. In your case you might think of it as a “pre-nup pre-nup.” Especially if you're going to commingle your finances, you want to be clear about everything up



front. While no one wants to think about it, a cohabitation agreement could save you a lot of unnecessary legal issues—and costs—if you find that your romance doesn't end with a trip down the aisle. Moreover, while Connecticut doesn't recognize common-law marriages, such a marriage entered into in a state where those are legal would be recognized by Connecticut.

A cohabitation agreement is a contract. You'll need what's called “consideration,” which simply means a benefit that is negotiated between the parties. For example, it may be a mutual promise to share work and living space, as well as any specific promises, such as how those joint expenses will be split. You'll also want to consider things like financial support, debts incurred by one party, child support, and even such issues as financial support if the relationship ends. Rather than being a depressing challenge, developing this agreement can give a couple a chance to really talk about all these important aspects of a relationship and encourage clarity and agreement. And, though we hate to say it, if you hit something that's non-negotiable, this is the time to find it out, right?

Most legal experts recommend that you write all this down. Yes, there are oral and implied contracts that can be binding, but if it ever came to litigation, those are really tough. You also should probably spring for a lawyer for each of you so that you can individually be well represented. A



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lawyer will advise you of your rights, in your situation and in Connecticut, and they will also look out for the fair and equitable reflection of your rights in the agreement.

For many couples, creating this agreement can be a daunting project. They don't want to "ruin the romance" or seem to be saying they don't trust their partners. We get that, but try to think of it as just taking care of the basics of the relationship. Many lawyers also advise that the best time to create a contract is at the beginning of a relationship when everyone is feeling good. Then, if things do take a turn, you can take comfort in the fact that you worked hard to create a fair and equitable agreement you can fall back on. That may not mitigate the emotional toll of a relationship breaking up, but you can spare yourself some legal upset at the same time.

And here's the good news: Every contract can be renegotiated and updated. In fact, you might even make a family project out of reviewing your contract every year or so to make sure that your agreements reflect your current situation. It may not be a traditional romantic date, but it can be a great reminder of your relationship, too.

Q. My husband and I are ready to start a family. We've considered both surrogacy and adoption, and we're learning toward surrogacy. What do we need to know in Connecticut?

—Peter G., Bristol

A. Surrogacy is a complicated issue, but fortunately here in Connecticut, we have some of the best surrogacy laws designed specifically to support this way to build a family. In Connecticut, same-sex parents are treated exactly the same under the law as opposite sex parents. However, according to American Surrogacy (americansurrogacy.com), it behooves anyone considering this path to be informed—and prepared.

In Connecticut, birth certificates are issued to the intended parents in a gestational surrogacy agreement, which allows and facilitates establishing parentage rights in the state. We covered the new parentage law in Connecticut (Page 22), which has spared Connecticut parents the expense and difficulty of having to adopt their own children. The only exception to this may be in the case where a couple cannot obtain a pre-birth order prior to delivery in a different state, they may have to complete an adoption in that state to further protect their parentage.

Nonetheless, you will still need a surrogacy agreement, which will protect the rights of all parties involved and allow for any liabilities. American Surrogacy recommends that any contract include the following items: Compensation for the gestational process, how the intended parents will communicate with the surrogate, what each party agrees to in terms of rights and responsibilities, any potential risks or liabilities, and issues such as selective reduction or termination of a pregnancy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 63

Here For The Community

With so many options and complex information, making financial decisions isn't easy. That's where Michelle Cutrali can help. With more than 20 years of serving the LGBTQ+ community, Michelle is dedicated to creating a strategy customized to each individual client's needs. Michelle believes, "We're in this together for the long haul. You can count on me to help manage and update your financial plan as your life changes."



MICHELLE CUTRALI, CLTC

Certified Long Term Care Planner & Financial Services Professional
860-559-2183

Cutrali Insurance and Financial Services is not your typical organization, Michelle says. "I take the stress out of finance. Pour yourself a glass of wine; jump on Zoom, and let's talk," she offers. As a New York Life agent and Certified Long Term Care Planner, Michelle is uniquely positioned to provide outstanding investment options and industry-leading service to help support any financial goals. "I help a broad range of clients from young investors to career-minded individuals, couples and families, and those that are pre- and post-retirement. I also assist with distinctly LGBTQ+ goals, such as financial planning for new families, surrogacy, and long-term care needs. Serving individuals and our community is what gets me up in the morning," she proudly exclaims.

She and her wife are actively engaged in their own financial planning, and Michelle stresses how important it is for everyone to build a strategy and a plan. "Wherever you are in your life, and whatever your goals are, I'm happy to help get you there and make sure you enjoy the ride!"



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Q. I'm older than my partner, and we share a house that I own, but we are not married. I want them to be able to live in the house after I die, but when they pass on, I want the property to go to my children from my marriage. What do I need to do?

—D.J., Farmington

A. This question goes a bit beyond the cohabitation agreement mentioned above. If you remain unmarried, your partner would have no automatic rights to the property, so you want to set up everything to ensure they can stay there. The first thing to do is talk with everyone involved. Make sure your heirs understand the situation and that they know what you plan to do.

You'll need to create a will, of course, but you may wish to create a trust for the property and create a life estate or stipulate other rights to the property as well. There are different kinds of trusts, such as living trusts or testamentary trusts, some of which can help avoid tying up the property in probate court on death. It's important that you speak with a lawyer who specializes in these matters so that they can help you fashion the best solution for your situation. There is no requirement that these agreements be created by a lawyer, but off-the-shelf forms tend to be general and may not take into account all the unique elements of your individual situation. 

DISCLAIMER: These answers were reviewed and researched by the CT Voice editorial team, and they are for general information purposes only. They do not constitute legal or professional advice, nor should you take any action based on these answers. You should consult your professional advisor for issues related to your specific situation.

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DELICIOUS //

Raising chickens in the backyard is a trend again, and it has a long history in Connecticut, particularly during the Great Depression.

The Egg & I ... 2021

By **AMY S. WHITE** / Photography by **MARY QUINN**

In the classic 1946 book, *The Egg and I*—and subsequent movie and TV series of the same name—a new housewife finds herself isolated on the Olympic peninsula in Washington. Hilarity ensues as a city girl adapts to the country.

People then related to the tale because between the Depression and a World War, for many raising chickens was of necessity an at-home enterprise, and they were struggling with making it work. In fact, in the 1930s, it was common to see chickens in backyards in East Hartford. After the war, supermarket eggs became the norm, but in 2021 for health, economy, or (if you can believe it) fun, people are raising chickens at home.

Manchester-based Mare Quinn is one of those new urban poulterers. Manchester is one of several Connecticut municipalities that allows people to raise chickens, a trend that has seemed to grow since the beginning of the pandemic. Wild-running chickens and the fish-out-of-water antics of a novice farmgirl may be entertaining, but in reality raising chickens is a long-term, time-consuming commitment.

Depending on the breed, chickens won't start laying eggs until they are about six months old, and they can live up to ten years. Zoning ordinances and regulations can vary widely among towns and even neighborhoods. Some residential areas don't allow roosters. Others give specific rules about the size and placement of chicken coops. Then there's the logistics—how to set up a coop, what to feed them, how to take care of them in all seasons, what to do if they get sick—as well as the expense. It's a lot to consider.

Mare, however, takes this commitment very seriously and provided a brief “eggucation.” Mare opened the coop and we could see Geraldine, sitting on a bed of woodchips in one of the coop's compartments. Mare explained that



Different breeds of hens lay different colored eggs.


different breeds of hens not only lay different color eggs but also vary in the number of eggs they produce. Geraldine is an Australorp, with black feathers that take on a beetle-green sheen in the sunlight. Mare gently rifled among the wood chips underneath Geraldine and was rewarded with one of the large brown eggs. Australorps are famous for. This breed can also lay three times as many eggs as an American breed whose

eggs are a beautiful light blue.

We go back inside to take some pictures and Mare points out the egg cartons on her counter. They are full of white, brown, and blue eggs. “We don’t refrigerate our eggs,” she says. “You can - it will make them last longer, but we don’t. We don’t have to because they’re so fresh. Plus, it’s almost a conversation piece, like, ‘Why are your eggs out?’”

For perspective, we compared the store-bought white eggs I have brought over to the ones from Mare’s hens. The backyard eggs are considerably larger. But more importantly, when we crack them, the yolks are bigger and brighter, almost orange compared to the light yellow of the store-bought eggs. Mare says, “Sometimes we get double yolks, which is exciting.” In fact, eggs from backyard hens are generally more nutritious than industrially produced eggs because most backyard hens have more opportunity to spend time outdoors foraging.

Raising chickens may not be for everyone, but eating better tasting, more nutritious eggs should be. If you’re not ready to get cooped up yourself, get eggs from a friend, a neighborhood farmstand, or a local farmer.

Eggs are easy to work with, and the results can be quite show-stopping. As you’re thinking about your fall entertaining, or a weekday treat, try these three recipes for an appetizer, entrée, or dessert. You can get cracking on your own first-person egg-tales. 



“Raising chickens may not be for everyone, but eating better tasting, more nutritious eggs should be.”



These are more than just
hens — they're family
members

DEVILISHLY SPICY CREOLE DEVILED EGGS

Makes two dozen half eggs

Ingredients:

One dozen eggs
¼ cup mayonnaise
**2 teaspoons Creole or any
spicy mustard**
**2-3 teaspoons Creole
Seasoning (such as Tony
Chachere's), to taste**
1 tablespoon hot sauce
**3-4 scallions, chopped, for
garnish (optional)**
**Cayenne pepper, for garnish
and added heat (optional)**

Directions:

Place eggs in a large saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and immediately remove pan from the heat. Cover and allow the eggs to stand in the hot water for 10-12 minutes. Remove eggs from the water, cool, and then peel them gently. Slice the eggs in half lengthwise. Remove the yolks to a medium bowl and place the egg whites aside on a platter. Using a fork, mash the yolks together with the mayonnaise, mustard, Creole seasoning, and hot sauce. Fill the hollows of the egg whites with the yolk mixture using a small spoon or piping bag. Sprinkle with chopped scallions and/or cayenne pepper and serve chilled.



WAY-TOO-EASY CRÈME BRÛLÉE

Makes 6-7

Ingredients:

1 quart heavy cream or half-and-half
12 egg yolks
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract*
Granulated sugar

Directions:

Place all ingredients in a large saucepan over medium heat. Whisk constantly until steam starts to develop and mixture is slightly thickened. Place 6-7 ramekins inside a large baking dish. Pour mixture into ramekins. Fill the baking dish with water halfway up the side of the ramekins. Cover tightly with foil and bake at 400F for 45 minutes or until firm but not curdled. Allow to cool. To serve, sprinkle tops with sugar and use a kitchen torch or place under the broiler to melt and brown the sugar to form a glass-like top.

*Create other flavors by using different extracts like maple or almond, or substitute with an ounce of liquor such as bourbon or rum!





SHAKSHUKA (EGGS BAKED IN SPICY TOMATO SAUCE)

Serves 3-4

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 4 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 tablespoon hot paprika**
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes**
- 6 eggs**
- ½ cup feta cheese**
- Toasted pita bread to serve**

Directions:

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6 minutes or until onions are soft and slightly browned. Add garlic, cumin, and paprika, and continue to stir and cook for 2 more minutes. Add diced tomatoes with the liquid, reduce heat, and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to medium-low and make six wells in the thick sauce. Crack an egg into each well, cover the pan, and cook for 5-6 minutes, until yolks have set to desired consistency. Uncover, and baste the eggs with a light coating of the tomato sauce. Sprinkle the feta throughout the pan, turn off the heat, and allow to sit for 1 minute. Serve with toasted pita bread.



PERFECT PAIRINGS

BY ALLEGRA TEDESCO



Breakfast on the griddle, hot tea in your hand, your favorite book waiting to be read. Simpson & Vail's loose leaf tea blends are the perfect addition to any breakfast ensemble. When paired with eggs; scrambled, over easy, sunny side up, or even poached, these earthy and malty teas bring out the savory flavors of any type of egg dish. Both hearty black teas are great substitutions for coffee and hold up to milk or sweetener.



Dunmore East:

Dunmore East is a small fishing village on Ireland's southeastern coast in County Waterford. This beautiful village is very popular as a vacation destination known for its fishing and water activities, beaches, fabulous restaurants and cafes, music, and breathtaking scenery. This delightfully bold blend of teas, with a golden cup, a malty flavor and a slightly fruity aftertaste was created to honor Cyndi's, a co-owner of Simpson & Vail, wonderful memories of holidays in the village

visiting her friends. This tea has become one of our favorite blends! Start the day with this hearty black tea blend, enjoyable with milk or sweetener but also perfect without!

This tea blend pairs well with chocolate, spiced desserts, cheeses, eggs, pastries, meats and more.

Ingredients: Black teas

Brew tea at 212° - steep for 3 minutes.

Visit www.svtea.com to learn more.

Edgar Allan Poe's Black Tea Blend:

This dark, earthy blend evokes the damp tombs of Poe's stories. While it is perhaps the most well-known, The Cask of Amontillado is not Poe's only story in which his fear of being buried alive becomes a major plot point. His vivid descriptions of "utter darkness among a quantity of loose earth" that "threaten[ed] to bury [him] entirely" offered a direction for our blend. It combines the earthy tones of Puerh black with the mellow smokiness of Lapsang and the slightest citrus hint of an Earl Grey. The dried beetroot turns the brewed tea a deep blood red.

Ingredients: Black teas, puerh tea, lapsang souchong tea, beetroot and natural bergamot flavor.

Brew tea at 212° steep for 3 minutes.



HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO PIGLET

By **RENEE DININO**

A passion for caring born in childhood has inspired the life and work of Connecticut's Melissa Shapiro. She's a veterinarian, pet foster and loving pet parent who with her husband Warren has created an unlikely social media star—Piglet, a deaf, blind pink puppy—who has nearly 260 thousand followers on Instagram and whose joyful approach was dubbed “The Piglet Mindset” by Melissa.

Piglet, however, is just the latest project Melissa has undertaken. She refers to herself as a “veterinarian and mom to Piglet, and I also have a husband, 3 kids, 5 other rescue dogs, and 3 birds!”

She is also a compassionate, determined, no-nonsense, inspiring, kind, naturally calming, unassuming, loving soul. You would never hear her say any of those things about herself. In fact, during our interview, she often referred to her family, clients, and animals as the reason she continues her work. Especially during the pandemic,

her work allowed her to be the last source of hospice and comfort for pet parents for at-home euthanasia. She understands how important this service is and the emotional issues surrounding end of life care for a pet, particularly during COVID.

Melissa is also the CT State Representative for the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association and serves as a resource on animal welfare-related issues for the veterinary community. She also acts as an advocate on legislative initiatives and animal advocacy among other responsibilities.

Melissa's work today is a continuation of her lifetime of caring and devotion to pets. She explains, “I was born with an attraction to animals of all kinds, fur, feathers, or scales! My parents were keyed into that, but neither of my parents grew up with dogs. They supported my passion and took me to animals, farms, zoos, and the circus. Looking back on that now makes me feel bad because of how I know some of the animals were treated, but no one knew back then. They were just being supportive parents.”



The tiny pink boy when he first came to his new family. Photo by **Melissa Shapiro**

At the age of 6, her parents brought home her very first dog. “And from that point on, I knew I was going to be a veterinarian” she says.

“All through school, everything I did was geared toward going to veterinarian school. I knew I had to get good grades, be community-minded, and when I got to college, I got so determined!”

After 3 years of college, she applied to and was accepted to Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine in Indiana. “That day, if you can believe, was more exciting than my actual graduation! Because once I knew I got in, I knew I was going to be a vet!”

After graduating and a few years of interning and working for others, she decided to open a house-call practice

in 1991, Visiting Vet Service, which is celebrating 30 years this year (2021) in Connecticut.

“It was important for me not to open a brick-and-mortar business but more of a personal practice to be involved with people and pets. Of course, it was a juggle, being a wife, and then kids came and more animals, but it all seems to work.”

In addition, about eight years ago, she started Your Senior Pet’s Vet.

“I really do cater to people and their pets,” she says. She is keenly aware of the emotional scope of losing a pet and the issues surrounding that loss and how important it is to honor the final moments of a beloved pet’s life. “At this point in my tenure, and as a result of my love for working with senior pets, this has been a joy to not only

myself, but my clients - even those who just use my service for in home euthanasia.”

When Piglet came into her life, it was just the next step in a career built on compassion and looking out for (pardon the pun) the underdog. Melissa met Piglet by way of Colbert Veterinary Rescue Services. Piglet was rescued from a hoarding situation in Georgia along with his mother and three litter mates. He is a Dachshund Chihuahua mix and is the result of a type of breeding for color that can result in disabled puppies. Piglet is deaf and blind. In Piglet’s case, and others, it is also the result of hoarding, not spaying or neutering, and irresponsible pet ownership.

When Piglet entered her life, Melissa and her husband Warren had been



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married for 26 years, had three grown kids, 6 rescue dogs, and 4 birds! Melissa and her family were experienced disabled pet owners. Some pets were partially blind, and some were some deaf, but Piglet was their first deaf and blind dog.

Piglet was initially a foster, and their plan was to find him a loving home. He was tiny and needed 24/7 care. “It was not a decision made overnight, and he created quite a lot of change in our home. Luckily, our pets quickly and

happily accommodated Piglet.” As fosters, Melissa and family quickly grew concerned that they would be able to find a forever home where Piglet would be safe, loved and well cared for. It became clear fairly quickly that Piglet’s permanent home was with the Shapiros.

“Once we decided to keep him, in ways, it became easier, and we all adjusted our lives to having another addition to our family. While this may not be for everyone’s lifestyle, this is our life, and we gladly accept all of it, everything.”



The Shapiro's inclusive group of rescue dogs who love and accept Piglet. Photo by Carruthers Photography

“He has taught us so much.” In fact, the plucky pup has inspired a movement called the “Piglet Mindset,” which Melissa says has made her live more in the moment and be more patient and relaxed.

A Piglet Mindset is:

Facing challenges with a positive attitude.

Focusing on what you have and moving past what you don't.

Accepting individuals for who they are and including

them despite their differences.

Having empathy and understanding towards others and following up with positive actions.

Being kind to all people and animals

Teaching this mindset provides a continual opportunity for people to expand their perceptions. “When people say, ‘I wish he could at least see,’ we respond, “We don't know he'd be any happier.”

Piglet uses his nose and sense of touch to map his world



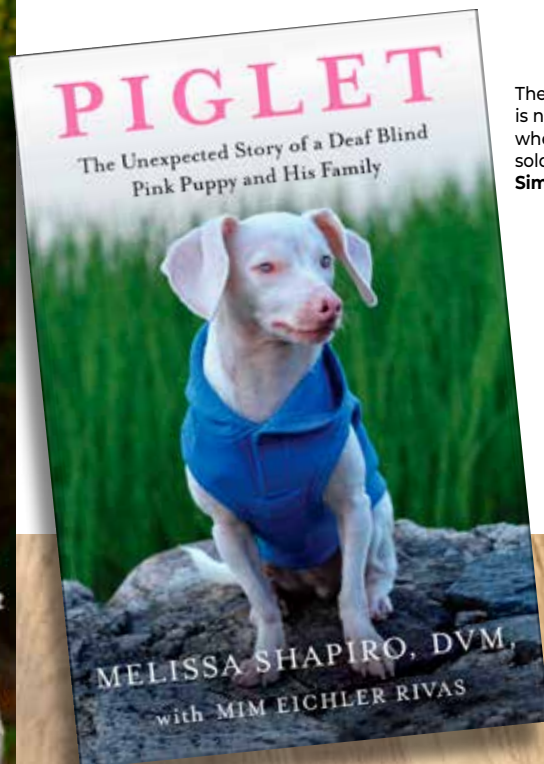
Piglet can't resist cuddling his "favorite dad." Photo by **Carruthers Photography**

and to connect with whoever is there. He knows his world around him and he's very confident. He loves to meet new people and go to new places, and he knows his mom will keep him safe.

Piglet has given her an opportunity to share and advocate for animals in ways she was never able to do, including educating kids about diversity, inclusion, and kindness. There is an extensive school program where kids can learn about this and even meet Piglet in person. A web site, pigletmindset.org, includes curricula that teachers



Piggy adored his sister Susie and misses her dearly, as she passed earlier this year. Photo by **Melissa Shapiro**




The Shapiro's book is now on sale wherever books are sold. Book cover by **Simon & Schuster**



Piggy and ZoZo awaiting a well-earned treat!

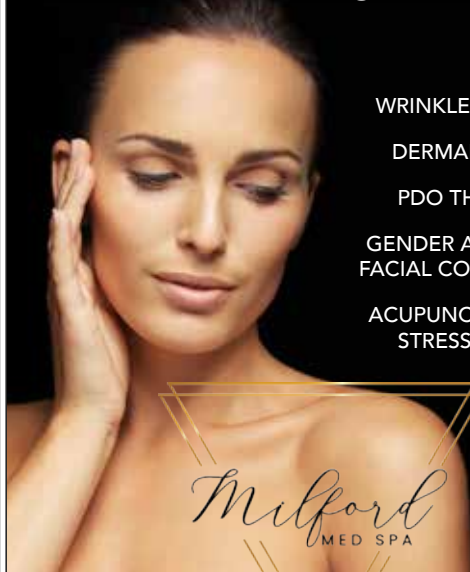
all over the country have used to teach critical lessons in empathy, inclusion, and acceptance. There are t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hats, too.

“I really hope Piglet’s legacy will reach as many kids and adults as possible to live a Piglet Mindset,” she says. I know he is making a big impact and creating change. It’s so rewarding to hear from teachers that students have reacted in such a positive way from our visits.”

Piglet’s story is told in a new book, *Piglet: The Unexpected Story of a Deaf, Blind, Pink Puppy and His Family* from Atria Books, and is available everywhere. You can also follow Piglet on Facebook and Instagram, sharing his adventures and inspiring, heartwarming stories. 



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Pandemic Highlights Growing Inequality in LGBTQ+ Communities: Now Is the Time to Act

By ROSA DELAURO

Connecticut leads the way in LGBTQ+ protections, but it is time for the federal government to catch up. From difficulties obtaining life-saving medical treatment and identity-affirming healthcare to accessing employment, paid leave, shelter, and housing, our LGBTQ+ friends and neighbors still struggle with the indignities that come with discriminatory laws that jeopardize their safety, security, and prosperity.

That is why I am proud to support the Equality Act, which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, federally funded programs, credit, and jury service. This legislation is long overdue, but in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “the time is always right to do the right thing.”

Across our country, the pandemic has disproportionately affected members of the LGBTQ+ community. Discrimination, stigma, bias, and oppression have hindered LGBTQ+ individuals from obtaining testing, treatment, and preventative care. And this has put the community at much greater risk of contracting COVID-19 and developing life-threatening complications.

According to the U.S. Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, the LGBTQ+ community has higher rates of preexisting conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, obesity, autoimmune disorders, chronic pain, and cancer. These issues are compounded by higher rates of alcoholism, drug use, post-traumatic

stress disorder, anxiety, depression, gender dysphoria, obsessive-compulsive disorder, suicidal behaviors, and isolation. Additionally, because COVID-19 forced hospitals to shift resources toward treating COVID-19 patients, LGBTQ+ individuals were no longer able to obtain preventative or palliative care, putting them at even greater risk to COVID-19 infection and complications.

According to research conducted by the Human Rights Campaign in partnership with PSB Insights, LGBTQ+ communities were more likely to either have their hours cut or lose their jobs altogether during the pandemic. In fact, according to a later poll, 17 percent of LGBTQ+ people lost their jobs because of the pandemic, compared to 13 percent of the general population. Unsurprisingly, these economic and occupational difficulties had a severe impact on housing security for LGBTQ+ communities as well. Though the CDC’s eviction moratorium prevented many LGBTQ+ individuals from being evicted during the pandemic, many landlords either ignored the law outright or took advantage of loopholes that put an increasing number of LGBTQ+ people on the street. Now with the eviction moratorium about to end on July 31, 2021, millions of American households still face foreclosure or eviction.


This could be catastrophic especially for LGBTQ+ individuals who face greater difficulties in obtaining safe, identity-affirming accommodations. During the pandemic, college students who previously relied on campus housing were forced to return to potentially abusive homes, which meant that many opted instead to live on the streets. Those who were already

homeless prior to the pandemic found themselves competing with more people for fewer spaces in homeless shelters and struggled to find shelters that would protect them from harassment or abuse.

All of these difficulties for LGBTQ+ communities existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for the Equality Act to finally become the law of the land has never been greater.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only further underscored the need to ensure all Americans get what they need to stay healthy and safe as they continue contributing to our economy. Laws on the books should protect all Americans in every aspect of society, including LGBTQ+ individuals.

So, now, as we reflect on this summer’s Pride celebrations, I am renewing my efforts to ensure the Equality Act finally becomes federal law. While Connecticut has some of the strongest laws in the nation to protect the LGBTQ+ community and serves as an example for states across the country, we have waited long enough for action at the federal level. Our LGBTQ+ communities, neighbors, family members, and friends deserve better. Now is the time to get this done and ensure they can get the life-saving healthcare, accommodations, and equal treatment that they so desperately deserve.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro serves as Chair of the House Appropriations Committee and the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. She represents Connecticut’s Third Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. 

Put yourself at the top of your list

There's a lot to remember these days. And it can be easy to forget one of the most important things: **taking care of yourself**. It's recommended that women ages 40 and over receive a mammogram each year. At Hartford HealthCare, we have mammography sites throughout Connecticut that are convenient, safe, and suit your busy schedule.

To learn more, visit HartfordHealthCare.org/mammogram

To-do List

- ☒ Mammogram
- ☐ Finish draft proposal
- ☐ Dog food
- ☒ Groceries for Mom
- ☒ Soccer pick up
- ☐ Schedule oil change
- ☐ Call leaf guy
- ☒ Pay bills
- ☐ Disposable masks



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