

A photograph of actor Spencer Day, wearing a white button-down shirt, leaning forward and looking at the camera. The background is a warm, orange-toned gradient.

outWord

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New Year With
Spencer Day

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Spencer Day will be performing in Sacramento. Photo courtesy of Spencer Day.

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Trans & Queer Youth Collective Provides A Safe Space

In 2018, Julie Strathdee, MFT and queer therapist, started a process therapy group for teenagers questioning their gender and sexuality in a tiny office in the suburb of Fair Oaks, 30 minutes from downtown Sacramento.

This was the only group of its kind in the area, and some members drove over 45 minutes each way to attend, claiming it was their only lifeline in a society of prejudice and bullying. Many would disclose their struggles with self-harm and attempts at suicide.

Strathdee saw that the group needed to evolve to make it possible for friends and the greater community to join. However, she learned that in order to continue to grow, it was no longer an option to bill the insurance of the original group members.

"The kids kept asking if they could bring their LGBTQ+ friends who were suicidal and in need of support. I knew I had to make this mental health service accessible to everyone, regardless of health insurance coverage and economic resources," says Strathdee.

who always wished such a space existed that I could get to, but also because it spoke to who I am now," says Buffington. "I am an openly trans adult who is stepping into who I am in this community that celebrates and learns from it. I'm honored to be a part of this family."

It was at this time, in January of 2019, that Strathdee and Buffington officially founded the Trans & Queer Youth Collective (TQYC) as a place to provide a safe space for trans and queer youth to receive mental health services, build community, receive basic needs assessments, gender-affirming healthcare resource linkage, and LGBTQ+ education.

"I don't have to feel alone when I come to TQYC. I can be who I want to be. I don't have to hide," says Leo, a 14-year-old Trans & Queer Youth Collective member. "If the

Thursday in Fair Oaks, along with extra trips and events, as well as individual and family therapy sessions and crisis support throughout the week.

In September of 2019 the Gender Health Center became the fiscal sponsor of TQYC, giving them 501c non-profit status, and allowing all donations to be tax-deductible.

The group is currently seeking sustainable funding through one-time donations and recurring contributions, as well as grants so that they can expand their services and better serve the LGBTQ+ community.

TQYC is also excited to be the recipient of an upcoming benefit concert featuring the Gay Men's Chorus, Sacramento Women's Chorus and musicians Jim and Jean Strathdee.

\$15 pre-sale tickets for the concert are available at TQYC.org, and Strathdee says



Photo courtesy of TQYC.

At that point it became a free public group run on a voluntary basis. Strathdee recruited transgender advocate Daniel Buffington to help lead the group and provide a gender-centered approach to the existing structure, as well as provide additional support in weekly group facilitation.

"I felt really drawn to the group because not only did it speak to my inner teenager,

group wasn't here, I wouldn't feel like I had a place to go."

Since then, Strathdee and Buffington's roles have expanded to case manager, youth director, healthcare advocate, tutor, crisis respondent, and in some cases, the only source of support for their aged 12 to 17 group members.

All services remain free for youth and their families, and TQYC meets every

they hope to have a strong turnout for the 7 p.m. concert on January 25 at First UMC, 2100 J St. where attendees can support TQYC's efforts to serve transgender and queer youth.

To donate, get involved, and learn more about TQYC, please go to Facebook @ tqyouthcollective, Instagram @ transqueeryouthcollective, or email tqyouthcollective@gmail.com.

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Faith For the Future

Faith Colburn, she/her
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A lot can happen in a decade. As 2019 comes to an end, I can't help but reflect on how far we've come and more importantly, how far we must go. As we ring in the new year and new decade, we shift our eyes to the future. A future that feels particularly fragile just days away from the most influential year in recent American history. It is impossible to escape the magnitude and weight of what's to come. But in the midst of the chaos, there IS hope. You just have to have a little faith.

I am here to tell you that this coming decade will be like nothing you have ever experienced. For decades we have raced to put together solutions but have been derailed by a missing piece. Now, the most diverse generation in history is starting to see the picture very clearly. The picture itself is not as complicated as it may seem; we've just been asking the wrong questions.

Maybe it's because we grew up with access to the whole world at our fingertips. Maybe it's a sign of the changing times. Regardless, young people are seeing the world through an entirely different lens. We do not feel indebted to the status quo. The promises we tethered ourselves to turned out to be nothing but a distant mirage, always slightly out of reach and in juxtaposition to the reality we inherited. We were lied to; and we want to know why.

We represent a new patriotism, one that shuns complacency and instead, fights for our countries' prerogative to grow and improve upon itself. I believe this intersectional approach is the key to unlocking policy and community solutions that work for all. Intersectionality

emboldens meaningful ally ship and collaboration as we seek lasting impact on our institutions in the years to come. Nothing exists in a silo, and it's time we start acting like it.

We went through a lot this year. 2019 felt like something out of a dream, and at times, a nightmare. But it awoke something inside of us all. A flame has been ignited and there is no going back. As we look to the new year, I am filled with hope. Hope in a future that strives to be better. Hope in a generation that isn't afraid to ask hard questions. Hope in a country that wants to get back on the right track. The time for complacency is over. So buckle up, because the next decade will change everything.

Note: Faith will be writing a reoccurring column in Outword about the Youth LGBT experience. She is very thankful for the opportunity to be able to share the experiences of herself and other young people to start conversations that lead to progressive and comprehensive change in Sacramento. She is 21 years old and works in the California State Senate. Opinions are all her own.

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The Power of Soul - Part 3

by Lauren Pulido he/him/his

I always felt this disconnect between body and soul and would spend most of my adolescence trying to figure out where this disconnect was stemming from. I came out to my family as a lesbian when I was thirteen but knew this still didn't feel correct. For the first time in my life something inside me was validated. I began searching for more of an understanding of myself through the help of my peers and my social surroundings.

I quickly began to explore more of this community that I had found sanctuary and acceptance in. I finally allowed myself to express what I had for so long suppressed. I found solace in the few other teens who identified outside of the binary, they were my support system when many of the remaining population of our school found discomfort in the idea and would often express their concerns to us. This was my first experience of a supportive community where suddenly, being out was encouraged and accepted. I knew in this space, I could grow. I could finally allow the emergence of

was confusing for them, but even more confusing to me. I was out to my peers and out casted. I decided to keep my private life quiet during this chapter of my life.

Since I was one of the few students openly out in this program, which was separated from the rest of the population, I would often be singled out by my peers. They would often demean my existence and would proceed to call me "strange," "unnatural," "weird," and much more. I would often only be of service to others when they had questions about their own sexuality but of course I'd have to meet

In high school, I went back to being the outcast. I went to a different high school than my group of supportive peers and likeminded individuals I had made in middle school and suddenly went back into this life of secrecy.

my encaged self to slowly come out and explore the world.

In high school, I went back to being the outcast. I went to a different high school than my group of supportive peers and likeminded individuals I had made in middle school and suddenly went back into this life of secrecy. I was a part of the college preparation program that landed me in advanced placement courses and even farther within this binary of self-expression. Students were expected to be avid learners and clean cut individuals with no room for self-expression or self-exploration, only learning and education. Again, I had been pressured to follow the rules of the binary by my peers. A lesbian

these questioning individuals privately and they had to be confidential and never spoken about to others. I often became an encyclopedia for all questioning individuals to understanding themselves. Oddly enough, this lead to a sense of pride within myself. Being an avenue of understanding for others eventually led to my own interest in activism and the power of having pride within myself. This is what was able to finally set my soul free. Understanding my sense of self came from helping others find their own understanding of self-truth and being able to express themselves openly. I began to see the wonders of living your truth which helped me be able to fully express my own.



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Best Books of 2019

So many books, so little time. That’s what they say, and in 2019, it was the truth. Here are the can’t-miss, shouldn’t-skip books of the past twelve months: *review by Terri Schlichenmeyer*

Fiction

If the subject of death can be taken lightly, there’s no better way than in “How Not to Die Alone” by Richard Roper. It’s the story of a man who works in London as a finder: when someone dies, the people in his office are tasked with locating the survivors of the deceased. That’s not the funny part; the humor comes in a blurted statement that literally takes on a life of its own, and the lengths the man goes to perpetuate it. Clever, witty, perfect.

Lovers of Mark Twain’s adventure books will relish “This Tender Land” by William Kent Krueger, the story of two boys who run away from an Indian Training School in 1932, and they head down the Mississippi to escape the adults who want them back. Lush, exciting, and irresistible, this novel will fill a good evening or two.

What can you say about a book that starts off with an attempted suicide? That’s “Talk to Me” by John Kenney, and that’s what happens after a TV newscaster insults a temporary worker and because of it, his life falls completely apart. Media folks will particularly enjoy this story, but if you’re a news junkie or a hardline TV watcher, you’ll love it, too.

If you’ve already seen the movie about Harriet Tubman, then you know the kind of treat you’re in for when you read “The Tubman Command” by Elizabeth Cobbs. Taking one small event from Tubman’s life, this novel blows it up big and makes it exciting, while reminding readers that Tubman was a woman, first and foremost. For readers who need a novel that means something, this is it. (Tip: get it in an audiobook, for the full effect).

And, last but not least in the fiction category, “American Pop” by Snowden Wright is a sweeping, multigenerational novel about a family who’s patriarch creates a drink sensation. When he passes the business down to his scheming children, interesting – and heart-wrenching – things begin to happen...

NonFiction

For political animals and those who are tired of politics as usual, “Palm Beach, Mar-A-Lago, and the Rise of America’s Xanadu” by Les Standiford is a book to read. It’s a biography of a place and the people who made it, and it’s also a history of us, our need to explore, our adventurous spirit, and our forever fascination with celebrities.

Expect something a little different in “Toil & Trouble” by Augusten Burroughs, who reveals in this book that he’s a witch. Not the bubbling cauldron type, but one who knows things but can’t explain why, but who still has to work to find love, home, and happiness just like the rest of us. This book is sweet and quirky and perfect.

You don’t have to have visited Las Vegas, nor do you have to remember the Rat Pack to enjoy “Elvis in Vegas” by Richard Zoglin. Sure, it helps, but loving glitz, glamour, entertainers, and scandal is really all you need to want this book.

It’s not cheating to put together “Bitten” by Kris Newby and “Mosquito” by Timothy C. Winegard in one Best Of list, because they really belong side-by-side on your shelf. Newby’s book is about all the things that can bite you and maybe kill you.

Winegard’s book is about one thing that bites and kills more humans than any other creature. How can you resist books like those?

And then there’s “The League of Wives” by Heath Hardage Lee, a book about the wives of the men who served in Vietnam and were captured, and what these brave women did for themselves, their husbands, and others to bring their men home. If you remember the war – or if you didn’t – you owe it to yourself to read this hidden history.

Children’s Books

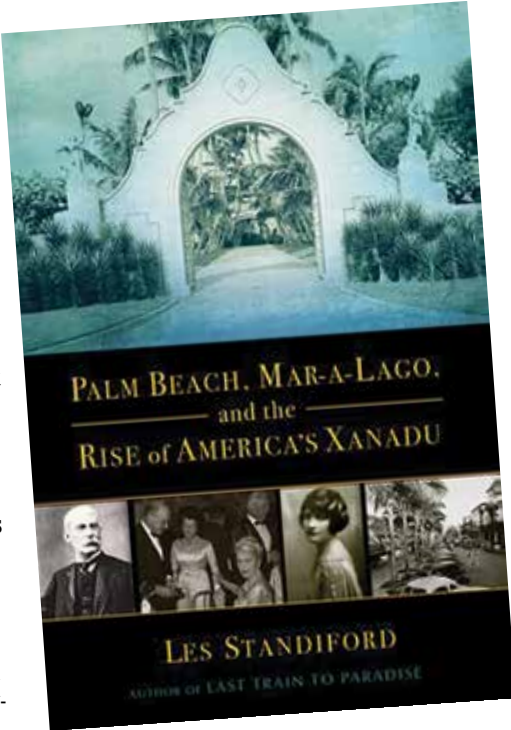
It’s going to be hard to decide if the story in “Sulwe” by Lupita Nyong’o is the better part of the book, or if the illustrations by Vashti Harrison are the better reason to have it. Either way, this beautiful book is about a little girl who learns to come to terms with the tone of her skin in a way that’s magical. Story or illustrations? Both.

Kids ages 7-12 will love the slightly-creepy story of friendship in “The Afterwards” by A.F. Harrold, illustrated by Emily Gravett. It’s the story of a girl who finds a garden in which things that are dead, aren’t quite dead. When she discovers her best friend in the garden, she must make a hard, hard decision. Bonus: borrow it back for a wonderful reminder of childhood friendships.

And rounding out the Best of Children’s Books for 2019 is “Fraternity” by Alexandra Robbins, who takes a look at college fraternities and some young men who joined them. It’s an eye-opener for teens who are heading to college soon, and it’ll give parents something to think about and discuss.

And now for the housekeeping...

Some of these books are from earlier in the year, so they might be out in paperback soon. Check with your local librarian or bookseller. They’re the Rock Stars of the book world, and they won’t steer you wrong. Season’s Readings!



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Since its inception, Brand g has been committed to philanthropy and prides itself on giving back to the communities they visit. Brand g's philanthropic guests have supported a wide range of projects including funding a new roof for a school in Myanmar, purchasing school supplies and clothing for students in need in Cambodia, and helping fund a clean water initiative in Tanzania. For this Giving Tuesday, Brand g Vacations is challenging their guests and followers to support ORAM and will match their contributions up to \$5,000. Giving Tuesday is a global movement to create an international day of charitable giving and is held annually on the Tuesday after U.S. Thanksgiving in the United States.

ORAM Executive Director, Steve Roth said, "We are thrilled to be working with Brand g Vacations over the coming year. There's an incredibly strong alignment between our two organization's commitment to supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the world."

Brand g Vacations' CEO Jeff Gundvaldson said, "We are honored to be supporting ORAM and its work advocating for LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees globally. We have a strong heritage of giving back to the communities that we have visited and are eager to begin our partnership with the ORAM team".

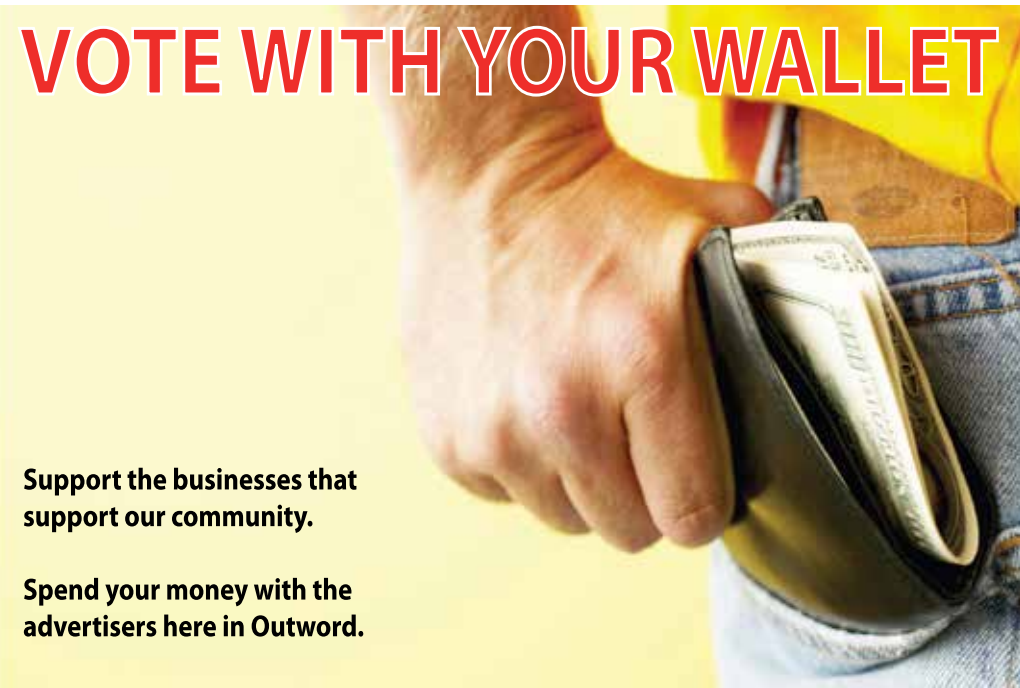
About ORAM
Founded in 2008, ORAM is dedicated to the protection of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees worldwide. ORAM collaborates with local stakeholders and beneficiaries to ensure that its work is built around the people it serves. Through capacity building, ground-breaking research and collaborative



relationships with governments, international organizations and NGO's worldwide, ORAM has successfully increased system-wide awareness and protection of LGBTIQ refugees and continues to deliver special expertise in this constantly evolving field.

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Out & About With Matt

by Matthew Burlingame

We did it! A new year, a new decade, and a new election year! It's time to put the twenty-tens behind us—far behind us—and focus on a bright and prosperous future for ourselves and our planet. We've survived the loss of some of the greatest musical legends, rode the waves of attack after attack on our human rights and impeached a corrupt President. It's time to embrace our power to do better, be better and demand better of ourselves and our leaders. But in the meantime a gurl still needs to party!

Kick off the year with a stiff drink and a relaxed evening at *Outword's* Monthly Happy Hour & Liquid Therapy on January 10, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Badlands Sacramento, 2003 K St. badlandssac.com

The Rainbow Chamber's 5th Annual Crab Feed scheduled for January 25 at the Sierra 2 Center, 2791 24th St. is officially sold out of tickets. But don't be disappointed if you missed out because NCAC's annual crab feed is right around the corner!

B 18... you must be 18 to play Drag Queen Bingo and the monthly event will be held on January 2 at 7 p.m. at Mangos Sacramento, 1930 K St. This month funds will benefit the Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus. The Chorus was founded in 1984 as a singing group that aimed to foster a sense of community and provide support for gays and lesbians in the Sacramento area. Rainbowchamber.com

Want a bit more naughty after being to nice all year? Ring in the new decade with a dash of debauchery at The Bolt's Masquerade New Year's Eve Ball. Enjoy Jello Shooters, music, a midnight balloon drop and Champagne toast all with no cover charge. The balls start dropping at 9 p.m., 2560 Boxwood St, December 31. Sacbolt.com

Need something closer to downtown? Join the Mango's NYE Bash: Roar 2020, December 31 starting at 9 p.m. at Mangos Sacramento, 1930 K St. Rock out to rotating DJs, live Music and entertainment and the best VIP Packages around at this 21+ event. mangosburgerbar.com

Pride should be celebrated all year and Pride Night Vacaville: Winter Wonderland 2019 on December 26 gives us a wonderful opportunity to dawn our winter rainbows and raise funds and donations of winter clothing for local charities. Pride Night will be hosted at The Hide-a-Way Lounge & Grill, 1080 Orange Dr. in Vacaville in collaboration with CGNIE. The event will be hosted by Taryn Thru-U and Ashton M. Principle with performances by Ben Flicker,

Suzette Veneti, Scarlett Skyy and Apple Adams. This is a 21+ event. CGNIE.org



Need a laugh? Comedian, actor and filmmaker Daniel Weingarten is set to deliver on January 15 at Laughs Unlimited, 1207 Front St. A Los Angeles native, Weingarten is the son of Mexican and Argentinian immigrants (both of whom are Jewish). It has shaped Weingarten's unique perspective of the world. Laughsunlimited.com

The amazing LoLGBT+ is back with an evening of drag queens and comedy January 12 at the Punch Line, 2100 Arden Way Ste 225. punchlinesac.com

If you've got chills and they're multiplying you can lose control at the Grease "Sing-a-Long" January 3 at the Crest Theatre, 1013 K St. The beloved 1978 musical romantic comedy film based on the stage musical stars John Travolta as Danny, Olivia Newton-John as Sandy, and Stockard Channing as Betty Rizzo. So throw on your leather jackets and your poodle skirts and come sing along to the movie on the big screen! crestsacramento.com

A huge congratulations to Brad and Troy Buyse-Stauss on celebrating their 29th anniversary together on January 7! Congratulations to Marc Koenigsberg and Robb Layne on their ____ anniversary also on January 7. More congratulations to Sage Brown on welcoming a new feline furbaby into the family.

Happy birthday to Jaclyn Shannon, Kelly Mosher Crooks, Sage Brown, Todd Powell, Joseff Gonzalez-Lederer, Sarah Rowland, author Liz Faraim, Kevin Michael McCarty, Byron Jackson Nash, and all the other Capricorn babies.

Got events, birthdays, anniversaries or did something awesome happen to you recently? Let Matt know at matthew.burlingame@gmail.com.

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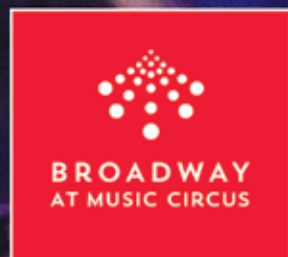
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Out & About

Our gay-friendly governor, Gavin Newsom, wisely chose RuPaul to be part of the CA Museum's California Hall of Fame for 2019, and this year's distinguished class was inducted after a celebrity-filled red carpet event outside that Sacramento museum, on Dec. 10, 2019.

Not surprisingly, drag diva RuPaul Charles and his handsome husband, rancher Georges LeBar, set the bar for style at the event, but there were other notable names in attendance as well, including Tony Hawk, Wolfgang Puck, Brandi Chastain, and George Lopez. Check out our intrepid photographer Chris Allan's photos from the evening.



Rupaul and husband at CA Museum's Hall of Fame 2019



Brandi Chastain and family at CA Museum's Hall of Fame 2019



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Bruce Springsteen's "Western Stars" Arrives On DVD by Chris Narloch

Thanks to rampant ageism in the music industry, we don't hear much new music on top 40 radio stations from older artists like U2, the Rolling Stones, and Chrissie Hynde, even though they continue to put out new music.



Bruce Springsteen performs in his new documentary and concert film, "Western Stars."

Bruce Springsteen, who it's hard to believe is now 70, falls in to this category as well, and many music fans don't realize that the famous rocker from New Jersey released an acclaimed new album and a companion movie in 2019, both entitled "Western Stars."

The CD came out this past June, and the documentary concert film was briefly in theaters later in the year. The good news for fans of "The Boss" is that the DVD of "Western Stars" is now available.

I was lucky enough to see "Western Stars" on the big screen, and it's a

fascinating combination of documentary and concert film in which Springsteen ruminates about his life and career while walking and driving around his horse ranch and then performs a small, private concert inside a beautiful barn on the property, which is located in Colts Neck, NJ.

That concert features Springsteen backed by a band (including his wife Patti Scialfa) and a full orchestra as he performs the 13 songs from the "Western Stars" album plus a rousing cover of Glen Campbell's "Rhinestone Cowboy." This DVD is a must-have for FOB (fans of Bruce).

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Ring In The New Year With Sexy Singer Spencer Day

by Chris Narloch

You have two opportunities to catch the multi-talented and very handsome jazz singer Spencer Day between the end of the year and the end of January.

Mr. Day will perform two New Year's Eve shows at Feinstein's at the Nikko in San Francisco, and then he will return to Northern California on January 18 for a concert at The Sofia, right here in Sacramento.

Day's first collaboration with Postmodern Jukebox recently surpassed one million views on YouTube, and the 41-year-old artist has a new album of reimagined theater songs, entitled "Broadway By Day," coming soon.

An accomplished singer-songwriter and pianist, Mr. Day is also a former Mormon and an openly gay performer with a very eclectic fan base comprised of gay men, straight women, and jazz fans of all persuasions.

I spoke with Spencer about all of this and more by phone recently. Read on for excerpts from our conversation, which took place not long after his private gig on a boat in Bora Bora and before a show in Malaysia.

How do you decide what to perform at each different show, Spencer?

Sometimes people will fly in from out of town, and they've never seen my show before so there are fan favorites that you want to make sure you play but then I'm also incorporating this new project which I'm really proud of. I'm not a Broadway singer, as you know, but my goal with the next album was to take not just obscure Broadway songs but really tackle some well-known tunes that jazz guys don't usually touch. So I'm doing 'Maybe' from "Annie," and 'What I Did For Love' and 'One' from "A Chorus Line" on "Broadway By Day."

That's cool when an artist can take a familiar song and give it a flavor that maybe hasn't been brought out before so that people experience it in a new way. I can't wait to hear your take on Broadway.

That's the kind of career I hope to have, like a k.d. lang or a Tony Bennett, who are able to stay relevant and reinvent themselves decade after decade and even far in to their careers, working with other artists or tackling unexpected material. I try to keep pushing myself musically. Right now I'm putting the finishing touches on "Broadway By Day," but I've also started working on an electronica project and I've totally fallen in love with mariachi music after spending a lot of time in Mexico so I'm working on that too.

You fan-funded your previous CD, Spencer, which is becoming more and more common for music artists. Was that a positive experience, using Indiegogo?

Yes. My assistant wanted to shoot for fifty thousand dollars, and I thought no way was that going to happen, but we reached it in just a few days, which warmed my heart that so many people wanted to support my music. I spent every cent on the record, and in fact it allowed me to go to Capitol Records and use Frank Sinatra's microphone. They brought it out in a little coffin, and I was able to use a great band too.

One thing I read on your Wikipedia page was that a roommate heard you singing in the shower when you were younger and suggested that you pursue a career in music. Is that true?

Yes it is. At 21, I sort of bolted out of town because where I grew up in Utah, a Mormon mission and then BYU was the standard path after high school, but I had this feeling that I was sort of suffocating. I knew that wasn't for me, and so I would dabble with the piano, but then my roommate bought me a Casio keyboard. Music gave me a place to channel all of my angst and self-doubt, which was really amazing and beneficial.

Well, you obviously chose the right career. Is the jazz world as open and accepting of gay artists as, say, pop and Broadway are?

No, actually. The jazz world is still behind the curve. The industry has improved a lot since I've been doing it, but when my song was #1 on the jazz chart about ten years ago I did an Advocate interview and I got like a hundred emails from haters saying that this song they used to love now makes them sick to their stomach. Things are getting better, but it's still a deal breaker for some fans, and even some of the jazz musicians, who tend to be male and straight. The good news is that I have this unique opportunity to bring these different groups together with my music, and that's what I'm trying to do.

Tickets for Spencer Day's San Francisco shows (if there are any left) can be purchased at www.feinsteinssf.com. For information about his Sacramento appearance at The Sofia, please visit www.bstreettheatre.org.



Photo courtesy of Spencer Day.

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Check Out The Crocker This Holiday Season

by Chris Narloch

Whoever decorates the Crocker for Christmas does an amazing job – the Sacramento museum always looks so festive this time of year. You can enjoy those decorations this holiday season, check out “Pueblo Dynasties” before it closes, and also ring in the New Year at the Crocker.

Pueblo Dynasties

Subtitled “Master Potters From Matriarchs To Contemporaries,” this cool exhibition of pottery continues at the Crocker through January 5, 2020 only.

Featuring more than 200 pieces by premier potters, “Pueblo Dynasties” focuses on legendary matriarchs such as Nampeyo, Maria Martinez, and Margaret Tafoya, as well as many of their adventuresome descendants, whose art has become increasingly elaborate, detailed, personal, and political over time.

The exhibition also includes a piece by the artist We’wha that is of particular interest to the queer community. A potter who created the pitcher in the 1880s, We’wha was a Zuni Native American from New Mexico and the most famous lhamana on record.

In traditional Zuni culture, the lhamana are male-bodied people who take on the social and ceremonial roles usually performed by women in their culture. They wear a mixture of women’s and men’s clothing and much of their work is in the areas usually occupied by Zuni women. Some contemporary lhamana participate in the modern, pan-Indian two-spirit community.



Christmas at the Crocker.

Noon Year’s Eve

Don’t miss Crocker’s beloved, high-energy New Year’s party, the day before New Year’s, on Tuesday, December 31 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. One of Sacramento’s major annual traditions, families can count down to the New Year at noon at this fun and free celebration. With live music from around the world, dance performances, art activities, and surprises throughout the Museum, this is one New Year’s celebration everyone can stay awake for.

For more information about these events and more, go to www.crockerart.org.



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Michelle Obama To Speak At Golden 1 Center This April

I keep telling everyone who will listen how sick I am of old, straight white men being President, and so I seriously wish Michelle Obama would run for the Oval Office at some point. Then we would have classy black folks back in the White House, rather than a white-trash-with-money moron named Donald Trump.

Mrs. Obama should have some choice words for the current resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue when she comes to Sacramento's Golden 1 Center this April for a moderated Q&A conversation.

A transformative First Lady, Mrs. Obama served from 2009 to 2017 and launched and led four key initiatives: Let's Move!, to address the challenge of childhood obesity; Joining Forces, to support veterans, service members and their families; Reach Higher, to inspire young people to seek higher education; and Let Girls Learn, to help adolescent girls around the world go to school.

Before becoming First Lady, Michelle Obama attended Princeton University and Harvard Law School. She started her career as an attorney at the Chicago law firm, Sidley & Austin, where she met her future husband, Barack Obama.

She later worked in the Chicago mayor's office, the University of Chicago, and the University of Chicago Medical Center. Mrs. Obama also founded the Chicago chapter of Public Allies, an organization that prepares young people for careers in public service.

In 2018, Michelle Obama published her memoir, *Becoming*, which sold more copies than any other book published in the United States in 2018, achieving that status in just 15 days and instantly rising to the #1 slot on the New York Times Best Sellers list.

Mrs. Obama was born on January 17, 1964, and she married Barack Obama in 1992. They currently live in Washington, DC and have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

Tickets are already on sale for the April 1 appearance by Mrs. Obama, and they can be purchased at www.Golden1Center.com.



Michelle Obama will speak at the Golden 1 Center this April.

A photograph of the exterior of Ernesto's Mexican Food restaurant at night. The building has a warm, orange-toned facade with a large, illuminated sign that reads "ERNESTO'S MEXICAN FOOD". The entrance is visible, and the interior is lit up.

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A photograph of an Ernesto's Mexican Food gift card. The card is red with a patterned border and features the restaurant's logo and the words "Gift Cards". It is tied with a red ribbon.

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The Force Returns To Movie Theaters

Plus “Cats” & “Little Women” Reviewed

by Chris Narloch

It’s that magical time of the year again, when thousands of theaters are clogged with new films, all vying for your holiday movie-going dollar and many of them hoping to receive Oscar nominations in January.

That multiplex mix of family-friendly films alongside more serious, awards-potential titles makes for some unholy bedfellows at the local cinema, with “Frozen II” and the new “Star Wars” movie crushing smaller, darker titles like “Uncut Gems” and “Richard Jewell.”

Lucky for you, *Outword* is here to sort it all out, with reviews of what to see and what to flee among the year-end movies.



Cats Jennifer Hudson stars in “Cats”

I’m a big ol’ theater queen and yet “Cats” is one of those musicals whose appeal I have never understood. Sure the choreography is fun, and the show has one killer song, but there is almost no plot underneath the spectacle.

That said, I sort of enjoyed the movie version, as thin as it is, thanks to its all-star cast, the crazy-beautiful oversized sets, and (most of all) Jennifer Hudson’s heartbreaking, go-for-broke performance as Grizabella.

Hudson gets to belt out “Memory,” the showstopper that made the musical a hit, and she sings it twice, softly the first time and at full volume near the end. Wisely, the singer acts the song out, instead of just trying to make it sound pretty, and every ounce of pathos is wrung out of the lyrics.

Elsewhere, Taylor Swift is surprisingly sexy and fun in the film, James Corden and Rebel Wilson provide welcome comic relief, Jason Derulo brings the hotness, and Judi Dench and Ian McKellen class things up.

Last but not least, I enjoyed the bizarre sight of the man mountain known as Idris Elba slinking around in a computer-generated cat suit, as the villainous Macavity.



Little Women Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Saoirse Ronan and Eliza Scanlen star in “Little Women”

Sacramento native Greta Gerwig (“Lady Bird”) returns to directing with this stellar adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s classic 1868 novel about the March sisters, and the result is as sweet as fans of Gerwig and Alcott could have hoped for.

Saoirse Ronan gets the plum role of Jo, Laura Dern is Marmee, Florence Pugh plays Amy, and Emma Watson makes a lovely Meg in the movie. Also along for the ride are an excellent Timothee Chalamet as Laurie and the great Meryl Streep as Aunt March.

Hometown hero Great Gerwig’s “Little Women” opens on Christmas Day in wide release.



Uncut Gems Adam Sandler plays a jeweler in “Uncut Gems”

This is one of those really dark, critic-friendly films that most moviegoers are going to hate, thanks to its unhappy ending and its disturbing portrayal of a jeweler who gambles other people’s money and his own life for a big payoff.

Adam Sandler, in a total change of pace, plays the film’s (anti) hero, but fans of his comedies will probably be shocked by how repulsive his character is and how funny the movie isn’t.

I admired Sandler’s commitment to the role, but the wheeler-dealer he plays is so obnoxious that by the end of the movie – which is admittedly suspenseful and skillfully made – I was exhausted and could hardly look at him.



Richard Jewell Sam Rockwell, Kathy Bates and Paul Walter Hauser star in “Richard Jewell”

It’s too bad that audiences have not turned out for this true story about a security guard who was wrongly accused of planting a bomb that he discovered in Centennial Park during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

The script’s depiction of the real-life female reporter who helped smear Jewell is ugly and misguided, but Eastwood’s direction is, as usual, clear and forceful, and the movie’s cast, led by Paul Walter Hauser and Kathy Bates (who are both superb) as the hero and his mother, could not be better.



The cast of "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker"

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker

By this point, "Star Wars" films are fairly critic-proof – you either like the franchise or you don't – but if anyone cares what I think, well, I enjoyed watching J.J. Abrams wrap up the original saga.

"The Rise of Skywalker" isn't as successful as Abrams' other "Star Wars" movie, but it's also not a travesty, as some haters are claiming. There are several fun surprises in the script that I won't spoil, and any movie featuring the late Carrie Fisher and the great Billy Dee Williams is fine by me.

Among the younger actors, Daisy Ridley and, especially, Adam Driver more than hold their own, and the director keeps the action moving at warp speed. "The Empire Strikes Back" and the original 1977 film will always be my favorite "Star Wars" movies, but you know you have to watch the new one to see how it all turns out.

You can check out "The Rise of Skywalker" on the biggest screen in town, at Sacramento's Esquire IMAX Theatre on K Street. To purchase tickets in advance, go to www.imax.com/theatres/esquire-imax.

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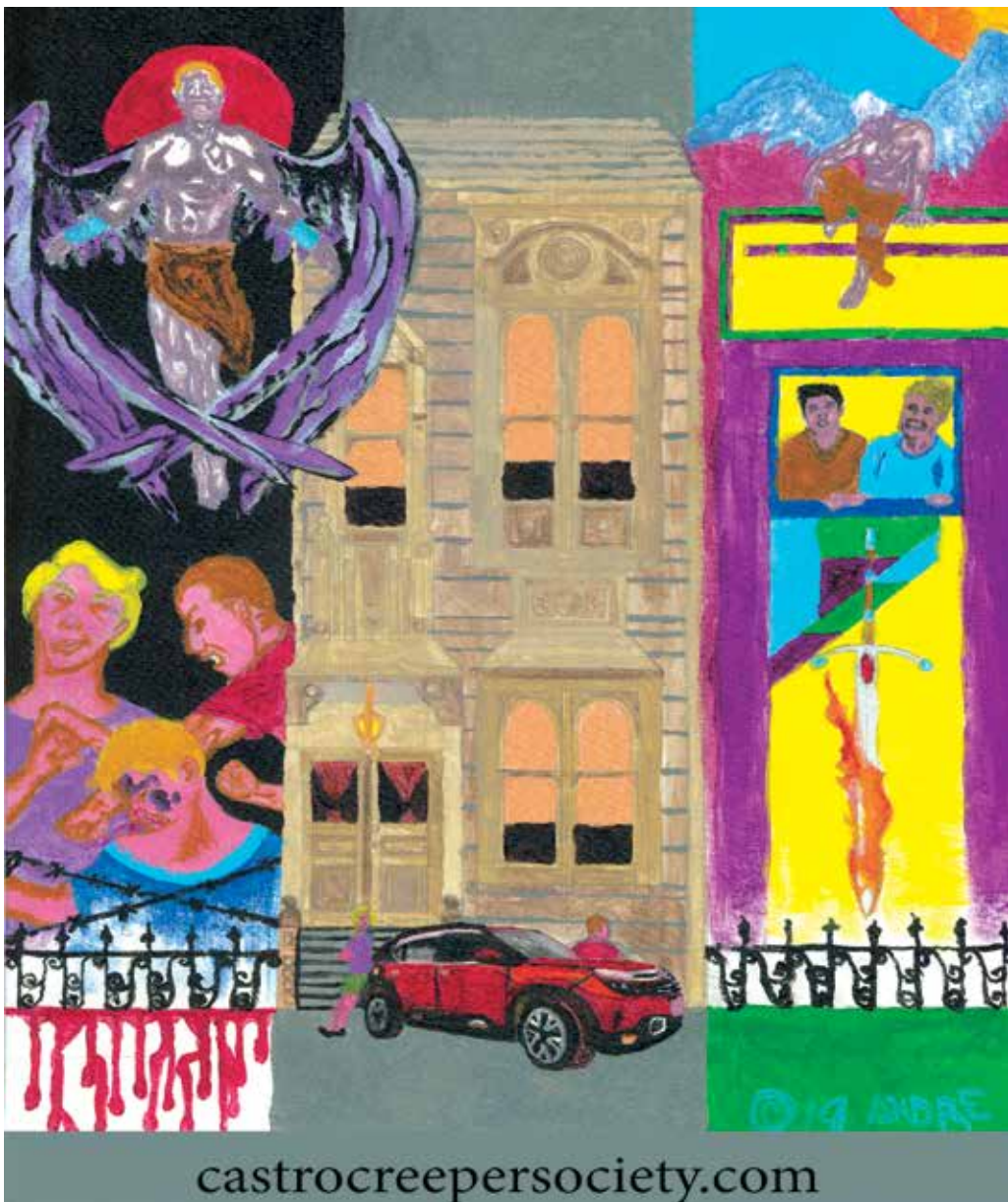
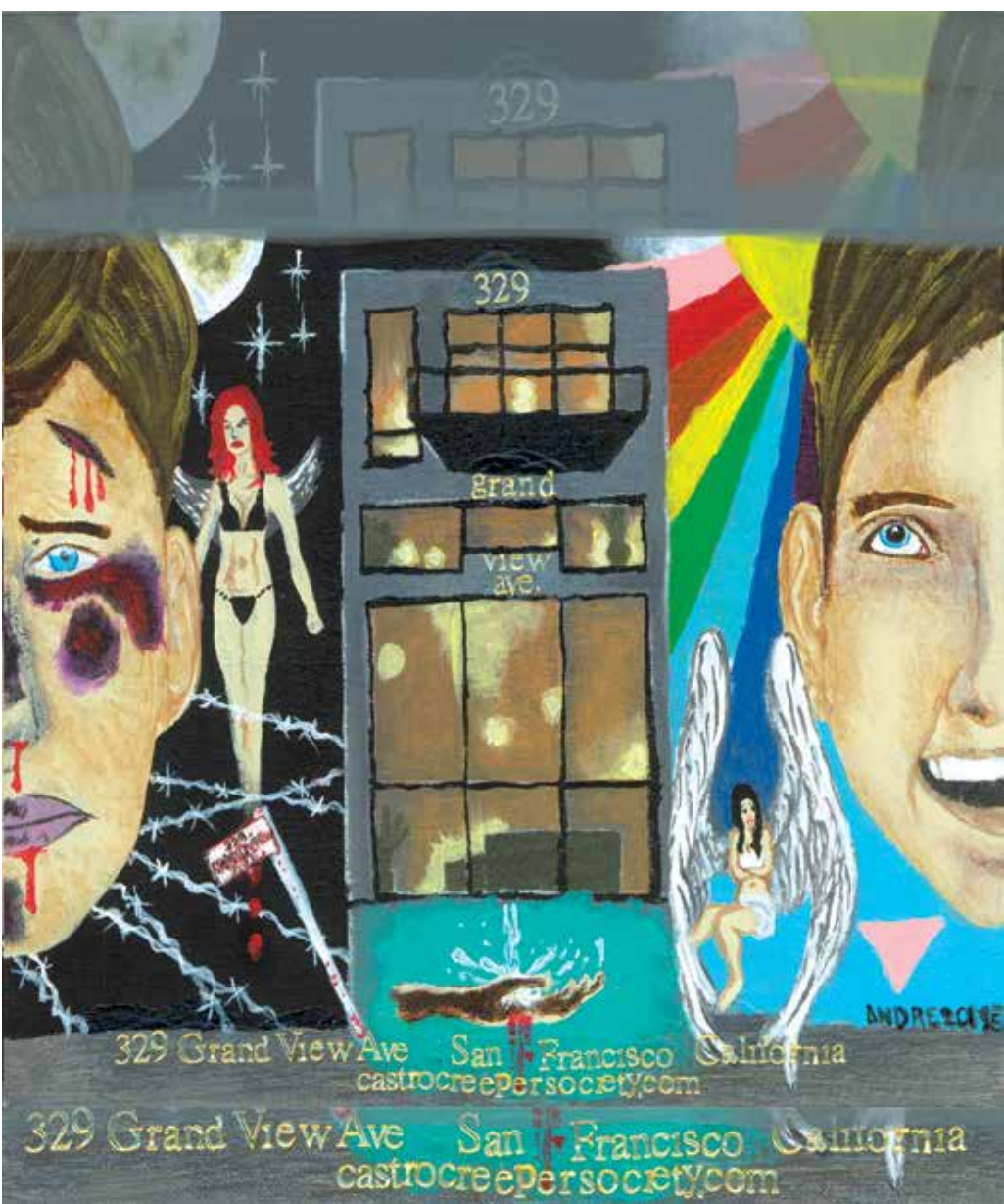


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Out & About

A HUGE thank you to everyone that braved the rain and joined us for Outword's monthly happy hour at Badlands on December 13 and brought a toy for our toy drive. The toys were gathered for WEAVE's safe house toy shoppe and by now they should be putting huge smiles on a lot of kid's faces. We would also like to thank all of the sexy Santa helpers that made the night that much more entertaining. See you next year!





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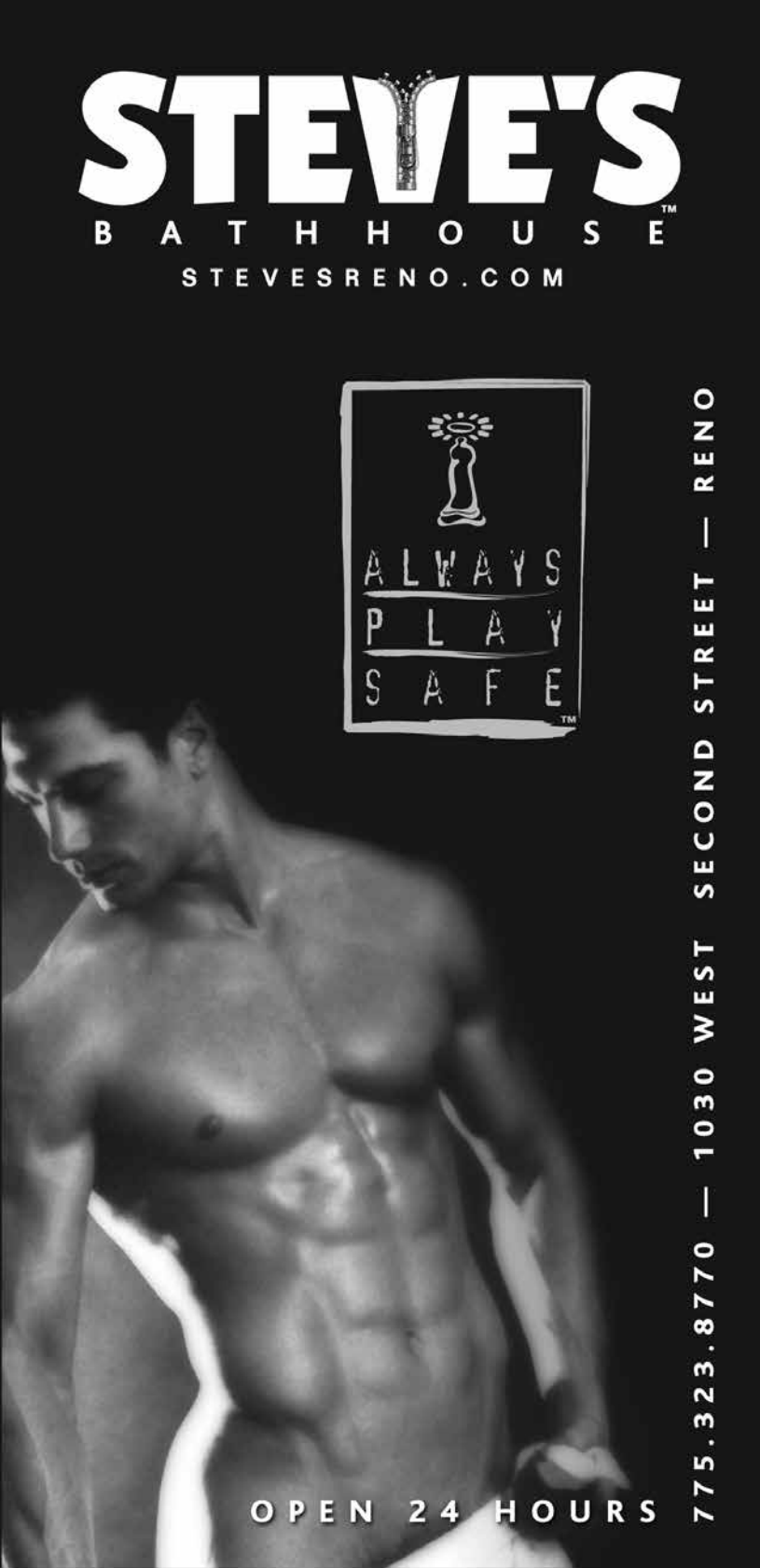
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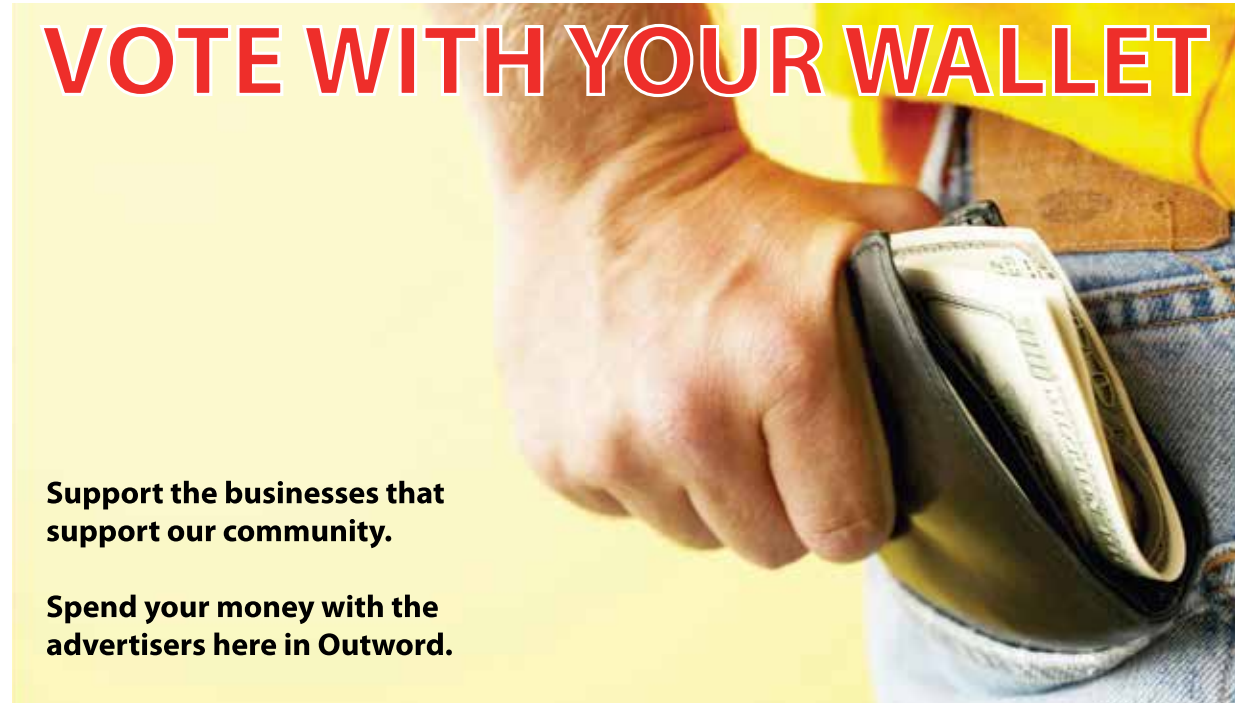
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